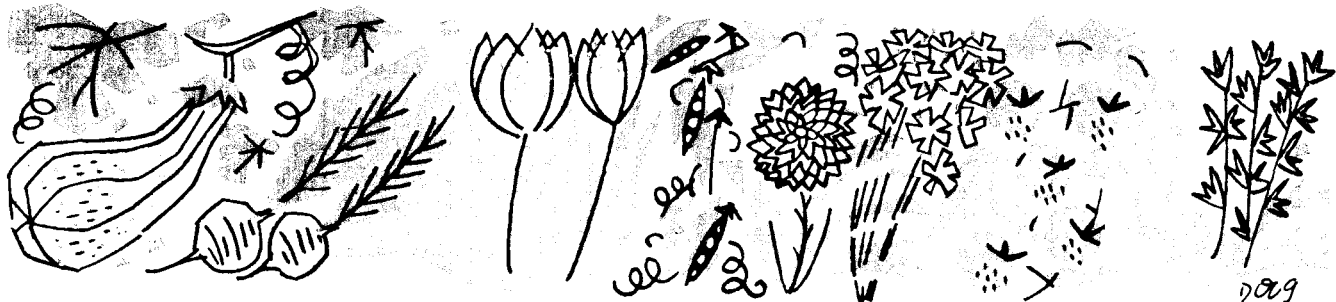


For Thumbs Smudged and Green

In the Spring One's Fancy Turns to Tulips and Turnips



By VIRGINIA KIRKUS, *director of the Virginia Kirkus Service, which provides pre-publication reviews to guide bookstores, libraries, and periodicals throughout the country.*

GARDEN books, to this practical and not very expert gardener, fall into various categories: those I like to read during the months when nature demands that the garden—if not the gardener—rest; those that light a spark of adventure and make me jot down notes for future garden plans; those that are strictly practical, that suggest solutions for my problems and that, shamelessly marked, will be carried to the garden and smudged with garden dirt. And finally there are the garden books that I yearn to own, just for their sheer beauty of bookmaking (if not of garden-making), for their superb photography, or for the thought that someday, perhaps, I'll have time to use them as they should be used and make an expert out of a rather bungling amateur. But as the years go on—and I become expert in no area of gardening—my hopes fade and I turn again to recipes for gardening without an aching back.

In the practical area, Ruth Stout's "Gardening Without Work" (Devon-Adair, \$3.95) is a must for those who adopted her mulching program so eagerly, only to find certain questions unsolved. Some of those questions are honestly answered here, in her informal, chatty, person-to-person style. But not content with Ruth Stout as mentor, I turned to Edwin Steffek's "Gardening the Easy Way" (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$3.95) only to find that he had

attempted too much and treated real problems too glibly. His lists are comprehensive, too much so for the average home-owner. I found Jean Hersey's "Carefree Gardening" (Van Nostrand, \$4.95) vastly more to my taste. Any garden-loving home-owner with limited time and funds would find this just the right book when confronted with a new home, a new garden, new problems. It takes some know-how to get the most out of it. Let's define it as a book for the gardener who has his initial mistakes behind him.

