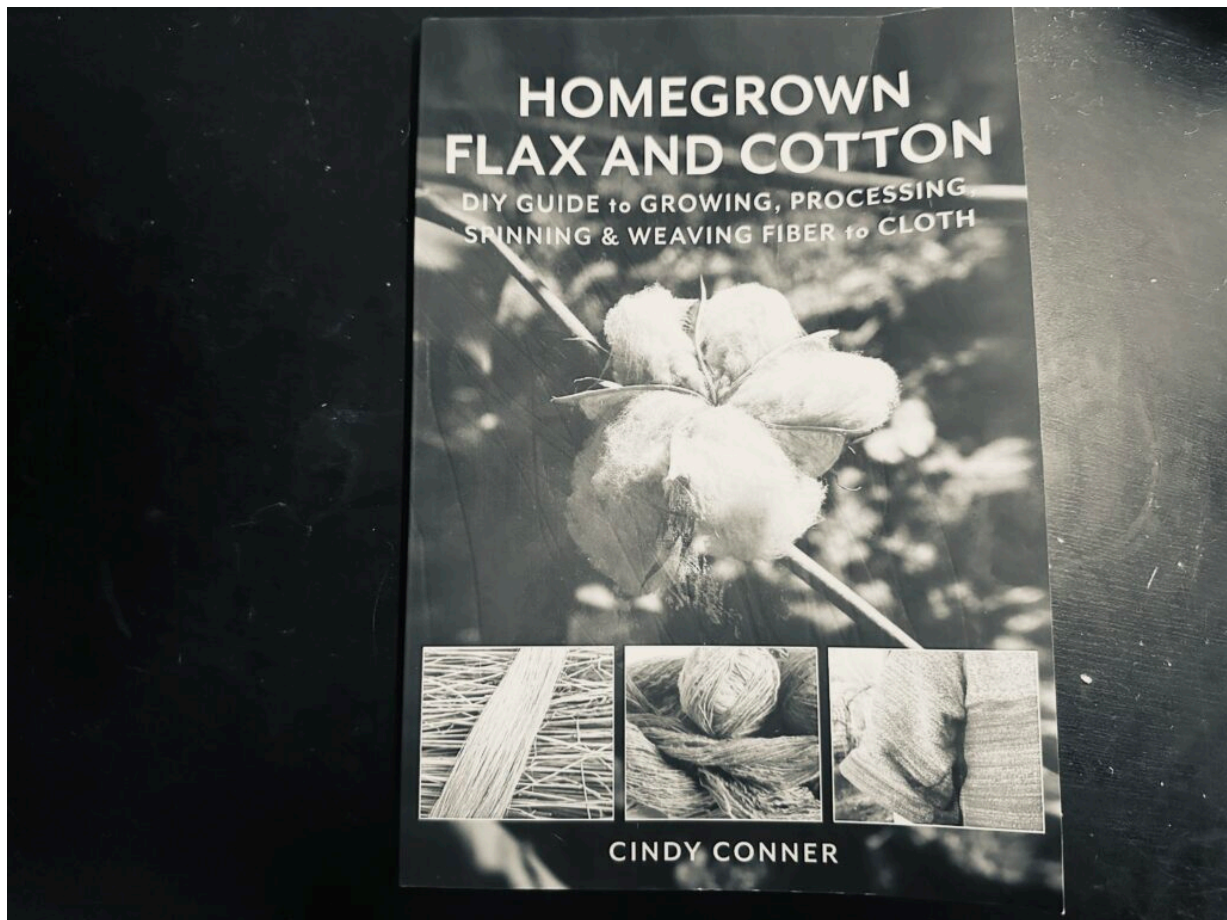


Book Review: Homegrown Flax and Cotton



Every once in a while, I get to marry multiple interests. For example, I have long loved crochet and believe in the slow yarn movement. Every now and then, I can combine that with gardening. I shared a bit of that with you when I did a book review of [A Garden to Dye For](#). Today, I'll share more with a book review of Homegrown Flax and Cotton by Cindy Conner.

