

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 5-12-04) Book Picks, ©2005

If you're getting a little tired of working in your garden pulling out all those weeds, you might want to take a break, visit your favorite book store or library and browse through these three new gardening books.

“Grass Scapes – gardening with ornamental grasses” by Martin Quinn and Catherine Macleod, Ball Publishing \$29.95 ISBN 1883052378. If you've always been confused about grasses or you'd love to start collecting some check out this wonderfully illustrated and created book. It's one of the most thorough and user-friendly books I've found on the subject of grasses. The authors refer to gardening with grasses in their native Canada but all the grasses featured would do very well in our Pacific Northwest.

The book is a page-by-page tutorial about grasses from root to stem and flowers. Readers learn how grasses are named and cultivated. Tips abound on working with color, special growing conditions and habits, designing with grasses and perennial companions. The final section “grasses at a glance” shows snapshots of the grass plus pronunciation, zone, form, size, finest seasonal color, flower color and timing of growth and bloom. After reading this book you'll want to go out and buy some grasses to incorporate into your own gardens.

The second book, “Continuous Color,” Ball Publishing \$44.95 ISBN 1883052386 is a stunning book written and photographed by Pam Duthie, owner and president of The Gifted Gardener, a landscape design and consulting firm specializing in continuous color gardens. She has lectured at the Chicago Botanic Garden for fifteen years and has served as president of the Landscape Design Association. She also wrote the award-winning book “Continuous Bloom.”

“Continuous Color” features “woody plants” i.e. trees and shrubs for every situation in a garden. The book is organized by month but also includes seasonal sections. Other tips include plants with interesting flowers, fruit, foliage, fall color, stems and bark. One section shows shrubs and trees in the dead of winter so the reader can see the structure of the plants and how the striking colors of the twigs and bark are enhanced by ice and snow. Every page is outlined in a very light color framing a black background with the photo illustrated as if the reader were looking at a slide presentation. The text is white.

The last fifty-seven pages include a wealth of information for making decisions on plants for foliage color, fall color (purple, red, orange, yellow etc.), conifer forms, a whole section on Crabapple (*Malus*) varieties, and *Viburnum* varieties. Also included is a USDA Hardiness Zone Map; a section on “Beware: Invasive!” plants; plant societies list; a list of mail-order catalogs to collect; a very thorough bibliography and both an index of common names and scientific names. This book has everything for the gardener who'd like to include structural designs using trees and shrubs, the plants that give the bones to our gardens.

Timber Press is renowned for their scholarly books with maximum interest and temptation for the gardener. "Ecology for Gardeners" by Steven B. Carroll and Steven D. Salt \$29.95 ISBN 0881926118 does not disappoint. The first thing to hook you is the cover with a montage of striking photos of honey bees, a swallowtail butterfly, monarch larva, a Colorado potato beetle and a squirrel. Both authors have not only thoroughly researched and written the book but have provided 174 photo plates illustrating their words.

Steven B. Carroll is an ecologist at Truman State University in Kirksville Missouri teaching ecology and botany. His particular interests are pollination biology, plant reproduction and problems posed by invasive species. He is also a Master Gardener. He lives and gardens on three acres where the deer keep a close watch on the plants.

Steven D. Salt holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry and microbiology and teaches college and university courses. He too lives in Missouri where he and his family grow herbs, fruits, flowers and vegetables to sell at farmers' markets. He has also written articles and given public presentations on vegetable and herb growing, small farm tools and techniques, and rural social issues.

"Ecology for Gardeners" is somewhat textbook-like but the materials and thoughts presented need that approach to do the topic justice. This is a book you'll savor a few chapters at a time. But you'll also want to return to the thoughts and words presented, time and again. Even though the authors are from Missouri the ideas and research shared in the book will intrigue and inform you and are completely applicable to our Northwest.

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