

Books

RHS mail order: 01483 211320;
www.rhsshop.co.uk

Garden Crafts for Children

Dawn Isaac 128pp, 2012, Cico, ISBN 9781908170255, RRP £14.99

The Book of Gardening Projects for Kids

Whitney Cohen and John Fisher

264pp, 2012, Timber Press,
ISBN 9781604692457, RRP £12.99

These two different books both aim to connect children with gardening and nature.

Written by Californian gardening educators, *Gardening Projects for Kids* is designed to engage families in everyday food production, outdoor skills and sustainability.

The content is excellent, going far beyond the actual projects. It is packed with ideas that successfully incorporate the big picture, and can be adapted to suit all ages.

It is, however, somewhat text-heavy and occasionally hard to navigate, while the anecdotal style, veering between chipper, earnest and morally virtuous, can grate. There is also a culture gap: gardeners in Milton Keynes or Manchester neither preserve many lemons nor have much trouble with gophers.

Although not a book for children or quick-fix entertainment, it is positive, enthusiastic and experience rich. Teachers and community gardening groups will find it a useful resource.



Garden Crafts for Children made me smile from the outset. The beautifully presented, easy-to-follow projects are fresh and inventive, covering a minimum of old ground and meeting the interests of different ages and genders remarkably well.

It kicks off with simple instructions on how to garden and what plants need, to ensure success and confidence. A fuss-free 'useful tools and clothes' section deals with the realities of gardening with kids.

The book is aimed at children aged 3-11 and

while little ones will need a bit of adult help, the 8+ range will manage alone, happily absorbed in making a micro-leaves farm, using cress seeds to make sprouting birthday cards, and pressing flowers to create scented soaps. Inventive growing projects include crocus fairy rings and a tyrannosaurus garden with ferns, moss and dinosaurs.

Achievable, fun and down-to-earth, this book will be making a regular appearance on my children's gift list. ●

Naomi Slade is a garden writer and author

Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy

Claude Hitching 320pp, 2012, Garden Art Press, ISBN 9781870673761, RRP £35

Between the 1840s and 1930s, the firm of James Pulham and Son created a large number of rock gardens around Britain, most of them using an artificial stone of their own devising.

James Pulham I, the founder of the firm, was one of the pioneers of Portland cement, and put his formula to use in church architecture and decoration; his son James Pulham II began to make rockworks by assembling masses of brick, pouring cement mixture over them and moulding them into shape, boulder by boulder.

The firm's fame grew during the 1850s and 1860s; it opened multiple offices; created rock gardens for the Royal family (Sandringham), local authorities (Battersea Park cascade), gardens great and suburban, and (in natural stone) RHS Garden Wisley. It also developed subordinate lines in terracotta garden

ornaments, and even carried out the prize-winning monument for the tomb of the artist William Mulready, in Kensal Green Cemetery.

After the First World War, it regularly exhibited rock gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and created its largest schemes for seaside tourist towns such as Blackpool, Ramsgate, and Folkestone. The firm closed at the end of the 1930s, and its records were destroyed.

The author, whose great-grandfather and four other ancestors worked for the firm as 'rock builders', has spent the last decade tracing the rock gardens and compiling this detailed and splendidly illustrated history. From north to south, there is probably a Pulham rock garden near you: read this book and find out. ●

Brent Elliott, *RHS Historian*; his book celebrating the Chelsea Flower Show centenary is published in March



Just Vegetating: A Memoir

Joy Larkcom 336pp, 2012, Frances Lincoln, ISBN 9780711229358, RRP £18.99

Though the author describes this modestly as 'a memoir', it is much more: part reminiscence, part travelogue and part autobiography. Together with a compilation from her life's work of writing on vegetable growing, this book puts both the subject and the author in high profile, where they justly belong.

An evident enthusiasm for learning more about growing vegetables has taken her across geographical and cultural boundaries,

venturing into techniques, technology and related science. Her four decades of exploration and research has had a great influence on home food growing in Britain, introducing vegetables and techniques first from Europe and later from the Orient and America.