What Is Slow Yarn?

[Slow yarn](#), like the slow food movement, refers to engaging in yarn crafting mindfully and sustainably. It's part of an overall sustainable lifestyle. And it celebrates doing things by hand. Crochet and knitting are already slow crafts. After all, it takes a lot longer to create a handmade sweater than

it does to just go buy one. However, you can extend that into a longer, more involved slow yarn process.

For example, in the book [Unraveling](#), author Peggy Orenstein shares her slow yarn story. She first learns how to shear a sheep, which is no easy task. After learning, she shears enough to collect wool to make a sweater. She cleans the wool. Then she learns how to spin it. After that, she learns how to dye it. Finally, she is ready to knit it into a sweater. That's an example of slow yarn.

Slow Yarn in the Garden

Wool isn't the only fiber that you can use to knit or crochet. In fact, there are many other great natural fibers that offer various benefits when crafting. Cotton is a favorite choice when making lightweight summer clothes as well as kitchen towels. Therefore, you can incorporate gardening into a slow yarn movement of your own. Cindy Conner's book "Homegrown Flax and Cotton" is all about this.

Homegrown Flax and Cotton by Cindy Conner

This book is subtitled: "DIY Guide to Growing, Processing, Spinning and Weaving Fiber to Cloth." Or, as a description of the book puts it, you learn how to go "from seed to shirt." That pretty much sums up what this book is about. It teaches us how to grow either flax or cotton in our own gardens. Then, we learn how to actually take that material from plant form into yarn form. Finally, there are tips for weaving it to create a cloth. However, once you have the spun cotton or flax yarn, you could also knit or crochet with it. As a crocheter, that would be my personal plan.

Flax vs. Cotton for Growing Your Own Fiber

The book explains that both flax and cotton are easier than you might expect to grow in your own garden. The author explains that if you live in a colder climate, then you will probably want to try growing flax. In contrast, cotton is best grown in a warmer environment. Of course, if you live in a more temperate climate, then you could choose either one (or both).

Some of the other key differences, besides temperature requirements, of flax vs. cotton include:

- Flax has a shorter growing season, smaller flowers, and is usually a physically shorter plant than the cotton plant. Cotton plants actually have really pretty flowers that turn into the cotton.
- Generally speaking, cotton requires more garden space to grow. That said, flax tends to have a lower yield than cotton. As a result, you will need to plant more in order to get the same amount of yarn.
- Flax prefers well-draining, fertile soil with a slightly acidic to neutral pH range (around 6-7). It requires regular watering, particularly during its early growth stages. Cotton, on the other hand, prefers well-drained, loamy soil with good moisture retention. It has a higher water demand than flax and requires consistent watering throughout its growing season.
- Both flax and cotton can be susceptible to certain pests. However, the pests are different for each. Flax may attract insects like aphids, thrips, and flea beetles. Cotton can be affected by pests such as bollworms, aphids, and spider mites.
- Flax is a self-pollinating plant. Cotton, on the other hand, typically requires cross-pollination by bees or other [pollinators](#) to produce a good yield of cotton

bolts.

- The harvesting and processing methods are different for each, which the book explains in greater detail.

8 Gardening Things to Learn From Homegrown Flax and Cotton

You'll have to read the book to get all of the details. In brief, though, here are eight things you'll learn about related to the gardening of cotton and flax:

1. If farm-to-table gardening and eating makes sense to you, then garden-to-garment will make sense as well. The textile industry does a lot of harm to the planet. You can help by growing your own fiber and making your own clothes.
2. In case you weren't already familiar with it, growing flax means that you'll be making clothes out of linen. Notably, you will not also be able to eat flax seeds from this plant. That's because there are two different flax plants – one that's edible and another that's for fiber.
3. For both plants, you want soil that is rich and ready to go in spring. You can use autumn leaves to cover the beds through the winter, preparing the soil for spring planting. However, if you live in an especially cold area, then you might instead plant "winter-kill" crops like forage radish, winter rye and oats.
4. You can plant flax in rows or by scattering the seeds. However, rows might make more sense as a beginner because it's tough to tell what's flax and what's weeds at first. That said you want a really dense planting so that the stalks are crowded together and don't get too wide.
5. You can get seeds for white, green, or brown cotton. The author thinks it's more fun to spin with the color, but you can choose what works for you. Make sure that you

get cotton seeds that are NOT genetically modified.

