

Book Reviews

A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens. Carole Ottesen. 2011. Smithsonian Books. P.O. Box 37012, MRC 513, Washington, DC 20013-7012. 160 pages, with illustrations, US \$14.95. Softcover. ISBN 978-1-58834-300-0

In the first publication highlighting the Smithsonian gardens, Carole Ottesen provides a poignant exploration of the horticultural collections along the National Mall in Washington, DC. Ottesen's insightful descriptions of the gardens constitute a well-rounded, readable analysis of the landscape surrounding some of our nation's most storied museums. In this book, the beautiful horticultural displays and collections prove to be as splendid as the materials indoors.

A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens combines a reverence for history and horticulture. It traces the gardens' evolution from the beginning in 1835, when British scientist James Smithson left his estate to the people of the United States to create an institution for the increase and diffusion of knowledge. The historical narrative continues throughout the book and provides a sense of purpose and direction to the writings. Ottesen praises the key personalities and plant specimens characterizing the gardens with equal enthusiasm. For example, one can learn about how the Hirshhorn Museum came into existence while admiring striking color images of *Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula' at the Sculpture Garden. These vignettes carry throughout the book and combine nicely with the gorgeous images of the gardens throughout the year.

The book is organized by site, with each chapter illuminating a different garden along the Mall. The structure and size of the publication makes it perfect to carry with you on your next trip to Washington while venturing between gardens. It conveniently includes a map of the Mall in the front and back sleeve to help you along your way. Furthermore, at

\$14.95, this book is a great deal for the level of detail included in the 160 pages. The chapters include inset information describing everything from integrated pest management practices at the Katherine Dulin Folger Rose Garden to the life cycle of a monarch butterfly at the Butterfly Habitat Garden. Other chapters review a zoo display, native American landscape, French-inspired royal parterre, and a victory garden, to name a few.

Amateur and professional garden enthusiasts can enjoy this book. It provides unique plant combinations and a range of design ideas to inspire the masses. The stories will keep you reading, while the illustrations provide ideas for your next garden project.

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Understanding Vineyard Soils. Robert E. White. 2009. Oxford University Press, New York. 240 pages, \$39.95, hard cover. ISBN: 978-0-19-531125-0

Understanding Vineyard Soils by Robert White is a scholarly approach to the concept of terroir, a word not often encountered in a soil book. Terroir can be described as the sum of all the effects that the site, land, climate, and resulting soil have on the qualities of grapes and wine. The concept is decidedly French in origin and helps to explain intellectually why wines taste the way they do in certain years or from certain locales or both.

Many factors must be included in any study of the soil, and this book does not disappoint. Soil is affected by parent material, weathering, amendments, moisture, biota, biological activity as well as other effects, and every possible interaction of effects therein. This thrifty book barely wastes a word and yet covers all of these ideas comprehensively. Precise presentations of research defend the science of terroir, lending objective

credibility to what was once a field of "vintner's tales."

Robert White relies on several well-referenced articles and books to state his case for terroir, and it has been done with elegance. No longer is growing great wine grapes a secret of the vintner's rumors. This book would serve well as a textbook for vineyard managers, horticulturists, and soil science students in wine country anywhere in the world. Countries displayed in the many attractive black-and-white photographs by White include Australia, New Zealand, France, South Africa, USA, and Italy, among others. One of White's most interesting photos is of the oldest Shiraz vineyard in the world in Victoria, Australia.

Chapter titles include "Why Soil Is Important in Viticulture," "Site Selection and Soil Preparation," "The Nutrition of Grapevines," "Where the Vine Roots Live," "The Living Soil," and "Putting It All Together." The appendices include a handy International System of Units conversion table, additional nutritional information, an electrical conductivity guide, and a schedule for irrigation. References, Further Reading, Web Sites, and a great Index wrap up the book.

Each chapter states why the topic is important to understanding the soils used for vineyards, then presents the research and illustrations, figures, tables, and graphs to explain the particular effects on grape quality. White's drawings, diagrams, tables, and figures are often original and are crisp and effective. The tables and graphs from colleagues' research are clearly credited and referenced. White uses boxes throughout to highlight particularly useful information at a glance. The boxes should be the most visited sections of this useful text.

This book could have been dull and dry; however, it is written in an interesting, descriptive, professorial style, and it is illustrated attractively. I particularly appreciated the original photographs, diagrams, and those practical boxes.

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