

DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 10-22-08) Books for Gardeners © 2008

When the weather turns nippy it's always a nice respite to linger indoors with a few good books on garden related topics. Here are four books you may want to find and peruse. You may even want to check them out at our Kitsap Regional Library first and then head out to your favorite local bookstore to purchase one of all of them.

"The Garden Primer" by Barbara Damrosch (Workman Publishing, ISBN 9780761122753) has been "completely revised." Damrosch lives and gardens in Harborside, Maine with her husband at Four Season Farm, which is also their sustainable agriculture business. The book contains 819 pages filled to the brim with information about every phase of gardening from pretty and enjoyable ornamental plants along with plants providing food.

This is a no-nonsense yet charming book, illustrated with black and white drawings. Every page is crammed with information, tips and facts. The illustrations are appealing and easy to understand. Damrosch tells how to select and grow more than 370 plants, including the many variations of these plants. Very factual statements are woven into quaint stories from a true gardener's perspective. Reading the book is akin to sitting at a table talking with your own favorite gardening guru. "The Garden Primer" is a book you'll refer to again and again.

I think my gardening buddy, Fay Linger, told me about a book called "Insects of the Pacific Northwest" by Peter Haggard and Judy Haggard (Timber Press, ISBN 9780881926897). It describes more than 450 species of the most visible insects in our gardens. Butterflies and moths, along with their larva, are illustrated through more than 600 excellent color photographs. Insects are grouped by their order and family. The range covered in the book is southwestern British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and northern California, from "coast to the mountains, from wetlands to high desert," says the book jacket.

"Insects of the Pacific Northwest" is sized perfectly to fit into a backpack. Page edges are colored for easy access in locating specific insect sections. Each insect description includes the plants these creatures like to munch on, where their eggs can be found and what time of year to look for the insects in our gardens. This book is a must have. You'll leaf again and again through all 295 pages of this excellent reference book.

An oldie but goodie "Bugs of Washington and Oregon" by John Acorn and Ian Sheldon (Lone Pine ISBN 1551052334) came out several years ago. This too is a great field guide, sized to live in a back pack or on a desk at the ready. This small paperback, 160 pages in length, is appealing to adults and youngsters. The illustrations are quite realistic. We've used this book numerous times in the Extension Office to identify insect specimens brought in to the Bremerton office.

Many home gardeners are beginning to raise chickens. Check first to make sure the regulations in your area allow raising chickens. If it is permitted you will want to find

"Keeping Chickens" by Jeremy Hobson and Celia Lewis (David & Charles, ISBN 0715325671). Every page is illustrated with color photographs. Instructions are given from start to finish, explaining how to select, raise, house and care for chickens. There's even a section on how to make various crafts using chicken eggs and feathers. There's even a section on how to enter chickens in fairs. Information is also provided showing a wide selection of chicken houses and coops. This is a very user friendly, concise and complete book.