This is not a gardening book but a book for gardeners. You don't have to be interested in vegetable growing to warm to the theme. The focus may be on vegetables but running through it is a deep love of growing plants and an insatiable curiosity for what is being grown over the fence.

Each chapter covers a significant period of the author's life, with reminiscences of her personal story as an introduction to selected writings for publications (including *The Garden*) during that period. Here and there she adds a note to put the writing into modern context.

Over the decades Joy Larkcom must have written everything there is to say about vegetable growing. That doesn't leave a lot of room for the rest of us. ●

Bob Sherman is Chief Horticultural Officer for Garden Organic



Cacti and Succulents for Cold Climates

Leo J Chance 328pp, 2012, Timber Press, ISBN 9781604692648, RRP £25

When the author first revealed his idea of creating a cold-climate cacti and succulents garden in Colorado (where he lives), he was told he was on a road to failure. Over the past 30 years he has been enthusiastically proving his critics wrong, successfully designing and creating gardens for himself and others.

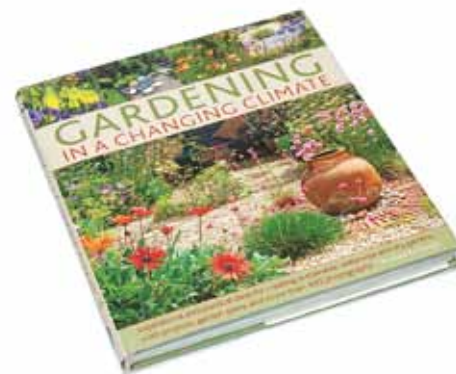
The early parts of the book provide much information on cultivation and establishing a cacti and succulent garden. The chapters on understanding hardiness and how and where to plant are particularly useful.

Most of the book is taken up with detailed accounts of 274 cacti and succulents, mainly species native to North and South America, recommended by the author for cold climates.

The problem from a UK reader's perspective is that the climate here is more equable, with warmer, wetter winters and cooler summers. Many of the species recommended, although hardy to cold conditions, will not thrive outdoors in the UK. Consequently many of the species known to grow well, particularly in the milder parts of the UK – for example some of the South African succulents – are not included due to being outside the remit of this book.



Anyone with an interest in growing cacti and succulents will enjoy this readable book. It is a source of invaluable information and practical tips from a pioneer in his field. But what sets it apart from the many other books on cacti and succulents is that it encourages the reader to garden with these plants, rather than just grow them as part of a collection. ● **Stephen Mules** of Lower Keneggy Nurseries specialises in exotic and maritime plants



Gardening in a Changing Climate

Ambra Edwards
160pp, 2011, Aquamarine,
ISBN 9781903141625, RRP £14.99

This book is a useful but one-sided approach to answering the growing climate challenges for gardeners.

The title is over-ambitious, suggesting a comprehensive strategy for coping with change. In her introduction, the author refers to 'greater extremes of heat and cold, deluge and drought' and agrees that we face damaging events such as flash flooding.

The contents, however, present nine classic gardening styles intended to help us cope with only heat, drought and water shortage. Italianate, Mediterranean, Islamic, desert and Cape gardens are among those profiled. Each is presented as a sequence of tutorial, plan, project and discussion of architecture or landscape, plus a few plants typical of the particular dry habitat.

'For many of us,' the author writes, 'summer drought has become a regular problem.' While this might chime with readers in Australia or parts of the USA, it is only one of the predicted challenges. Weather is not climate, but a growing suspicion in scientific quarters would link increasing global temperature with floods, high winds and cold snaps. The styles and plants recommended here mostly require full sun, good light and well-drained soil; there is no consideration of violent storms, waterlogging or prolonged cloud cover, all possible features of our increasingly turbulent and unstable weather.

As someone once said, for every complex problem there's a simple solution, and it's usually wrong. But then I might be proved wrong next summer: dramatic warming in the Pacific Ocean suggests El Niño is building, possibly auguring sun-drenched drought for UK gardens. ●

Andi Clevely is a gardener and writer