

## GARDEN SPOT

## Books take us on a European tour of gardens



MARTY FIGLEY

Gardens in other countries hold a certain fascination with many people. The following books will entertain and enlighten and, perhaps, the travel bug will bite as you enjoy them.

"The Impressionist Garden," Derick Fell (\$35, Carol Southern Books-Crown), is a detailed account of the Impressionists' gardens and the artists such as Monet, van Gogh and Renoir who designed and painted them.

"The artists used plants as they used paints: to manipulate color effects and to introduce new color schemes — by using hues that intensified . . . they created a shimmering sensation," Fell writes.

The book illustrates that point. Not only plants, but benches, trellises, bridges, pots, etc. were important pieces used in the gardens to add interest and comfort. More importantly, Fell demonstrates with more than 20 colorful diagrams how you can recreate these types of gardens as he has done at his farm in Pennsylvania.

From Claude Monet to Jennifer Bartlett, "Artists' Gardens," text by Madison Cox, photographs by Erica Lennard (\$49.50, Abrams), contains photographs of more than 25 private gardens created by well-known artists of the late 19th and 20th centuries, filling the book with lush beauty. Cox has caught the flavor of each artist and eloquently describes their gardens and relates personal information. Many countries and different styles of garden are represented: Henry Moore's sculpture garden in England, Isamu Noguchi's peaceful Mure in Japan, American Joan Mitchell's orderly garden in France. The colorful garden of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant in England, the electric Moroccan garden of Jacques Majorelle, with lush tropical plants and mysterious paths and water gardens. A description of the fantastic follies garden of Sandro Chia in Italy needs to be discovered in these pages.

"Monet's Giverny: An Impressionist Colony," William Gerdt (\$40, Abbeville Press), is the account of the artist colony during the 1890s at Giverny. This is the story of artists such as Theodore Wendel, Edward Breck, Lilla Cabot Perry, Wimmiam Blair Bruce and John Singer Sargent — 52 in all, who lived in the town at various times and

grew creatively. Gerdt has included a detailed description of everyday life in the colony and of the townspeople and their work. Excerpts of correspondences reveal their personal feelings and thoughts. The paintings are a significant part of the book. It is interesting to compare the sameness, yet differences in the styles of the artists.

"The Secret Gardens of France," Mirabel Osler (\$27.50, Prentice Hall), is one of a series published under the imprimature of Horticulture magazine. Osler traveled to 18 private gardens and discovered "Gardens are the one area available to each of us in which to create our own personal paradise . . ." We sense that the French accept the fact that if a plant doesn't survive in the garden there will always be others to try, as she learns the philosophy and feels the passion of each person such as Madame Vercken, who encourages children to explore her flowing garden where she propagated all the plants by cuttings or seeds; Madame Anne Simonet, whose fragrant plants are all grown in pots; Joaquim daCosta, who grows primarily vegetables at a feudal chateau and still lays out and tends his large gardens the same way it has been done for many years. And, a great garden, now derelict, where the family with the title of Coeur-de-Roy has lived since 1556.

"The Gardens of Spain," photographs by Michael George, text by Consuelo Correcher (\$60, Abrams), informs us that Spanish gardens are a spiritual experience, influenced by the Moors and many fountains and pools were constructed because water was so important to desert people. Forty beautiful private and royal gardens are captured in the exquisite photographs, while the author eloquently describes each of them. The creative use of the plants will inspire ideas and new uses, as will the patio designs.

In "Royal Gardens" (\$40, Pocket Books-Simon and Schuster), Roy

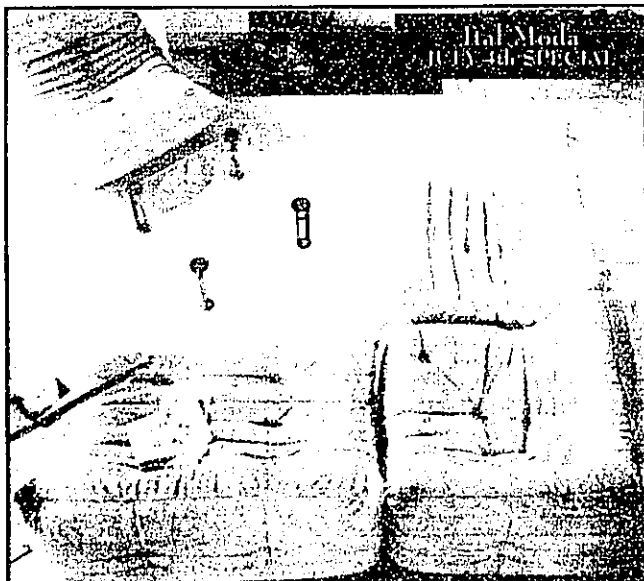
Strong traces the history of these gardens through four centuries — from Charles II's Hampton Court to Prince Charles' Highgrove of today. Strong meticulously relates the steps involved in these projects and brings the monarchs alive as we learn the reasons (political, social or personal) why they had these magnificent gardens created. Many illustrations come from the Royal Family's private archives. This is valuable information for history and garden buffs.

"Italian Gardens," Charles Platt, with an overview by Keith Morgan (\$34.95, Sagapress/Timber Press), originally published in 1894, is available again. The American Platt felt that "The first steps of one interested in the formal style of landscape architecture should be directed to Italy."

This book contains the original photos from glass plate negatives as well as 20 additional ones omitted from the first volume. In Part II, Morgan, chairman of the art history department at Boston University, reveals the person of C.A. Platt and his definite ideas and describes Platt gardens in America and how they influenced American landscape designs. Garden historians will find this worthwhile.

Although not a book about gardens, "Treasures of the Royal Horticultural Society: 350 Years of Botanical Illustration," Brent Elliott (\$39.95, Timber Press), is significant in that it contains botanical drawings and paintings produced from original works rather than from engravings. Elliott's accompanying text gives a botanical and horticultural record of each plant and information about the artists. An art exhibit of these works is to tour the United States in 1995-96 — watch for it.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1852. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.



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In the Monet: Monet's garden in France is often photographed and captured in paintings.