



THE REVIEWER

We take our pick of the new releases, including fascinating insights into the Rothschild family garden, treasures from the Natural History Museum, Shakespearean botanicals and more

BOOK REVIEWS

The Company of Trees

by Thomas Pakenham
(Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £30)

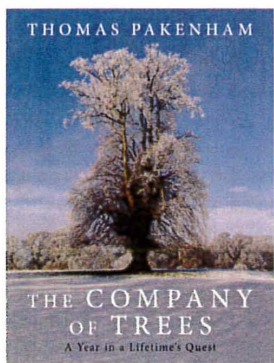
Brother of the more famous Antonia Fraser, Thomas Pakenham has had a lifelong love affair with trees. An early memory is of a children's book in which a copse of beech trees regrows to drive out the couple who have wantonly chopped them down. This story struck a chord with the young Thomas, who found it came back to haunt him when, as an adult, he in turn sacrificed a majestic lime on his Irish estate (or 'demesne', which is the Irish word). Thirty years later, he found that the indestructible common lime had been reincarnated as a small copse.

Chairman of the Irish Tree Society and a trained historian, he has written extensively about trees from all around the world. He does so again in this very personal book which, using diary form, interweaves history, travel and an account of a year in the life of the estate, Tullynally in Westmeath, which he inherited from an uncle. It was, he says, 'the ancient trees in the parkland that from the beginning grabbed my imagination and excited my senses'.

In his first years of ownership, Thomas struggled to pay off the estate's debts, but in the last 25 years he has planted extensively himself, creating a new arboretum and a Chinese garden, reflecting 18th century enthusiasm for the style. All of this he has done using seeds brought back from the travels he describes in the Himalayas, Patagonia and south-west China. Now nearing 80, he follows undaunted the footsteps of his heroes, such as the 19th century plant hunter Joseph Hooker, whose enthusiasm he channels.

Thomas, you sense, is a hopeless romantic who dashes up mountain sides in search of seeds, and who writes about his special places with lyrical pride. This richly layered book is illustrated with pictures of both his travels and of Tullynally. It is an account of energy and passion, and makes an enthralling read.

Reviewed by Vanessa Berridge



Paradise and Plenty

by Mary Keen
(Pimpernell Press, £50)

High up above the Vale of Aylesbury is the French-style Waddesdon Manor, the creation of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the late 19th century. While Ferdinand staked his claim to be part of British society by having his schemes of 41,000 bedding plants changed four times a year, his sister Alice created her own paradise at nearby Eythrope, including a magnificent four-acre walled kitchen garden.

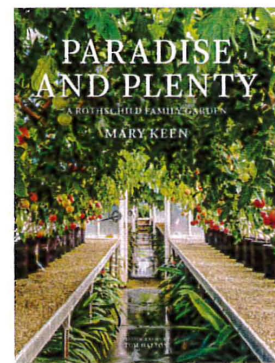
Like many other great gardens, Waddesdon and Eythrope had their ups and downs in the 20th century as the result of two world wars. Waddesdon was given to the National Trust in 1957, but the Rothschilds remained involved, keeping Eythrope as their dower house. When the present Lord Rothschild inherited in 1988, he restored the manor's great parterre, and also decided to recreate his ancestor's kitchen garden. He commissioned Mary Keen - the author of this lavish book - to design the garden. She, in turn, enlisted Sue Dickinson as head gardener to reproduce the high standards of Alice Rothschild on what became a 25-year project.

The sense of being on a horticultural journey informs this book, which is arranged thematically with sections on veg, glasshouses, pots and topiary, among others. Much more than just a coffee table book, Mary gives a detailed account of techniques used.

The Rothschilds' Paradise Garden is very grand indeed, but Mary's down-to-earth approach means there is plenty of practical advice in this book, such as how to keep blackfly off beans and keeping micromesh taut over cabbages by using builders' twine.

Sumptuous illustrations include flaps of pictures which open to reveal the same view at different seasons or in close-up. Mary is as good a writer as she is a gardener, so vegetable and flower growers, armchair gardeners and garden historians alike will all find much to interest them in this fascinating book.

Reviewed by Vanessa Berridge →



We spoke to special collections manager **Andrea Hart** (right) who co-wrote the new book *Rare Treasures From The Library Of The Natural History Museum* (Natural History Museum, £30)

Tell us about this book.

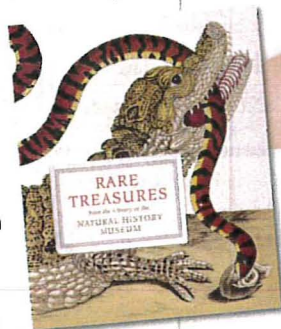
It's a collection of essays on some of the rarest books from the museum's extensive library, selected for both their scientific and artistic merit. Written and researched by library staff and museum scientists, the essays explore the books' motivations, history and their contribution to our understanding of the natural world.