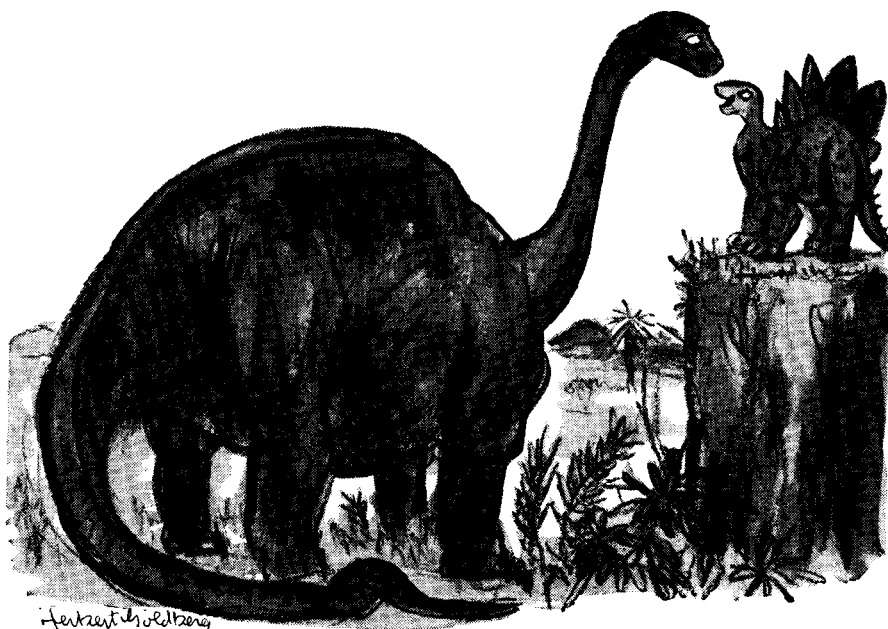
Speaking of initial mistakes, have some of you found that the garden you planned for sunshine is now a shady plot? You will be grateful—as I was—to know that once again Harriet K. Morse's "Gardening in the Shade" (Scribners, \$5.95) is available in a new, enlarged, and revised edition, which has some new ideas, new lists, new suggestions for this special problem.

Have you long cherished the hope that you can have, if not a rose garden, some roses in your garden, without too many difficulties? John Milton—out of a practical home rose-garden experience (amplified by working for Conard-Pyle, whose Star roses are widely known)—has published this season "Rose Growing Simplified" (Hearstside, \$3.50). He starts with the stipulation that one must know how to dig a big enough hole, and must know how to read directions. And then he goes on to make it all seem very matter of course, applicable to one's dreams, and rewarding. There are lots of photographs to urge you on.

Every garden bookshelf should add a good reference work or two each year. One in a new direction, published last fall, was "Miracle Gardening Encyclo-

pedia," by Sam S. Baker (Grosset & Dunlap, \$5.95). This book is oriented to a better comprehension of the new plant materials, the chemical fertilizers, conditioners, preventatives and cures for the pests and diseases that plague the gardener; there is also a satisfying amount of basic instruction here. Miracle gardening does not eliminate either the dedication or the hard work, so Mr. Baker offers no panacea. However, he does bring important current factors into proper perspective. Robert W. Schery's "The Lawn Book" (Macmillan, \$5.95) is also for the reference shelf, for it provides not only step-by-step directions that should lead to a better lawn, but dispels lots of misconceptions about maintenance and makes the know-how seem within the average home-owner's reach. Montague Free assumes some experience in the gardener who will use his "Plant Pruning in Pictures" (Doubleday, \$4.95). The principles are here: basic information on tools and how to use them, specific instructions on when, where, how, why and why not to prune. With 321 photographs and 78 linecuts this is really a reference book for serious gardeners. Another manual is in the offing: "The Home Owner's Tree Book," by John S. Martin (Doubleday, \$3.95; to be published June 1st), which details the facts of life about trees, the physiology, the requirements, the pests and parasites, the rates of growth of various species, the hazards and rewards.

One of the events of the season is the reissue of a classic long out of print, Homer D. House's "Wild Flowers" (Macmillan, \$17.95). To those of us who have used it week in, week out, for identification, for increasing our



"I'm certainly relieved to know you're herbivorous."

knowledge of our native wild flowers, being without it seems impossible to conceive. And yet nowadays many do not know it. Here in one volume is a superb pictorial presentation of some 400 wild flowers, of which 364 are in color that is extraordinary for fidelity and showing the salient features. Index cross reference sends the inquirer to the descriptive data: popular name, botanical name, family, roots, stalks, leaves, flowers, fruits, variants, heights, something of soil and habitat, range, season of bloom. Moreover, the introductory section succinctly presents the botanical structure of plants, and there is sufficient data as well on changes taking place and the essentials of conservation to provide a warning to those who would strip our wilderness heritage.