6. If you know how to plant tomatoes, then you should find it relatively easy to learn to plant cotton!
7. If you've never seen a cotton plant grow before, then you might find the whole process surprisingly exciting. It goes through interesting stages of flowering.
8. Did you know that in some states there are restrictions on planting cotton even in your own backyard garden?! If you live in a cotton-growing state, you should look into the rules before proceeding.

Read More:

- [Colorfast vs. Fugitive Dyes From Plants](#)
 - [Garden Photo Walks for Mindfulness](#)
 - [5 Fun Ways to Use Yarn in the Garden](#)
-

13 Gardening Books on My To Be Read Shelf



I love my local library. In fact, I get pleasure not just from going to the library and reading the books I get there but also from the process of looking through their catalog regularly and adding books to my “for later shelf.” There’s something satisfying about even just learning about which books are out there that I might get to read someday. So, I thought that I’d head over to my virtual bookshelf and let you know about 13 gardening books currently waiting there for me.

13 Gardening Books on My To Be Read Shelf

There are actually more than two dozen gardening books on my SFPL “For Later” shelf. However, here are the top thirteen on my list:

1. The Climate Change Garden by Sally

Morgan

Subtitled “Down to Earth Advice for Growing a Resilient Garden,” this book seems like a must-read for gardeners in our times. Soils are eroding, rainfall is unpredictable, and plants are blooming earlier or being damaged by pests.

This book provides techniques, practices, and equipment that can be used to adapt gardens to climate extremes and protect them against exotic pests and invasive weeds. It covers topics such as adapting plant selections, using season extenders, reducing a garden’s carbon footprint, and planting more of the right trees for a future climate.

The aim is to create a low-maintenance, climate-savvy garden that can withstand the effects of a changing climate.

2. To Stand and Stare by Andrew Timothy O’Brien

The subtitle of this one pretty much sums up what interests me about it: “How to Garden While Doing Next to Nothing.” Honestly, I’m a bit lazy about active things. I’m the kind of person who goes to the yoga studio primarily for the restorative yoga class. So, this book feels right up my alley.

3. The Joy of Gardening: the Everyday Zen of Mowing the Lawn by Ellen Mary

With a background in integral psychology, I am a proponent of the [benefits of mindfulness](#). I have a busy mind and I don’t always practice what I preach. However, I regularly read books that remind me to get back in touch with the slower side of life. I like books that teach me again how to “be here now.” This one looks like a must read for me.

4. Growing Joy by Maria Failla

This one’s subtitle is “The Plant Lover’s Guide to Cultivating Happiness (and Plants).” How I love the idea of growing joy! This one was written by the host of the Bloom and Grow Radio podcast. It also seems to look at the mindfulness benefits of

gardening.

5. Creating a Garden Retreat: An Artist's Guide to Planting An Outdoor Sanctuary by Virginia Johnson

Virginia Johnson shares her personal garden journey, from a small city lot to a beautiful and welcoming oasis. Her garden is wild and carefree, with hornbeams, peonies, hollyhocks, roses, and hydrangeas. Johnson explains her process with ease and clarity, bringing her ideas to life through words and illustrations. The book is organized into clear chapters about trees, flowers, seasons, and more. It sounds so inspiring!

6. The Philosophy of Gardening by Karen Caruana

This one doesn't actually have a very extensive description on the library website. In fact, all it says is, "A collection of essays about different gardening philosophies and practices, mostly from a German point of view." However, that's enough to pique my interest. I am so curious to see what is inside those pages!

7. The Regenerative Garden by Stephanie Rose

This one's subtitle helps explain what it is all about: "80 Practical Projects for Creating a Self-sustaining Garden Ecosystem."

