

gardener's book nook

Marty Figley

I enjoyed reading "The Victorian Kitchen Garden," Jennifer Davies (Norton \$11.95), and learning how walled gardens on English estates were planted and cared for in the 19th century.

The book traces in detail the steps taken to restore such a garden in England's Berkshire County, using plants, tools and techniques from that day. Walls were built to utilize the full benefit of the warmth of the sun and fruits and vegetables, herbs and flowers were planted in the best spot for that purpose. Fruit trees were espaliered against the walls and box was the preferred edge plant for paths.

There were special buildings for the many purposes required to make the garden function — storage for vegetables and fruits, glass houses to force plants to produce when the estate owner demanded and tool sheds. Even pest control is covered.

AN INGENUOUS WAY to preserve grapes for as long as three months was to pick them with a stem intact, put the stem into a bottle of water, which charcoal had been added to keep it sweet, with the bunch of grapes hanging on the outside.

Photographs and drawings are nice additions. A sense of adventure and history are all rolled up in the volume. It would be a good Father's Day selection.

"The Garden Primer," an award-winning book by Barbara Demrosch (Workman Publishing, \$16.95 paper, \$24.95 cloth) begins with the basics of good gardening such as site and tools. This is followed by chapters devoted to planting and caring for flowers, vegetables, herbs, vines, shrubs and houseplants.

A lot of valuable information for both novice and experienced gardeners is packed into the excellent book. I like the way the author uses her first-hand experience to explain the hows and whys. As Demrosch says, "The green side is always up."

The cross-indexing makes a specific subject or plant easy to find. This book will become a much-used reference guide.

AS I LOOKED at the photographs and read the text of "American Gardens," Peter Leaver (Simon and Schuster, \$35) I began to understand that finally Americans have "come into their own" in designing and maintaining gardens to suit the variety of lifestyles and different climates of the United States.

Reading "American Gardens" make you realize how much the skills, intensity and love of growing plants has meant and still means to Americans.

All the gardens featured, except one, are privately owned — from small to large. Some owners had assistance with the design; others accomplished their goals alone — truly the American way. This book will inspire all who read it to follow their own hearts and enjoy gardening in a new light, with no restrictions, only joy.

One garden featured in our zone (5) was planted by Jens Jensen. It is now restored and is simply beautiful.

IF THIS is the year to plant an herb garden, "Herb Garden Design," Faith Swanson and Virginia Rudy (University Press of New England), is the one to buy. Order from The Herb Society of America Inc. 9019 Kirtland-Charlton Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060 (\$17.25 paper, \$31.25 cloth, ppd) which sponsored the book.

Autographing books

Doron P. Levin will be at the Birmingham Bookstore at 4 p.m. Saturday to autograph copies of his book "Irreconcilable Differences: Ross Perot Versus General Motors."

Levin is Detroit bureau chief of the New York Times. Articles he

wrote about General Motors and Ross Perot for the Wall Street Journal were nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. This current book is an outgrowth of the author's earlier work for the Wall Street Journal. Birmingham Bookstore is at 263 Pierce, Birmingham.

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