

Books

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The Bad Tempered Gardener

Anne Wareham 168pp, 2011, Frances Lincoln, ISBN 9780711231504, RRP £16.99

This book, with a title that plays on Christopher Lloyd's *The Well-Tempered Garden*, is a personal look at garden-making from a writer and commentator who has, for some years, been known for promoting the idea of 'garden criticism'.

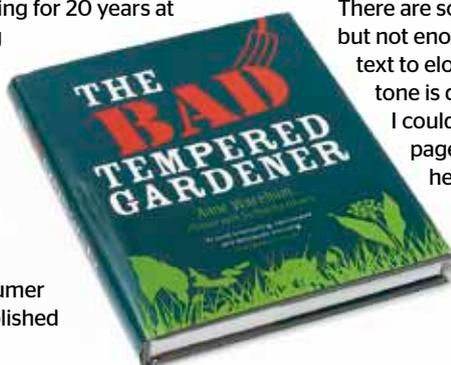
Rather than casting her eye on gardens made by others (no doubt to a collective sigh of relief) this is firmly about the garden in the Welsh borders that she and her garden-photographer husband Charles Hawes have been making for 20 years at Veddw House. In doing this, the author revives a genre of 'how I did it' garden-writing that was popular before the contemporary photograph-driven garden book, and one well worth revisiting.

Contemporary consumer garden culture is established

early on as a point of opposition, with its focus on a 'roses around the door... everything in the garden is lovely' approach. It is perhaps an unpalatable fact that much modern garden-making is driven by trend and fashion; this book is refreshing for being resolutely contrarian. The author's searing honesty will earn instant respect from many readers - we have all felt like the chapter headed 'I hate gardening', but few of us admit it.

There are some great lines, but not enough to carry the text to eloquence; its general tone is querulous. Though I could only read a few pages at a time, I couldn't help but keep coming back to it. ●

Noel Kinsbury is a garden writer and designer



The Founding Gardeners

Andrea Wulf 384pp, 2011, William Heinemann, ISBN 9780434019106, RRP £20

It seems that individuals and indeed nations, including newly formed ones, may be better understood by considering their interests and pastimes. And if this is so, then their relationship with plants and the landscape they inhabit provides particularly fertile ground to explore.

That is a central contention, at least, of Andrea Wulf's latest book, which builds on her immensely successful *Brother Gardeners* by examining the fascination that gardens, plants, plant exchange,

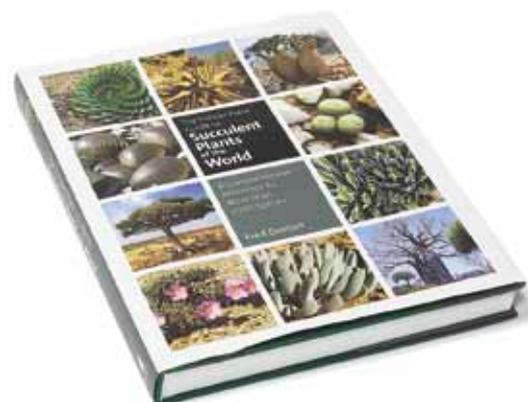
agriculture and the expansion westwards perhaps inevitably held for modern America's revolutionary founders.

Through US Presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison, the author shows how they imposed their vision on their properties and on the wider natural landscape, linking their endeavours back to the political sphere for which they are remembered.

Politics, plants, gardening and the growth of America under four presidents are traced in this enjoyable, well-researched book, but rightly the gardens and their owners feature most prominently. The book includes colour and black-and-white images, with nearly 100 pages of bibliography and notes that reveal the weighty research behind this excellent work.

I wonder where the author will take us next in her exploration of history through its gardens and plant collectors? ●

Neil Chambers is editor of *The Scientific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks*



The Timber Press Guide to Succulent Plants of the World

Fred Dortort

344pp, 2011, Timber Press, ISBN 9780881929959, RRP £35

The ingenious methods which many plants have evolved to enable them to survive prolonged drought is illustrated in this engaging and informative book. Taking a broad interpretation of succulence (but excluding cacti) the author covers genera from *Acanthoscyos* to *Zamioculcas*. He includes more than 2,000 species, including familiar plants such as aloe and lithops, alongside the rare or obscure.

His selection of plants is indulgent, chosen for their notoriety, beauty or curiosity, and includes noted cultivars and selections. The narrative is peppered with knowledge and experience of succulents, gleaned both from seeing them in habitat and from growing them in California, where the author is based.

High-calibre images throughout the book usefully show plants in the wild as well as in cultivation. Captions are often not self-contained, making them cryptic and an irritation unless you appreciate the connection in the text. The short section on cultivation is not aimed at UK growers, although the author recognises that most plants need to be grown under glass in western Europe.

This book is a fascinating compendium and homage to succulence, amply repaying exploration for both expert or experienced novice who thirsts to know more. ●

Ian Hodgson is a past Editor of *The Garden* with a life-long interest in succulent plants