A healthy, organic, regenerative garden is a self-sustaining ecosystem where everything works together. The goal of permaculture is to turn your garden into a functioning ecosystem that is less reliant on external resources and can sustain itself through many seasons.

The book's projects cover six living elements of the garden: soil, water, plants, climate, ethics, and community. They reduce workload, conserve water and other resources, and create a habitat for wildlife. Projects include intensive planting, living mulches, self-watering planters, rain gardens, and compost systems.

8. Native Plant Gardening for Birds, Bees & Butterflies. Northern California by George Oxford Miller

I live in Northern California so this one makes a lot of practical sense for me. Plus, I love butterflies. I like birds. And I know that bees are important. A friend of mine has a garden here that is a [Certified Wildlife Habitat](#). I imagine that this book has tips along the lines of what she incorporated in her amazing space.

9. Grow More Food by Colin McCrate

My sister is the biggest gardener in my life. She prefers only to grow edibles. So, this book, subtitled "Vegetable Gardener's Guide to Getting the Biggest Harvest Possible From a Space of Any Size," seems right up her alley.

10. No-dig Gardening: Raised Beds, Layered Gardens, and Other No-till Techniques by Bella Line

The book says that it teaches you everything you need to know in order to start and care for a kitchen garden. No-dig gardening is better for the environment, easier on your back, and can produce an abundance of vegetables, herbs, and flowers. So, it's worth reading about, right?

11. The Elegant & Edible Garden by Linda Vater

As you might notice, I'm often enticed by the title and/or subtitle of a book. The subtitle of this one is: "Design a Dream Kitchen Garden to Fit Your Personality, Desires, and Lifestyle." That just captures my imagination!

12. Striking Succulent Gardens: Plants and Plans for Designing Your Low-maintenance Landscape by Gabriel Frank

I love succulents. I'm originally from the Arizona desert, so naturally I find myself drawn to cacti and succulents of all kinds. Also, they're easier to grow than many other plants. Since I'm not really great with plants, that's best for me. I think that even if I don't learn a lot from this, I'd love just looking at the images inside!

13. Garden for the Senses by Kendra Wilson

Subtitled "How Your Garden Can Soothe Your Mind and Awaken Your Soul," this one intrigues me because of the mental health benefits of gardening and plants.

Do you read gardening books? Any that you recommend me to add to my virtual To Be Read shelf?

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Gardens, Books, and Legacies



