

Gift Books or Winter Reading

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Littleton Garden Club

Two active readers & members of the Littleton Garden Club share recommendations on gardening and nature books.

Phyllis recommends:

What the Chicken Knows: A New Appreciation of the World's Most Familiar Bird

by Sy Montgomery, 2024. Montgomery is the bestselling author of The Soul of an Octopus. This is a little book about the relationship between humans and chickens. After reading it, I would love to get a few chickens to live in my backyard.

The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year

by Margaret Renkl, 2023. This is a book of 52 chapters. It looks at life & nature in Renkl's backyard over the course of a year. I read the first chapter about crows and am looking forward to reading about her observations for each week of the year.

A Way to Garden: A Hands-On Primer for Every Season

by Margaret Roche, 2019 rev. /21st anniversary edition. This is a good reference for seasonal garden tasks. Margaret Roche is an experienced gardener who quit her job as an editor for Martha Stewart. She moved to her summer residence in NY state after 9/11. All her books and podcasts are informative and enjoyable.

The potted herb by Abbie Zabar, 2004. Zabar is an artist who had special permission to draw the beautiful bouquets gracing the great hallway in the NYC Metropolitan Museum. She drew the large bouquets in the mornings before the museum opened. I enjoy making topiaries, and Abbie's book gives good directions on how to grow them. Abbie lives in NYC where she has a penthouse apartment rooftop garden.

Uprooted: A Gardener Reflects on Beginning Again

by Page Dicky, 2020. Dicky sells her home and moves to a new house in Connecticut. She had a beautiful garden in the first house. Then in middle age, she started a garden from scratch in her new home. Fortunately, her next-door neighbor was Bunny Williams, a garden designer. Bunny gave Page good design suggestions for both her house and garden. I enjoyed reading about these women! Bunny Williams started Trade Secrets - an annual event benefiting project SAGE. Their mission is to create social change to end interpersonal relationships causing violence to women. Held every year, Martha Stewart is usually pictured there checking it all out.

Gardening in Eden: Seasons in a Suburban Garden

by Arthur T. Vanderbilt III, 2007. The author, a lawyer, describes his hobby working in his suburban, home garden. His garden is an enchanting place; not too large. He describes cold, endless winter days waiting until the nurseries open in spring, when he can get out and shop for plants. Although cautioned by the local nursery grower to wait awhile until the possibility of a frost has ended, Vanderbilt is impatient to get plants settled in the garden. His humorous writing reminds me of gardeners here in New Hampshire- waiting restlessly for the time when they can get in their gardens again.

Mrs. Whaley and Her Charleston Garden by Emily Whaley, 1997. I've given copies of this book to many gardening friends because I enjoyed it so much. Emily Whaley was an 85 year old grand southern matron. This was a conversation with William Baldwin, her garden designer. This charming memoir shares advice on gardening and entertaining.

Mary Recommends:

The backyard Bird Chronicles by Amy Tan, 2024. This is a Barnes and Noble best books of 2024 pick.

Shhh!....don't tell anyone: I bought two as gifts for bird loving relatives. It's had rave reviews and I enjoy browsing it repeatedly as a special coffee table reference. I admire the amazing hand drawn and layered illustrations; I ended up buying myself a copy. Amy Tan is a proven author (Joy Luck Club) and shows a different side in this non fiction title that is sometimes quite witty.

Naturally Curious by Mary Holland, 2019. This book was mentioned a lot at our garden club meetings. Our club president has an uncanny ability to know what nature is ready to unfold at any given time. She attributes some of her garden knowledge to this book. Members enjoy it for it's "trip through the seasons" with fascinating facts about the natural world. Set up chronologically, readers anticipate nature's stages. I love the section on Monarch butterflies. Monarchs arrive in June & their egg and larvae mortality rate is greater than 90%. It points to the specific struggles of this treasured butterfly. Stunning photographic illustrations make the book very special. Also, there are fast facts throughout.

The \$64 Tomato: How One Man Nearly Lost His Sanity, Spent a Fortune, and Endured an Existential Crisis in the Quest for the Perfect Garden by William Alexander, 2007. This very humorous book had my partner and I laughing. This is a memoir of Alexander's gardening project. They bought a home with several acres in upstate New York. He was determined to create a 2000 sq. foot organic garden. His biggest challenge included a persistent groundhog he names "Superchuck". After a few years, he calculated each coveted Brandywine tomato cost him \$64! My partner, Dominic joked: it's probably a \$76 tomato now with inflation! The author is nurturing and other times crazed by frustration. Many gardeners can identify. Available at the Littleton Public Library.

For youngsters:

Planting a Rainbow, Lois Ehlert, 2003 A highly recommended picture book with vibrant illustrations and one that I shared with attentive toddlers in the past. It helps with color recognition and is a great nod to gardening and nature.

Tree A peek through board book by Britta Teckentrup, 2022 ed.

Just so much fun! It was voted- New York Public Library's 100 Best Books for Kids in 2016 and remains an interactive hit. I think it's never too early to cultivate love of nature and reading too!

Lastly, when you're not busy reading, consider holiday shopping at Revive 365 in Littleton. They carry the most amazing garden gloves! Long lasting & sales help support our club's endeavors.

Happy reading and Happy Holidays!

For more information on our club or meetings- please visit our website: <https://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org>