

Hopefully all your plants are happily growing and all your weeds have been defeated. It's time to pour a glass of lemonade or iced tea and sit down with a good book.

Former naturalist Patricia Lichen has completed her first three books in a series. Reading her books is like taking a personal tour to observe the animals and plants in our area. Lichen helps us better understand our relationship with the natural world. "Passionate Slugs & Hollywood Frogs," "River-Walking Songbirds & Singing Coyotes," and "Brittle Stars & Mudbugs," published by Sasquatch retail for \$14.95 each. You'll definitely pick Lichen's field guides up again and again.

I bought "Weedless Gardening" by Lee Reich (Workman, a steal at \$8.95) thinking and hoping against hope that it would be the panacea to all our weed problems. NOT! His methods definitely require a few hours a week of weeding, but are definitely worth reading. It's one of the most compact, succinct and thorough books I've seen yet on the subject of controlling weeds and at the same time building up and nourishing a garden's soil. You'll find hundreds of ideas in Reich's book to use in your own gardens. If you're a vegetable gardener, you'll especially like the book. The only downside (other than the couple hours a week weeding suggestion) is that Reich gardens on the east coast. One ground cover/green manure crop recommended is soybeans. Soybeans grow great in the hot humid Midwest (where I once gardened for six years), but here in the northwest this method won't work. Other than that I heartily recommend this book. You'll never have an entirely weedless garden, but using Reich's methods will make you a happier gardener.

Amy Stewart has written a delightful book titled "From the Ground Up – the Story of a First Garden (Algonquin-Workman \$18.95)." Stewart planted, tended and nourished her first garden in Santa Cruz, California. She now lives in the warmer, sunnier Sacramento area. This is a book you'll want to read from cover to cover without a pause. If you're a seasoned gardener you'll smile and nod your head every time you read one of Amy's well-intentioned but not quite "horticulturally" correct methods as a fledgling gardener. If you're a novice gardener you'll especially appreciate Stewart's words because she'll save you lots of frustration and angst. Her tone is conversational and personal. I sent a copy of this book to my daughter in San Francisco who is making and tending her first garden. Everything about this book is charming; even the jacket cover and the size of the book.

"Four Wings and a Prayer" (\$23, Pantheon) by Sue Halpern isn't really a gardening book, but it makes an excellent respite from hot summer gardening. It's all about the monarch butterfly. The cover was what snagged me first. A monarch butterfly is emblazoned on the garnet colored background. The butterfly's body covers the spine and each pair of wings covers the front and back of the book. Quite striking! The words Halpern weaves throughout the book are equally appealing. She followed the trail of the monarchs and writes about the countless men and women who have been researching the monarch's migration each year. The book is scientific but reads like a memoir with splashes of travel writing thrown into the mix. I couldn't put this book down and am still astonished by how many thousands of miles these exquisite winged creatures travel.

Speaking of bugs and insects "Bugs of Washington and Oregon" (\$11.95, Lone Pine) by John Acorn and Ian Sheldon is the perfect book for learning about insects and spiders. Illustrations and words are equally appealing. The back cover says it all: "From beautiful butterflies to scary spiders, Washington and Oregon have about 25,000 species of bugs. John Acorn, Nature Nut and avid bugster, describes 125 of the coolest species, which are grouped and color coded."

You'll be tempted to own at least one of these books, but remember the library has them or can purchase them for circulation. Happy reading.

*Send comments or questions to Peg at [gardenmentor@yahoo.com](mailto:gardenmentor@yahoo.com) or in care of this newspaper.*