*GARDENS,
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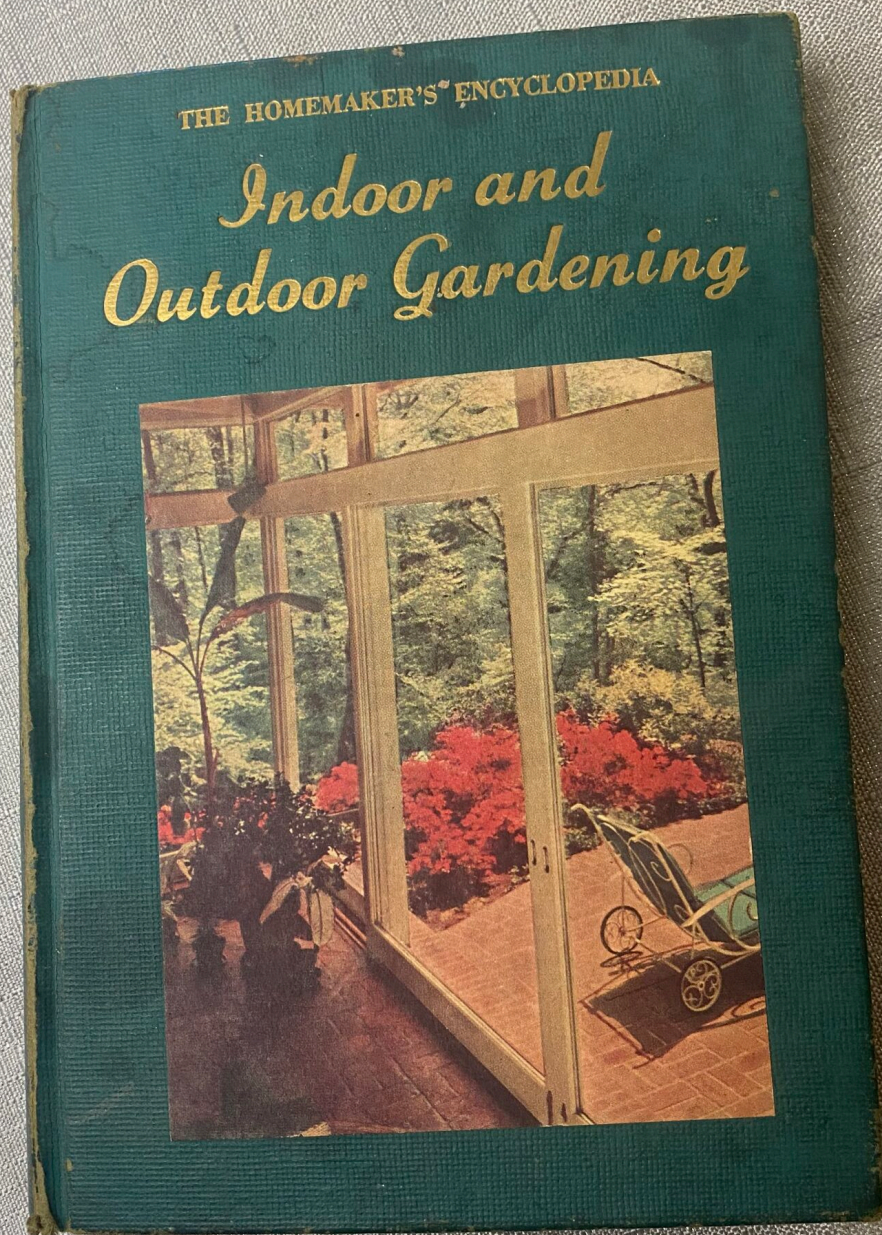
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Gardening wasn't a hobby in my mother's family. Instead, it was essential to their lives. In the 1950s and 60s in rural Arkansas, the garden was their only source of fruits and vegetables. And when they wanted something different, they bartered their oversupply with their neighbors.

As the decades passed, my grandmother's life changed dramatically. In the 1990s, the rural farming community had a grocery store, but my grandmother used it sparingly. She loved buying things like snack cakes and out-of-season fruits, but her heart still lived in the growing and cooking of food she grew.

Gardens and Books

Before the internet, my grandmother was an adventurous gardener, so she had all kinds of magazines, pamphlets, and books around her home. And they called to my bibliophile soul, y'all.



I remember spending hours upon hours looking through the books with her. Sometimes, she would plan a garden, so we would make charts and draw out maps on graphing paper.

She taught me how to use the index and cross-reference between 2 sources to check facts.

Even more important than these skills, she taught me that garden work was not all weeding, feeding, and harvesting.

It is a place where we can provide for ourselves. Food, creativity, beauty, and community intersect in the garden, and she knew it.

Gardens and Legacies

My grandmother took a lot of pride in her garden.

When I was in high school, my grandmother grew a peach tree from the pit of a fruit she bought at the grocery store.

I remember seeing the seedling pop up, then she kept it in a pot and brought it inside that first winter. The day she planted it, she had never seemed so happy. And I remember seeing the first flower and tasting that first peach.

It was delicious, but it was so much more than that. It was the culmination of 4 years of meticulous care. Instead of keeping it to herself, she cut it up and served as many of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandkids as she could.

It wasn't about the peach anyway. It was about sharing in the loving family she cared for just as meticulously as that peach tree she nurtured.

Conclusion

My grandmother has passed away, but the things she taught me while working in the garden, like patience, diligence, and compassion, live on. I am using my garden to teach these things to my children.

