

Gardening books



Although we find much information on the internet, there are times when no website will replace a good book. This is particularly true in horticulture. While there are always new hybrids and varieties of plants becoming available to home gardeners, the basic principles rarely change much. The changes usually have more to do with improving techniques than altering the fundamentals, so unlike some other subject areas, horticulture books can generally be practical for long periods.

One delightful aspect of these books is that they rely on beautiful pictures, making them a pleasure to use. This also makes

them appealing gifts –important with the upcoming holidays!

Gardening books need to meet the unique needs created by our desert environment. Books on maples or other cool weather plants will probably not have a lot of information we can readily use. There are, fortunately, quite a few titles that are attractive and directed at growing plants in our challenging climate.

The *Sunset Western Garden Book* is a virtual bible for many local gardeners. It uses 33 climate zones of the western United States, and has detailed information on hundreds of plants, many of which (not all) can work here.

Arizona author Mary Irish has written several desert gardening books. her *Month by Month Gardening* books give calendar-based guidance, and *Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants* (in collaboration with Gary Irish) is good for non-cactus landscape plants.

Some people incorrectly believe it is impossible to find plants that grow and look attractive in a xeriscape setting. Guidance is available. One picture-filled volume I have come to appreciate is *Xeriscape Plant Guide -100 water-wise plants for gardens and landscapes*. This is a joint effort of the American Water Works Association and Denver water. The book's drawback is that not all entries will work well here in the Mohave, but its detailed descriptions include the USDA climate zones for each entry, as well as pictures of the plants in all seasons.

The “unfriendliness” of local soil is a problem for many gardeners, and until recently, there was little information on soils that would be appropriate for non-specialists. *Teaming with Microbes* by Lowenfels and Lewis covers the microbial world within the soil, and how it affects plants and people. For those eager to study soil on a slightly more technical level, a *Soil Science*

Simplified by Krohnke and Franzmeier is useful. While it has only a few illustrations, it is a good introduction for people who want to learn what is underfoot.

Knowing more about controlling pests can lower the level of pesticides used in a garden. Integrated Pest Management is a system that uses all practical methods for pest control, using minimal amounts of conventional chemicals. *IPM for Gardeners* by Cloyd, Nixon, and Pataky is a guide to using biological and cultural practices to confront insects and diseases of plants.

Not everyone might think of books on soil or plant disease as a gift, but gardeners are different. There are many good books available – and the information can be so helpful in growing anything here.

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