

## Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

### A Rose by Any Name

Douglas Brenner and Stephen Scanniello. Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2009. 320 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$19.95.

IN THE introduction of *A Rose by Any Name: The Little-Known Lore and Deep-Rooted History of Rose Names*, Douglas Brenner and Stephen Scanniello caution that if you're hoping to "learn how to prune a large-flowered hybrid tea rose like 'Dolly Parton' or quell an infestation of aphids on a miniature rose such as 'Santa Claus,'" you'll need to look elsewhere. Instead, this book explores the intriguing histories of dozens of roses, with the authors asserting that "once you know it by name, a rose definitely isn't a rose isn't a rose."

The naming of a rose often carries with it cultural, social, economic, political, and emotional significance. For example, the book opens with the story of the 'American Beauty' rose, introduced in 1886, which became an emblem of national pride. Its popularity was such that in 1898 New York florists sold 'American Beauty' roses for \$3.75 a stem, about a dollar more than the typical daily wage of a carpenter. Thus it was also known as the "Million-Dollar Rose." People still ask florists for these antique roses today, though blooms sold as 'American Beauty' nowadays are probably imposters because these notoriously difficult-to-cultivate roses are not grown on a large scale anymore.

And as any rose breeder knows, the success of a new introduction rests not only on its flowering and growth habits, disease resistance, and other objective standards, but also on the emotional chord struck by the name. One currently ubiquitous rose originally was going to be called 'Razzeberry', until it was branded Knock Out®, a name with much more marketing power.

You can dip randomly into the book's concise chapters to discover these gems of information, but more likely you'll find yourself drawn in by the excellent writing and fascinating anecdotes and want to read it cover to cover. Even the glossary is worth a careful read. One interesting tidbit I picked up there was that roses don't technically have thorns, which are defined as a modified branch composed of the same material as the plant stem. Roses actually have prickles. Just as a rose by any name may smell as sweet, so a thorn by any name is just as sharp!

—Catriona Tudor Erler

*Catriona Tudor Erler is the author of nine gardening books, including Design Ideas for Home Landscaping (Creative Homeowner, 2007) and Poolscaping (Storey Publishing, 2003).*

### 50 High-Impact, Low-Care Garden Plants

Tracy DiSabato-Aust. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2008. 168 pages. Publisher's price, softcover: \$16.95.

FOR THOSE GARDENERS who love plants but lack the time to spend hours in the garden, this is an excellent book. Both new gardeners and those who have picked high-maintenance perennials but want to make changes can benefit from the author's emphasis on tough, low-maintenance plants that give them more time to enjoy their garden. Even those who are downsizing to smaller gardens or to containers will benefit from these plant recommendations.

The plants are listed in alphabetical order by botanical name, which may make it difficult for beginners looking for a particular plant because there is no index. The author provides a brief description, notes important details such as hardiness zones and light requirements, and includes a concise maintenance checklist that gives all the pertinent information. Each entry comes with several color photographs, both of the plant in garden settings and in close-ups.

The plants in this book are a wonderful combination of the tried-and-true and the unusual that will satisfy more experienced gardeners. For example, shredded umbrella plant (*Syneilesis aconitifolia*) and woodland peony (*Paeonia obovata*) are good, unusual choices for a shade garden. For sun, rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) and Rozanne hardy geranium are two of my favorite easy-care perennials. For those who are unfamiliar with a plant, there are companions listed to make colorful combinations. However, the suggested plants are not necessarily going to flower together in all parts of the country.

There are a few other minor glitches. An aster is listed by its old botanical name rather than its new name, *Symphotrichum*. Regionally invasive plants that are mentioned, such as *Rosa rugosa*, are not flagged, and a few widely challenging-to-grow selections such as delphiniums are suggested.

Aside from these few drawbacks, the book is well written, has delightful photographs, and presents good, solid choices of plants. The author's narrative style, filled with personal experiences, makes this book an easy read.

—Stephanie Cohen

*Stephanie Cohen, also known as the "perennial diva," is co-author of The Perennial Gardener's Design Primer (Storey Publishing, 2005) and Fallscaping (Storey Publishing, 2007).*

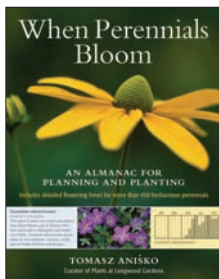
**When Perennials Bloom:  
An Almanac for Planning and Planting**

Tomasz Anisko. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2008. 510 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$59.95.

THIS IS just the type of book I wish had occupied my shelf during numerous plant identification classes I took in my landscape horticulture program. From *Acanthus* to *Yucca*, the pages are packed with season-specific bloom information and brightened by Tomasz Anisko's excellent horticultural photographs.