I still have some old gardening books that fed my passion for

reading and growing things. So I get them out and look through them now and then. I will share pictures of them below.

Staff of The Homemaker's Encyclopedia

Frances Burger, *Artist*
Nancy Daggett, *Beauty and Fashion*
Eileen Franklin, *Needlecraft*
Barbara Halton Hallam, *Food*
Marjorie Roehl Kaschewski, *Housekeeping*
Ernst Reichl, *Designer*
Dagmar Roberts, *Child Care*
Adelaide Shaw, *Etiquette*
Josephine Shaw, *Entertaining*
Marie Reid Smith, *Gardening*
W. I. Van der Poel, Jr., *Home Repair*

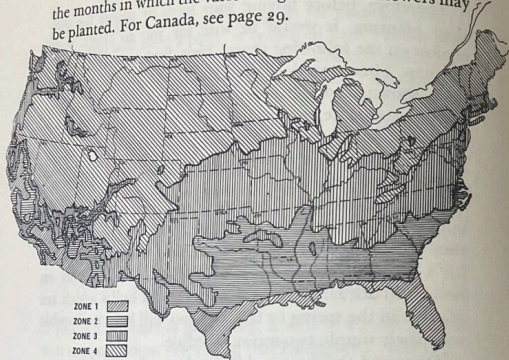
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When to plant your vegetables and flowers

Seasonal zones on this chart for 237 popular plants, compiled from the U. S. Department of Agriculture records, are based on the average date of the last killing frost in spring. To determine the approximate planting dates for your section of the country, find the zone in which you are located. Then, in the column under the zone number you will find the months in which the various vegetables and flowers may be planted. For Canada, see page 29.



CLIMATE CHART, VEGETABLES

	ZONE 1	ZONE 2	ZONE 3	ZONE 4
Artichoke	Feb.-Mar.	Mar.-May		
Asparagus	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-Apr.		
Beans	Apr.-Aug.	Apr.-June	Mar.-May	Apr.-June
Beet	Jan.-Dec.	Feb.-Oct.	Mar.-July	Apr.-July
Broccoli, Heading	July-Oct.	Feb.-Mar.	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-Apr.
Broccoli, Sprout	Feb.-June	Feb.-June	Mar.-July	Apr.-July
Brussels Sprouts	Feb.-May	Feb.-Apr.	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-Apr.
Cabbage, Spring	Jan.-Mar.	Jan.-Apr.	Mar.-May	Mar.-May

CLIMATE CHART, VEGETABLES (continued)

