

It's so cold today I can't even make myself go into the garden. Instead I've been wending my way through some wonderful books. I thought you might like to do the same while we wait for warmer breezes and soothing sunshine.

You'll never look at insects the same way after reading "Insects and Gardens" by Eric Grissell. This is my favorite book ever (so far) on these multi-legged crawling, flying, squirming creatures. Author Eric Grissell will hold your attention from the first page to the last. Exquisitely detailed photos by Carll (CORRECT SPELLING) Goodpasture give us amazing views into the life of insects. You'll learn all the good (yes, good) things insects do for us and our environment. Grissell adds a few spider facts too. Hopefully after reading the book you'll have a much better appreciation of these vital creatures. You may never reach for a bug weapon again. Published by Timber Press this book is worth every penny of its price. Roger Swain from PBS TV's "Victory Garden" says "This celebration of backyard insects is guaranteed to cure entomophobia. To understand insects is to love them. They are an inextricable part of the gardens we love."

A great savoring book out in paperback from Berkley (Penguin) is "The Literary Garden" introduced by Duncan Brine and illustrated by Lea Richardson and Jesse Kaplan. The book's subtitle says, "Recreating Literature's Most Beautiful Gardens in Your Own Backyard." Included are writings from numerous noted authors such as: Twain, Fitzgerald, Cather, Du Maurier, Eliot, Colette, Bronte, Stowe, Trollope...the list goes on and on. You'll love the literary passages followed by recipes and garden tips and advice. The cover says, "Combine literary inspiration with practical instruction to bring your favorite fictional gardens to life." I'm trying to figure out how I can smuggle this book to work and read it surreptitiously all day long. (Shhh, don't tell my boss.)

As many of you know by now, some of my favorite books are "how-to" and well illustrated. I can't resist books with great photos, illustrations and lots of written words giving tips and instructions. "Deck Scaping – Gardening and Landscaping On and Around Your Deck" by Barbara W. Ellis surpasses all these requirements. Storey Books is the publisher and they just keep these great "how-to" books coming. Treat yourself to a copy or ask our Kitsap Regional Library to add it to their collection; then check it out numerous times.

Patricia Lanza has taken the concepts we've all come to appreciate in her book "Lasagna Gardening" and written another book using her proven layering system of gardening. "Lasagna Gardening for Small Spaces" Rodale Press gives bountiful ideas for growing produce and ornamental plants in containers. Imagine growing a garden in a space 4-inches wide! Lanza tells you how. Topics included are: flowers, herbs, fruits and berries, rock gardens and trough gardens. You'll even find a small garden problem solving chapter. Remember if you garden in containers you'll rarely contend with weeds. Too cool!

April's right around the corner. Read one of the recommended books and then get ready to garden. For personal gardening advice and information Master Gardener Clinics begin in April in twelve locations and run from mid-April through mid-September. Saturday Clinics are at Port Orchard Farmer's Market, Port Orchard Nursery, Port Orchard Fred Meyer, Lowe's, Central Market, Kingston Farmer's Market and Winslow Farmer's Market. Thursday Clinics are at Bremerton Wal-Mart, Poulsbo Market Thriftway and Bainbridge Hardware. Master Gardeners are on duty from noon until 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Extension Office on Sidney Street in Port Orchard.