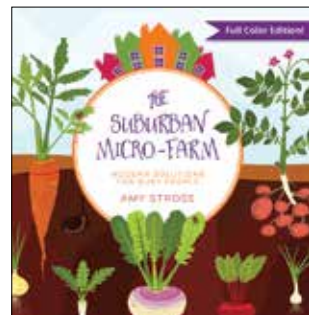


## Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

### The Suburban Micro-Farm

Amy Stross. Chelsea Green Publishing, Hartford, VT, 2018. 356 pages. Publisher's price, softcover: \$34.95.

THOSE WHO live in the suburbs would likely agree it offers many advantages, such as proximity to schools, workplaces, and other amenities. But how about its food production potential? In



*The Suburban Micro-Farm*, Amy Stross makes the case that all sorts of small spaces can yield a surprising amount of food, and it can be done without sacrificing every spare moment. The secret is thinking like a farmer, but on a micro-scale.

Stross begins by defining a farmer as anyone using land to grow crops or keep livestock. With this definition, growing lettuce on a windowsill constitutes a farm and the grower is a farmer—a micro-farmer! Once over this perceptual hurdle, Stross sets about providing the information that will “help busy gardeners learn how to work with the land they have—with the time they have available—to create a beautiful and ecologically friendly micro-farm.”

Focusing on vegetable, fruit, and herb production, the book provides chapters on cultivating each of these plant groups. Stross's discussions on how to select crops to best fit your needs and gardening circumstances are especially helpful. Beginners and experienced gardeners alike will appreciate her succinct coverage of key topics like soil, compost, and seed starting. I found her explanations of soil amendments and when to use them—or not to, in some cases—particularly edifying.

The last section of the book explores how to layer cutting-edge farming practices, edible landscaping, and permaculture with basic micro-farming techniques. Stross even delves into making money on a micro-farm, describing ways to create an income stream from a productive suburban landscape. Worksheets, web links, and an extensive bibliography supply further resources for avoiding over-commitment through realistic time management and thoughtful planning.

Stross's practical wisdom will help suburbanites harness the potential of their landscapes for producing food and increasing their self-sufficiency. Accessible and full of useful advice, this book provides an invaluable roadmap for diversifying from a lawn monoculture to a bountiful micro-farm.

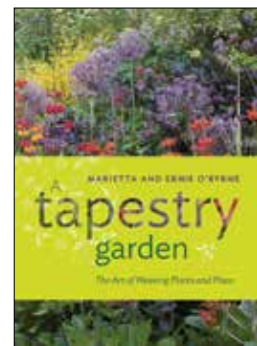
—Mary S. Chaddock

A horticulture specialist at the American Horticultural Society, Mary S. Chaddock maintains a suburban micro-farm in Virginia.

### A Tapestry Garden

Marietta and Ernie O'Byrne. Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2018. 263 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$34.95.

MARIETTA AND ERNIE O'BYRNE grew up continents apart, she with a love of gardening and plants and he with a great interest in the natural world. After moving to Eugene, Oregon, they met and fell in love. *A Tapestry Garden: The Art of Weaving Plants and Place* chronicles how over four decades the O'Byrnes turned their 70-acre property into the dazzling tapestry of colors, shapes, and textures that it is today. We also see this through the beautiful photographs taken by Doreen Wynja and the O'Byrnes.



Grand as the garden is today, Marietta relates how it began, with a blank slate. For readers also beginning a garden Marietta writes: “Be of good courage; we all start that way. Even the most sophisticated garden was once an empty lot or meadow.” She describes how they began, planning area by area. A chapter is devoted to each, starting with the vegetable and fruit garden.

As their knowledge of “the world of beautiful plants” expanded, so did their ornamental gardens. Marietta writes, “we became collectors, wanting to grow whatever struck our fancy.” As a result, their garden designs break the rule of planting in at least groups of three. She explains “a collector needs room for onesies and twosies of ever-precious rarities.”

While reading through the vivid descriptions of each area, I had difficulty envisioning the spatial arrangements of the gardens in relation to each other. Though there is a color map on the end papers, I found it awkward to keep having to turn to them; drawings with the chapters may have provided better orientation. Interspersed with the chapters, sections devoted to certain plant groups go into depth about the species and varieties the O'Byrnes grow. These include trilliums, bulbous plants, and hellebores. In the case of hellebores, the O'Byrnes “followed the dreams of their imagination” and became breeders and wholesalers of stunning varieties.

You may wonder as I did how the couple maintains this wonderful garden. The answer is that they work very hard, but they both love it. For that reason, I would have liked some of Ernie's voice in the book in addition to Marietta's. Still, this book reflects a beautiful partnership that created a spectacular garden.

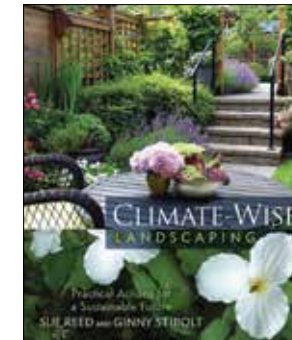
—Judy Nauseef

Judy Nauseef, author of *Gardening with Native Plants in the Upper Midwest* (University of Iowa Press, 2016), lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

### Climate-Wise Landscaping: Practical Actions for a Sustainable Future

Sue Reed and Ginny Stibolt. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, 2018. 320 pages. Publisher's price, softcover: \$29.99.