	ZONE 1	ZONE 2	ZONE 3	ZONE 4
Cabbage, Fall	June-Aug.	June-Aug.	Apr.-June	Apr.-June
Cardoon	Mar.-May	Mar.-May		
Carrot	Jan.-Dec.	Jan.-Mar.	Mar.-June	Apr.-June
Cauliflower, Spring	Feb.-Mar.	Feb.-Apr.	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-May
Cauliflower, Fall	May-July	June-Aug.	May-June	May-June
Celery	Mar.-June	Mar.-May	Mar.-June	Mar.-June
Chervil	Feb.-May	Feb.-Mar.	Mar.-June	Apr.-June
Chicory	Aug.-Oct.	Aug.-Sept.	Mar.-May	Apr.-June
Chinese Cabbage	Feb.-May	Feb.-May	Mar.-May	Apr.-June
Chives	Jan.-May	Mar.-June	May-July	May-July
Collards	Apr.-June	Mar.-Oct.	Apr.-July	May-Aug.
Corn	Mar.-Aug.	Mar.-July	Apr.-June	May-June
Corn Salad	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Cress	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Cucumber	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Dandelion	Feb.-Mar.	Feb.-Apr.	Mar.-May	Apr.-June
Egg Plant	July-Sept.	Aug.-Sept.	Mar.-May	May-June
Endive	Mar.-May	Mar.-May	Apr.-May	May-June
Fennel	Feb.-June	Feb.-May	Apr.-May	May-June
Kale	Mar.-June	Mar.-May	Apr.-May	Apr.-May
Kohlrabi	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-May	Apr.-May	Apr.-May
Leek	Jan.-Dec.	Aug.-May	Mar.-June	Apr.-June
Lettuce	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Melon, Musk	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Melon, Water	Feb.-May	Feb.-May	Mar.-June	May-July
Mustard	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Okra	Dec.-Mar.	Dec.-Apr.	Feb.-May	Mar.-June
Onion	Jan.-Dec.	Jan.-June	Feb.-June	Mar.-June
Parsley	Mar.-June	Feb.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Parsnip	Jan.-May	Jan.-Apr.	Feb.-May	Mar.-June
Peas	Feb.-Mar.	Feb.-Apr.	Mar.-May	Mar.-May
Pepper	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Pumpkin	Jan.-Dec.	Feb.-Oct.	Mar.-Aug.	Apr.-July
Radish	Feb.-May	Feb.-May	Mar.-May	Apr.-June
Rhubarb	Feb.-May	Mar.-May	Apr.-June	May-June
Rocket	July-Sept.	July-Sept.	July-Aug.	July-Aug.
Rutabaga	Jan.-Dec.	Feb.-Oct.	Mar.-Sept.	Apr.-Aug.
Spinach	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	Apr.-June	May-June
Squash	Mar.-Apr.	Mar.-May	Apr.-June	May-June
Sunflower	Jan.-Dec.	Feb.-Sept.	Mar.-Aug.	Apr.-July
Swiss Chard	Jan.-Dec.	Feb.-Mar.	Mar.-May	Mar.-May
Tomato	Feb.-Mar.	Jan.-Mar.	Feb.-Apr.	Mar.-May
Turnip, Spring	Aug.-Oct.	Aug.-Oct.	July-Aug.	July-Aug.
Turnip, Fall				

Read More:

[10 Best Gardening Podcasts Worth Listening To](#)

[5 Gardening Communities Where You Can Share Your Harvests](#)

[5 Affordable Indoor Plants That You Might Also Get for Free](#)

Gardening Books On My Library Want Shelf



I have a confession. One of my [favorite weird pastimes](#) is going through all of the new books available at the library and placing any that I might read on my “For Later” shelf. I

do this weekly. And I admit that there are more books on the shelves than I could ever actually read. However, I do also weekly browse my shelf and request some of the books, so I do end up reading a lot of them. Today, I thought I'd share with you some of the gardening books that are on my For Later shelf at the local library.

The Urban Garden: 101 Ways to Grow Food and Beauty in the City by Kathy Gentz

Obviously, I live in an urban area. I don't have a huge yard to garden in. However, I have a deck, windowsill pots, and access to local [community gardens](#). Therefore, I'm always interested in ideas about gardening in the city. I'm curious to see what might inspire me among the more than 100 ideas suggested in this book.

Companion Planting for Beginners: Pair your Plants for A Bountiful, Chemical-free Vegetable Garden by Brian Lowell

I love the idea of learning how to listen to nature when designing a garden. I remember during a vineyard tour learning about how they planted certain plants at the end of each row because they could see if there was any threat to the grapes by first checking out what was going on with those plants. That's always stuck with me. This book seems like an amazing expansion upon that education.

The Regenerative Garden: 80 Practical Projects for Creating a Self-sustaining Garden Ecosystem by Stephanie Rose

Is her last name really Rose? That made me smile. In any case, I love DIY stuff, and I'm really curious about this idea of "practical projects." Plus, it's important to design gardens that work with nature. I'm really into xeriscaping and not planting non-native species. So, I think I'll learn a lot from this book.

Sustainable Garden Projects, Tips and Advice for the Eco-conscious Gardener by Maryann Boswall

Here's another one that's along the same theme as the last. Whenever I see a book like this, I immediately add it to my library To Read shelf without hesitation.

Wild: The Naturalistic Garden by Noel Kingsbury

This seems to be another one similar to the two above. My library's description of it includes:

"This is the first comprehensive overview of a new planting approach that is wild and natural by nature, reflecting the global turn towards sustainability and the current zeitgeist in garden design."