These are the days of specialists, and this is as true in gardening as elsewhere. The herb gardener has a special treat in store in Elizabeth S. Hayes's *"Spices and Herbs Around the World"* (Doubleday, \$5.95) though it is not strictly speaking a garden book. Here are legends, historical data, and information on the cultivation and uses of herbs dating back to "Gerard's Herball" (1597-1633). Besides a fragrant miscellany of unusual recipes, wit and fancy, the book also contains a Herb Growing Chart. Not so new is a more comprehensive garden-cum-cookbook in this field: Dorothy Childs Hogner's infectious charming *"A Fresh Herb Platter"* (Doubleday, \$3.95), which discusses vegetables and herbs, garden salads, and the possibilities of herbs in pots, window boxes, and terrace gardens. Other areas of specialization are covered in Roy Genders's *"Miniature Roses"* (\$3.95), *"Gladioli and the Miniatures"* (\$4.95), H. Clifford Crook's

"Campanulas and Bellflowers in Cultivation" (\$2.50), Paul Fischer's *"Variegated Foliage Plants"* (\$3.50), A. T. Johnson's *"Hardy Heaths"* (\$2.50)—all published by St. Martin's Press. They are practical in approach and factual regarding selection of species, cultivation, propagation, and directions when and where to plant them. A final recommendation in a special field is Bernice Brilmayer's *"All About Vines and Hanging Plants"* (Doubleday, \$5.95). Everything one needs to know about vines and the increasingly popular hanging plants is here—how to use them, what to use and where, propagation, pests and culture, habits of growth, handling, pruning—including much information I have sought in vain elsewhere. A useful group of lists and sources makes this a practical addition to the garden shelf.

There's a warm spot in my heart for those books that don't quite qualify as garden books, though they are the very soul of gardeners. An example is Buckner Hollingsworth's *"Her Garden Was Her Delight"* (Macmillan, \$4, to be published May 21). John Bartram, an internationally known American botanist before the Revolution, wrote the title words about Martha Logan, an early Charleston florist, and here, in this wholly unexpected sort of book, are brief stories about notable women gardeners, botanists, agriculturists, artists, from the days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony almost to the present. It makes a composite picture, drawn from fragmentary evidence, sometimes too hesitant, sometimes verging on the sentimental, but providing piquancy and unusual fare.

And now for those tempting books one buys to give to a very special friend and then duplicates because one cannot

part with the first. Edwin A. Menninger, who belongs to a family famous in medicine but is himself a naturalist, plant explorer, and journalist, with a special hobby of tropical horticulture, shares a lifelong passion in his fascinating *"Flowering Trees of the World"* (Hearstside, \$18.95). And to those of us who have yearned for just such a book on returning from the tropics, here is a dream fulfilled. Mr. Menninger describes 1,000 species in 500 genres; he tells his reader what he needs to know and recounts a great deal of personal and botanical history. For practical use, he also discusses the adaptability and the use, culture and limitations of some of these trees for other climates. It is a valuable book in an almost untouched area. Another book both practical and lavish is the long-awaited *"Rhododendrons of the World,"* by David G. Leach (Scribners, \$25). The author is a widely known hybridizer; the illustrator, Edmond Amateis, is equally equipped for his contribution: diagrams, sketches, maps, charts in color, and sixteen pages of halftones. For amateurs there is all the information they could ask on suitable varieties, where to get them, how to use them; for professionals 148 species are described, and chapters are given to propagation, nutrition, production, and landscaping. And, finally, Georgina Masson, whose *"Italian Villas and Palaces"* delighted us several years ago, has produced its companion in *"Italian Gardens"* (Abrams, \$17.50), illustrated sumptuously with 213 beautiful photographs. Its fascinating text progresses historically and regionally, evidencing scholarship and a sense of the unity of architecture and landscaping. It is a fitting book with which to end our garden tour.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 977

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 977 will be found in the next issue.

QDK XQ XHLNGKCBRGK, RFL
LDBL XQ DKC NHGA MBFGL.
LBGKACBHT.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 976

Your ignorance cramps my conversation.

—ANTHONY HOPE.