



Garden Food, Hay, and the Flower Bible

From The Garden To The Table, Beyond the Hay Days and The Flower Gardener's Bible

From The Garden To The Table

Uncomplicated, yet painstakingly specific—From The Garden To The Table, Growing, Cooking and Eating Your Own Food by Monty and Sarah Don is a paradox. The authors' passionate tone for growing and preparing their sustenance is so simple, so environmentally conscious, so sensual, yet so detailed and well written, in thoughtful prose; From The Garden To The Table is unlike most books of its kind.

"There was a time when everyone would have known exactly where their food came from and that intimacy was part of the ritual and pleasure of eating. As a society we have developed a depressing irresponsibility about what we eat. ... We are so divorced from the practical production of what we greedily consume that we have stopped asking questions, as though ignorance was a justifiable excuse for factory farming, genetic engineering and the mass application of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides. ...," the authors lament. In this same clean style, minute particulars are delivered: "My favorite tool is a stainless-steel spade made in a foundry at nearby Wigin. I watched it being made through every stage from molten metal, right down to the presses to the final sanding of the ash handle."

The simplicity of From The Garden To The Table is a standout. Even the table of contents is explicitly pure: "Introduction," "The Garden," "The Kitchen," "The Food," "Index." In "The Food" chapter, the authors introduce us to each of their seasons (they live in the United Kingdom), in month-by-month detail, beginning with accounts from September. For every crop they raise there are anecdotes, nearly void of "how-to," about growing tendencies and harvesting, along with photographs and unusual recipes prepared in the family's centuries-old kitchen. There are even smatterings throughout the book of the authors' journal entries documenting trivial matters such as the weather, chores, visitors, et cetera. "Tuesday, June 9: Bone Tired. Good for nothing."

Monty and Sarah Don are not dogmatic organic gardeners. They simply respect the planet and favor fresh, nutritious sustenance. "The garden is an accumulation of all the experiences to be had within it, be they horticultural or not. In some ways, this underlines my own uneasiness with the word gardening. It does not do justice to the range of experience that you get when working outside with the land."

From The Garden To The Table is about a lifestyle, which is best enjoyed like a story not a manual. The book deviates from step-by-step instruction and delivers a feeling of pleasurable experience living from the garden to the table.

Beyond the Hay Days

Feeding a horse can be a very frustrating responsibility. Oh sure, just throw down the occasional grain and turn him out to pasture. Wrong! My hard-to-keep Thoroughbred would be emaciated by week's end. I instead have spent countless hours reading the latest research and then looking to my veterinarian for help with interpreting technical jargon on proper horse nutrition.

Now comes Beyond the Hay Days by Rex A. Ewing, a "refreshingly simple horse nutrition" guide (according to the cover). Is it so? Well since veterinarians and researchers aren't in complete agreement regarding equine nutrition, I'm not so sure Ewing's book is really that simple. (Heck, experts are still debating human nutrition.)

However, instead of veterinary terminology that leaves you wondering if you need to go to vet school in order to properly care for your horse, Ewing does deliver some basic information in a very easy-to-read style. Generally, most qualified veterinarians and researchers would probably agree with much of the information contained in Beyond the Hay Days, but certainly not all. But then that is the nature of veterinary medicine and nutrition: Opinions are always changing.

Since a horse can't talk to us in an explicit language that we understand, we can only know if something might be working through prolonged observation. If you're like me (never fully satisfied with any one answer when it comes to the care of my horse), I use Beyond the Hay Days as a guide to equine nutrition, along with many other sources. I also rely on my own observations and frequent veterinary consultations.

Beyond the Hay Days is a book that can complement your library of unending resources on the subject of equine nutrition.



The Flower Gardener's Bible

Fall is not the most colorful season when it comes to flowers in bloom. Rather, it's the changing leaves that make flora so vibrant this time of year. But as most gardeners know, if you really want color in the way of flowers year-round, you can achieve it with proper planning and diligence.

The Flower Gardener's Bible by Lewis and Nancy Hill is an excellent source, not only for year-round flowers, but also flower varieties, garden planning, organic controls, plant foods and more. The detail is immense and the photographs are all high-quality color. While there are some illustrations in the book (not my favorite mode of visualization when it comes to a gardening book), they are reserved for diagram-type topics such as plant keys.

One of the most useful aspects of The Flower Gardener's Bible is the "Flower Gardener's Calendar," which is a checklist, season by season, of tasks to ensure fabulous foliage all year. I also found the chapter on "Designing Your Flower Garden" helpful, especially the section on "Designing the Garden on Paper," a how-to for the beginner that takes the mysticism out of planning the perfect garden. Other tools include sections on insect invaders and how to control them using organic controls and fertilizers, and plant food elements.

Add The Flower Gardener's Bible to your library of gardening books and you will probably find it to be a valuable reference all year long.