What makes *Rare Treasures* more special - and what proved a personal highlight for me during my own essay research - are the extraordinary and beautiful illustrations. Even if you remove the accompanying text, the illustrations tell the story of the history of printing and demonstrate the skill of the artists, engravers and colourists. *Rare Treasures* also celebrates the diversity of natural history publications over the past 500 years, and considers the financial and personal efforts and sacrifices required to produce many of them.

Tell us about your essays in this book.

I was invited to write five essays, four of which focused on botanical treasures. A long-time personal favourite is Michal Boym's *Flora Sinensis* - not only for the wonderful hand-coloured engravings, but also the rather charming anthropomorphic-looking animals.

The other botanical books I wrote about were Christoph Trew's impressive *Plantae Selectae* illustrated by the German-born artist Georg Ehret, Basilius Besler's enormous 1613



tome *Hortus Eystettensis* and Robert Furber's *Twelve Months of Flowers* which features 12 beautiful plates of flower arrangements for each month of the year, the first illustrated nursery catalogue ever published.

What would gardeners find interesting about this book?

Rare Treasures features many illustrations of plants that would be of interest to gardeners. Georg Ehret's plant portraits in *Trew's Plantae Selectae* include the stunning night-blooming cereus *Selenicereus grandiflorus* along with other plates that demonstrate his absolute mastery of the Linnaean style of scientific botanical illustration. In stark contrast are Robert Thornton's dramatic plant portraits that were set against symbolic and romantic backgrounds in his *Temple of Flora*.

Tell us about the prints that come with it.

A set of 40 prints of the most stunning and beautiful featured illustrations accompanies the book in a presentation case. Reproduced from the originals in the museum library and printed on high quality paper, they have been selected so that the reader can pair them up for framing if so desired.

NOVEMBER'S FRESH PICKINGS

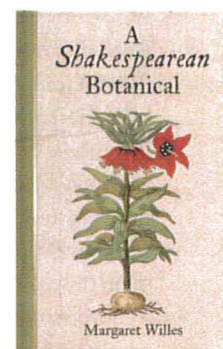
The Crafted Garden
by Louise Curley and
Jason Ingram
(Frances Lincoln, £16.99)



Divided up by season, this book has a wonderful - if occasionally wacky - range of craft ideas using treasures from the garden, all beautifully photographed by Jason Ingram. The author lists her favourite seasonal plants, alongside such suggestions as squashes used as winter vases, a summer floral fascinator of dried flowers and grasses, and a hanging garden for autumn.

A Shakespearean Botanical

by Margaret Willes
(Bodleian Library
Publishing, £12.99)



Shakespeare was a countryman whose compendious knowledge of flowers, herbs, fruit and vegetables is a feature of his plays and poetry. In this exquisite little handbook, with illustrations drawn from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Margaret Willes explores the history and symbolism of many of the plants he mentions, adding social context to provide an intriguing and original focus on daily life in Tudor and Jacobean England.

The Winter Garden
by Emma Hardy
(Cico Books, £14.99)



Author Emma Hardy has come up with more than 35 projects for foliage, flowers, berries, blooms and herbs, proving you can be just as imaginative in winter as in summer. Her often long-lasting planting schemes are for both inside and out, and use receptacles such as stone troughs, old sinks, enamel jugs and soup tureens. In the first chapter, we learn how to make a wreath from succulents and plant a decorative tabletop display of miniature conifers.

Fascinating winter lecture series

Don't miss a fascinating series of winter lectures organised by The Gardens Trust - the newly merged Association of Gardens Trusts and The Garden History Trust.

Speakers include author Margaret Willes talking about her new book *A Shakespearean Botanical* (see review above right), historian Michael Symes on 18th-century gardener Richard Owen Cambridge, and garden designer Kim Wilkie presenting his redesign of the grounds of Natural History Museum.

Lectures start at 7pm on the second Monday of each month until March at The Gallery, 70-77 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EL. Tickets cost £9 each. To buy tickets and for more information, call +44 (0)20 7839 3969 or visit gardenstrusts.org.uk





A rose by any other name... would be known to Shakespeare

By Hannah Furness
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

HE WAS master of the pithy put down, the romantic sonnet and the dramatic plot twists that have captured the public imagination for the past 450 years.

But William Shakespeare's talents did not end there. For the playwright was also an expert amateur botanist, with his deep knowledge of home-grown and exotic plants evident in his works, a gardening expert has claimed.

