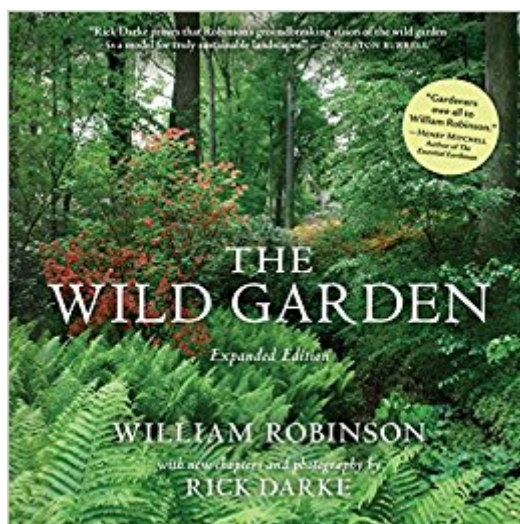


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The Wild Garden: Expanded Edition



Synopsis

First published in 1870, *The Wild Garden* challenged the prevailing garden style of the day and advocated a naturalistic style, in which hardy plants, both native and exotic, are arranged in groupings that mimic wild landscapes. Thanks to Robinson's passionate advocacy, the naturalistic style triumphed, and Robinson's urgent message continues to resonate today. For this newly designed edition, Rick Darke has written an introductory essay that not only underscores Robinson's importance in the evolution of garden design and ecology, but also explains his relevance for today's gardeners, designers, and landscape professionals. The book contains over 100 stunning photographs taken by Darke, including images of Gravetye and of modern "wild" gardens.

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Customer Reviews

I have enjoyed Rick Darke's writing and lecturing for several years because his insights always seem so well timed. He has an instinct for when a topic or plant will become important to the larger gardening community and is therefore able to deliver his own particular spin on the subject, just as the discussion gets started. This instinct is why I was looking forward to this expanded edition of *THE WILD GARDEN*. Here at Winterthur, *THE WILD GARDEN* is seen as the inspiration for our unique gardening style - the naturalized plantings, broad sweeps of color, and celebration of the pastoral landscape, for example, come right out of the pages of Robinson's writing. I have always been hesitant though, to recommend that people read *THE WILD GARDEN*. The book can be a little

dry. In my opinion, Rick has rescued it from this dryness. His writing has put the book in context and made it seem much more relevant to today's gardener. His photographs and the enlarged Alfred Parsons illustrations also help bring the concepts to life. For me this edition has been a wonderful excuse to revisit a classic. For many others, I hope it will be just the invitation they need to discover Robinson's thought provoking ideas. Chris Strand, Winterthur, Delaware

The chapters added by Rick Darke are informative, particularly as an easy interpretation of the original text. The indexing was necessary, and quite good. The bulk of the book is from the original text, and while it is informative and often detailed, in some cases it becomes a little too extensive in elaborating on plants for particular situations. The philosophy becomes quite clear - to plant hardy perennial (or reseeding) specimens in their ideal soil and site conditions, in masse, and turn them loose! The listed plants are often more suited to the British climate, and not as helpful to those residing in the Southern US, who must look outside this text for more adaptable specimens (see Michael Dirr or Alan Armitage). Hopefully Rick Darke will come out with a newer edition with much more photography; the old text is charming, but the photo examples speak loud volumes!

William Robinson's book presents a message, still important today: use plants that will take care of themselves, once they get established. American garden writer and landscape designer Rick Darke provides an introduction to the new edition. He says, "For all of us seeking creative, practical approaches to today's challenges and opportunities, William Robinson's inspired response to the same issues more than a century ago offer historical perspective and suggest current strategies." Darke traveled to Gravetye, Robinson's home south of London, to include in the book several photos from Robinson's home. The new images clearly reflect the words of Robinson as you read the book. Robinson wrote to voice his disapproval about current garden trends in England, like carpet bedding or borders with annuals that demanded intense maintenance, and at the same time created an artificial or unnatural look. He wanted a return to a garden where the plants could just grow as they wanted, with minimum pruning, no staking, and generally less demand for garden maintenance. Robinson confronts the issue of what are native plants and how exotic plants, or those brought from other cultures, may well become part of the landscape. He suggests beginning with local flora, but also makes allowance for exotics as part of the garden. The setting that Robinson describes for the wild garden, or placing plants where they will thrive, could be any place on a property's landscape, but especially where one might have woods, meadows, or near water. Plant choice in such places is important to create a more natural look as the plants mature. The plants he

lists include spring bulbs like narcissus that could blanket a wooded area before the leaves of nearby trees appear. Also, he describes shrubs, trees, and vines that would fit the wild garden concept. He suggests a meadow on the property where possible rather than mowing. In the meadow you could plant perennials, and mow as infrequently as once a year. Robinson prefers plants where a barrier might be needed rather than iron fences. In the book he lists trees and shrubs that would provide what he calls "a living fence". He likes to see the ground covered so that there is no need for weeding or raking of leaves. He writes, "Never show the naked earth; clothe it." The theme of Robinson's book seems quite relevant today. He calls the kind of planting he recommends, the wild garden or naturalizing, a term popular today. The lily of the valley is an example of a hardy plant he suggests for taking over an area. Just let it spread to create a delightful springtime look. "The Wild Garden" speaks to today's gardener who is confronted with limited use of water and yearns for less maintenance in the garden. Robinson's book would be a welcome addition to any gardener's library.

The Wild Garden by William Robinson was written and re written over a period of more than 50 years for the Victorian English gardeners as a rebellion from the changed out bedding practices of the time. Robinson used native plants and imported plants from similar climates to enhance his estate in western England. The expanded edition uses wonderful photographs to enhance the wood cut prints of the 1890's edition.

It is amazing how much gardening has not changed since William Robinson wrote this book a century ago. His concepts of garden design and plant use are still the basis of what we do today. The older books have more knowledge in them than some of the newer books with pretty pictures since they explain the "Why" of what is being done.

This is a beautiful book for those who love gardens. It provides a lovely look into different types of gardens with a very personalized touch to its informative narration. I got one for my mother, who had been taking it out from the library repeatedly. Now she is thrilled to have her own book!

It's been more than one hundred years since Robinson set his final edition of this seminal work. Darke has expertly brought into focus the language and plant terminology that has changed ever so slightly in that time--and the King's English is more focused into the American's usage.

This is not really about wild gardens. Nonetheless it was interesting to learn the history of how formal gardens of the past started to change with gardeners using indigenous plants that were pretty and perennial (considered at the time wild) instead of exotic and annual. However it is not about wildflowers

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