ANY GARDENER with a desire to contribute to a more sustainable future will find plenty of practical ideas in *Climate-Wise Landscaping*. Authors Sue Reed and Ginny Stibolt have created



an optimistic, captivating, and essential handbook for reducing a landscape's carbon footprint and increasing its ecological value, no matter if it's urban or rural, large or small.

To tackle this complex topic, the book is divided into sections that examine landscaping elements such as lawn, water, soil, and food production. For those looking to start a new garden or renovate an

existing one, sections on planning and design, materials, and ecosystems provide valuable information. In them, the authors explore concepts such as designing for supporting wildlife, resilience in a changing climate, and personal comfort. Other sections on herbaceous and woody plants explore how they can help to cool the air, store carbon, stabilize soils, and provide habitat.

Urban environments have unique challenges, so one section presents a range of solutions specifically for city landscapes. For example, the authors suggest ways to efficiently increase space for plants, such as building vertical forests on balconies and creating green roofs. They also provide insightful action plans for dealing with heat issues caused by urban hardscaping.

Of course, when considering the various elements that comprise any landscape, it's important to keep the big picture in mind. For instance, while Reed and Stibolt recommend the use of mulch for its ability to reduce weeds, retain moisture, and improve the soil, they also explain why mulch should not be the main feature of a landscape. “A mostly mulch landscape is not a reasonable answer,” they write, “because it's not an inviting ecosystem for pollinators and other wildlife.”

I especially appreciated the concise, easy-to-digest primers in pertinent sections of the book that explain the basics of the science behind sustainable landscaping. These include discussions on climate change, the types of commonly used landscape chemicals, how plants and water interact, the ecological roles of native plants, and carbon storage in soils.

*Climate-Wise Landscaping* gives readers easy, practical actions for creating gardens and yards that are better able to flourish in challenging, unpredictable conditions while supporting other species as they adapt to the changing climate. I've added several of these tasks to my own gardening to-do list, and this book will doubtlessly inspire others to do the same.

—Anne Marie Van Nest

Anne Marie Van Nest is a Fellow and past president of GWA: The Association for Garden Communicators and a member of the organization's Sustainable Gardening Committee.



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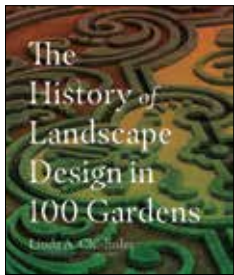


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## Focus on Design

PLANNING A GARDEN can seem daunting, but it's also an opportunity to experiment with new designs, colors, textures, and atmospheres. Regardless of where you live or how you want your garden to be, there is an abundance of resources that can help you tackle design challenges and provide fresh inspiration. Here is a selection of recently published books about garden and landscape design to get you started.



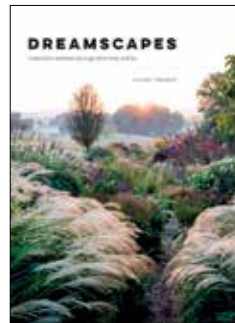
***The History of Landscape Design in 100 Gardens*** (Timber Press, 2018, \$50) is rich with photographs and descriptions of how landscape design has shaped and reflected culture over time. Linda A. Chisholm uses her background in social and intellectual history to evaluate how “materials were organized in space, the purpose they were meant to serve, and the message the designer wanted to convey.”



***Design-Your-Garden Toolkit*** (Storey Publishing, 2018, \$19.95) is Michelle Gervais's interactive guide to helping you create an interesting and varied garden. This book's watercolor illustrations outline basic concepts of color theory, texture, form, harmony, and contrast in garden design. Complete with profiles of 128 popular temperate-climate region plants and 150 reusable vinyl plant stickers, this innovative toolkit encourages you to experiment with new combinations of plants and is ideal for visualizing your dream garden before investing time and money in it.



***The Essential Garden Design Workbook*** (Timber Press, 2017, \$34.95) is an updated edition of Rosemary Alexander's widely used reference book for garden and landscape design. This book is composed of three sections—pre-design phase, design phase, and post-design phase—which efficiently outline the details and challenges of planning a garden, business tips, advice for creating contracts, and more. This comprehensive workbook provides a structured approach to design that students and professionals alike will find invaluable.



***Dreamscapes*** (Hardie Grant, 2018, \$50) is a collection of evocative photographs from more than 60 acclaimed gardens around the world. Claire Takacs takes readers on a journey to celebrate these gardens and their creators, including spaces by noteworthy designers like Paul Bangay, Piet Oudolf, and Fernando Martos. Flipping through the pages makes for an enchanting experience that's sure to inspire creative design in your own garden.



In ***Designing with Palms*** (Timber Press, 2018, \$50), Jason Dewees spotlights palms to help readers “bring their many beautiful and useful forms into gardens beyond the tropics.” Dewees covers basic cultural techniques for planting and caring for palms, then addresses how to best incorporate them into a landscape. Stunning photos by Caitlin Atkinson are the perfect accompaniment to the author's advice on spicing up landscapes with palms.



In ***The Magic of Children's Gardens*** (Temple University Press, 2017, \$75), Lolly Tai provides detailed examples of noteworthy children's gardens in North America. These include ones at Brooklyn Botanic Garden in New York and Chicago Botanic Garden in Illinois, designed to encourage learning and play through the stimulation of all five senses. Packed with photographs, illustrations, and suggested criteria, this book explores designs that foster children's interactions with plants and the outdoors to nurture their affinity for nature.

—Alejandra Vansant, Editorial Intern