Shakespeare not only spent time in the fields around his Stratford-upon-Avon home, the expert said, but also shows evidence of having studied the latest botanical texts in London.

Margaret Willes, a writer who specialises in gardens, has now identified 49 of the specific flowers, vegetables, fruit and herbs used in Shakespeare's plays, pointing out the in-depth knowledge he must have had.

Saying she had been "deeply impressed" at the level of understanding

of the natural world in the plays, she argued that the frequent references to plants in the Bard's works are not "mere literary devices", but take the reader "to the very heart of social life in Elizabethan and Jacobean England".

Her new book, *A Shakespearean Botanical*, uses documents held in Oxford University's Bodleian Library to cross reference each mention of a plant in Shakespeare's plays and two poems, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, with what his contemporaries

would have known about plants.

The result will allow fans of the playwright to recreate an accurate version of what might have been in his garden at the time, should they wish to experience similar surroundings.

Willes said: "Country men of the period - and we regard him as a country man - would have been knowledgeable anyhow because they were surrounded by fields. But what I find fascinating about him is he just chooses exactly the right plant for what he's trying to say."

Examples detailed in the book include a description of "overweight, outrageous knight" Falstaff as a "gross watery pumpkin", the narcotic properties of the poppy and the knowledge that parsley would be a good accompaniment to rabbit.

"Shakespeare's mother would definitely have grown vegetables," she said. "But he spent most of his working life in London, and many of the things he's describing I think he would have seen in London rather than Stratford."

"Things like mulberries, figs, and exotic plants like that would have been grown in London by rich people."

The book was inspired by discussions about the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, after Willes suggested it might be interesting to examine what he said about flowers, fruit and vegetables.

It is based on previous academic texts about Shakespeare's knowledge of the natural world, including Canon Henry Ellacombe's seminal 1896 text *The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare*. From that, the author was

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able to scour the poet's lines to find key references to flowers, and produce a definitive dictionary to explain their importance.

Much of the information within the new book was gathered from the Bodleian Library's colour copy of *Gerard's Herball*, which Shakespeare is believed to have used.

So close is the correlation between the two that passages, including a King Lear reference to samphire being picked while "hanging off cliffs in Dover", were taken directly from information in the Elizabethan text.

"William Shakespeare may be a man of mystery in many ways, but it is clear from his works that he was familiar with a wide range of botany: flowers, herbs, fruit and vegetables," Willes writes. The book, published by the Bodleian Library, is out now.

William Shakespeare knew about the narcotic properties of poppies and that parsley complements rabbit, says the book



The Bard's garden Works that contain knowledgeable

References to fruit, vegetables, flowers and herbs

Apple

Falstaff: "I am withered like an old apple-john."
(Henry IV)

Cabbage

Evans: "Sir John; good worts."
 Falstaff: "Good worts? Good cabbage!"
(The Merry Wives of Windsor)

Camomile

Falstaff: "For

though the camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth, the

more it is wasted, the sooner it wears."
(Henry IV)

Daffodil

Perdita: "Daffodils/That come before the swallow dares, and take/The

winds of March with beauty."
(The Winter's Tale)

Fig

Soothsayer: "You shall outlive the lady whom you serve."
 Charmian: "I love long life better than figs."

(Antony and Cleopatra)

Honeysuckle

Hero: "...bid her

steal into the pleached bower/
 Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun,/ Forbid the sun to enter."
(Much Ado About Nothing)

Mandrake

Juliet: "Alack, alack, is it not like that I/ So early waking - what loathsome smells,/ And

shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth/
 That living mortals, hearing them, run mad."
(Romeo and Juliet)

Mistletoe

Tamora: "A barren detested vale you see it is;/ The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean/ Overcome with moss and

baleful mistletoe/ Here never shines the sun."
(Titus Andronicus)

Mulberry

Titania: "Be kind

and courteous to this gentleman.../
 Feed him with apricots and dewberries,/ With purple grapes, green figs, and

mulberries."
(A Midsummer Night's Dream)

Parsley

Biondello: "I knew a wench married in an afternoon as she went to the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit."
(Taming of the Shrew)



Violet

Marina: "The

purple violet and
marigolds/ Shall
as a carpet hang
upon thy tomb/
While summer
days doth last."
(Pericles)

Rhubarb

Macbeth: "What
rhubarb, cyme,
or what
purgative drug/
Would scour
these English
hence."
(Macbeth)



EVERETT/REX SHUTTERSTOCK

Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh starred in the 1993 film adaptation of Much Ado About Nothing; a play in which Shakespeare described a bower of honeysuckles