It's a look at forty different gardens from this perspective. I believe that I could learn a lot from this book.

Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto by Leslie Buck

This is a book that I've actually already gotten from the library and have sitting right next to me to read soon. Memoirs are my very favorite genre. This one is about a female American gardener who went and trained in Japanese gardens.

Color in and Out of the Garden Watercolor Practices for Painters, Gardeners, and Nature Lovers by Lorene Edwards Forkner

I'm not actually a painter. However, I'm an artist (fiber and mixed media as well as writing). And I'm always inspired by creative exercises in different mediums. So, I probably won't get out the paints to work along with this book, and yet I'm certain that it will give me inspiration.

Royal Gardens of the World by Mark Lane: 21 Celebrated Gardens From the Alhambra to Highgrove and Beyond

I've never honestly thought about Royal Gardens much. However, I imagine it would be like going on a vacation in the mind to flip through the pages of this book. Therefore, it's on my list!

Help me build my wish list! What are some of your favorite gardening books?

Read More:

- [Best Garden Instagram Accounts for Inspiration](#)
 - [4 Best TV Shows for Gardeners](#)
 - [Being a Beginner in the Garden](#)
-

7 Free Gardening Ebooks You Can Download Right Now



I'm a huge fan of ebooks. I'm so into them that I actually have TWO e-readers! One for my library books and another for advanced reader copies (ARCs). Many people out there are

willing to share their gardening knowledge. These [free](#) gardening ebooks are an excellent choice for frugal gardeners, people new to gardening, and even just people who want a bit of inspiration before they get their hands dirty.

Most of these books are available for free with a Kindle Unlimited subscription. A few of them are free without one. And a few books aren't free but still under \$5!

If you're interested in creating your gardening ebooks, consider exploring a [free ebook maker](#) to share your expertise with others! It's a fantastic way to contribute to the wealth of knowledge available in the gardening community while also showcasing your passion and skills.

Read on for a brief description of each book and what you can hope to learn from reading it.

Free Gardening Ebooks

[Garden Potpourri: Gardening Tips from the Easy-Growing Gardening Series](#)

This under \$5 ebook includes a collection of tips to suit both advanced and beginner gardeners. If you're sad about the gardening season ending, this might be a nice way to remind yourself that a new season is on its way.

[Urban Homesteading: The Ultimate Homestead Guide to Becoming a City Homesteader](#)

This title is available for free with a Kindle Unlimited membership. If you've always dreamed of having your own homestead in the city, this is a good place to start.

Greenhouse Gardening: The Ultimate Step-by-Step Gardener's Manual for Beginners

This Kindle Unlimited ebook is all about how to get started with growing fruit and veg inside a [greenhouse](#). You'll get tips on how to plan your greenhouse and even how to make money growing inside your new structure.

Keyhole Gardening: An Introduction to Growing Vegetables In A Keyhole Garden

Learn about this no-dig gardening method that's perfect for small spaces. This is a great gardening method for frugal gardeners who don't want to spend a ton of resources on growing plants.

Growing Food In Winter: An Introduction To Growing Food Crops Out Of Season

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a huge nerd for winter gardening. When you live somewhere with a short growing season, it's nice to know that there are possibilities for growing beyond the summertime. This gardening ebook covers a host of subjects, including winter crops, hot bed gardening, and planting times.

Container Gardening Month by Month: A Monthly Listing of Tips and Ideas for Creating a Professional Container Garden

One of the most challenging aspects of gardening is knowing what to do when. Keeping track of what needs to get done can be overwhelming—especially if you're new to gardening. This ebook gives you monthly checklists so you can keep on task and focus on taking care of your plants.

Container Gardening for Beginners: A Guide to Growing Your Own Vegetables, Fruits, Herbs, and Edible Flowers

I love growing in containers! Pots are easy to move around, and plants are a lot more manageable when kept in containers. This book is a great choice if you're new to growing in containers and need a bit of wisdom to get you going.