

The Flower Gardener's Bible: Time-Tested Techniques Creative Designs and Perfect Plants for Colorful Gardens

Lewis Hill

Nancy Hill

Storey Books (Feb 15, 2003)

\$37.50 (384pp)

978-1-58017-463-3

If one wants to be happy for a lifetime, write the authors, one should become a gardener. Their love of gardening comes through every page of this comprehensive guide to growing 261 plants, with species-by-species information on each plant's type, bloom time, best location, diseases and insects, good garden companions, and propagation. There's a photo of each, along with its Latin name.

The authors, who have been gardening for fifty-five years at their home in Greensboro, Vermont, tell how they gradually came to know their plants' habits—when they bloomed, how high they grew, how vigorous they were, and whether their foliage remained attractive throughout the season. "It took time," they write, "but we finally learned to plan before we planted to achieve pleasant color combinations, and to arrange different cultivars so there would be blooms all summer long."

For beginning gardeners, they explain such basic terms as perennials, annuals, and biennials; genus, species, and cultivars. There's a chapter on designing a garden, both in northern and mountainous climates and in the nation's southern regions, with instructions on picking a site, choosing accent plants and flowers for cutting gardens, and the use of color to create special effects and moods.

Two of the gardens suggested by the Hills are those that attract butterflies and hummingbirds, delightful additions to any backyard. Butterfly gardens must provide food for the feeding stages of butterflies, from egg to caterpillar, to chrysalis, and then to the butterflies themselves. Asters, bee balms, coreopsis, and milkweed are among the plants the authors grow.

As for the ruby-throated hummingbirds that return to the Hills' garden in late spring after spending the winter in Central America, the authors suggest growing flowers with brilliant shades of red, pink, and orange that produce large amounts of nectar. They recommend such plants as fuchsias, geraniums, scarlet sage, and poppies.

The Hills have written fifteen other garden books, including *The Lawn and Garden Owners' Manual*, *Daylilies*, and *Bulbs*. De Sciose's photographs have appeared in numerous magazines, including *Country Living*, *House & Garden*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. His resplendent photos complement the Hills' informative text.

"We are always in the process of learning and forever will be," they write. "Among the many wonderful things about a garden is the fact that you can never say it's finished."

GEORGE COHEN (May / June 2003)

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