In this ambitious and comprehensive book, Anisko describes detailed flowering times for more than 450 herbaceous perennials. He relies on research conducted all over the world, much of it undertaken by cohorts as curious as the author to discover the answer to the question faced over and over again by professional and home gardeners alike: *When will this plant bloom?*

For those whose initial reaction is "who cares?" I found in Anisko's writing an emotionally compelling response: "Before we had calendars and before we learned to read the stars, flowers were telling us the time of the year." Flowers tell us volumes about the seasons, the weather, the geography, and even our own yearnings to enjoy color and beauty in our surroundings. That's reason enough to care.



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In the book's opening chapters, Anisko explains the seasonal development of various perennials and their response to weather conditions (temperature, light, and rainfall). He describes the basic concept of "phenology," the relationship between climate and seasonally recurring events. Phenology has its roots in the age-old agricultural ritual of keeping a calendar of flowering, fruiting, and other growing activities of one's crops. Apply these methods to perennial plant performance around the globe, in different zones and conditions, and you get the basis of *When Perennials Bloom*.

The "Encyclopedia of Perennials and Their Bloom Times" occupies the bulk of the book. For each plant entry, Anisko provides bar-graphlike bloom continuum charts. For example, *Phlox paniculata* 'David' produces its first flowers the second week of June; it peaks during the first three weeks of August; and continues blooming until the first week of October. At a glance, I can compare this cycle to other phlox cultivars, which helps me plan continuity of bloom in a border or bed.

At the back of the book, a chronologically organized graph sprawling over seven pages charts the bloom span of more than 450 different perennials, from April's first-to-flower perennial (*Petasites japonicus* 'Purpureus') to December's last-to-flower specimen (*Chrysanthemum pacificum*) and everything else in between. A year in flowers, indeed.

—Debra Prinzing

Debra Prinzing's most recent book is *Stylish Sheds and Elegant Hideaways* (Clarkson Potter/Publishers, 2008).

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## Regional Gardening Books

GENERAL GARDENING books that can apply to a wide swath of climates and include a broad plant palette have their uses, but sometimes the best resource for gardening in your corner of the country is a regionally oriented book. Such a book often gets more in-depth on the particulars of your climate, soil, and pests, in addition to focusing on plants that are known to thrive in your area. Here are some recently published examples.

Anyone who gardens along the Eastern Seaboard from Maine to South Carolina will appreciate *Oh Garden of Fresh Possibilities!* (David R. Godine, 2009, \$35). This book is filled with design ideas and plants that work well in this coastal region, as author and garden designer Kim Smith relates her experiences with her quarter-acre garden in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The first part of the book, “Creating the Framework,” delves into trees, shrubs, and other elements for creating structure in the garden, while the second section addresses how to fill out the framework to create a harmonious living tapestry in your garden.

While many of the concepts in *Rain Gardening in the South* (Eno Publishers, 2009, \$19.95) have universal applications, authors Helen Kraus and Anne Spafford wrote the book with the southeastern section of the United States from Virginia to Alabama in mind—hence, the regionally specific plant recommendations and soil preparation instructions. The authors define a rain garden as one that is “designed to capture rainfall flowing through your yard (known as runoff), store that water to nurture its plants, and cleanse runoff, thus removing the pollutants it carries with it.” Chapters cover the basics of designing, building, planting, and troubleshooting a rain garden, supplemented with color photographs, diagrams, and charts throughout the book.

*Durable Plants for the Garden* (Fulcrum Publishing, 2009, \$24.95) is a “documentary publication featuring the first seventy-four plants promoted by Plant Select” since the program began introducing plants in 1997. A collaborative effort between Denver Botanic Gardens, Colorado State Uni-

versity, and green industry partners, this program focuses on promoting exceptional plants for the High Plains and intermountain region. Anyone who gardens in this area of the country will appreciate having at their fingertips this list of tough but beautiful plants that will thrive despite low rainfall, alkaline soils, strong winds, little winter snow cover, and other challenges that often make short work of lesser plants. Each entry includes brief notes about why it makes the cut, its characteristics and landscape uses, preferred cultural conditions, native range, and a list of its best features—all accompanied by color photographs and illustrations.

For gardeners in western Oregon and Washington, British Columbia, and northern California, there’s *Gardening in the Pacific Northwest* (Timber Press, 2008, \$29.95) by Carol W. Hall and Norman E. Hall. This comprehensive volume begins with a detailed discussion of the region’s climatic and geographic characteristics, which serves to familiarize gardeners with the conditions they will be facing. The next section is a month-by-month calendar of what to expect and do in the garden. Much of the remainder of the book is dedicated to profiles of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bulbs, and other plants the authors are partial to. In addition to being “as beautiful to look at as they are beautifully adapted” to the region, most of these plants are well-behaved and not difficult to find or grow. The book’s final chapters focus on how to handle common pests and other garden problems such as deer, drought, and weeds.

*The Hot Garden* (Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2009, \$40) by award-winning author Scott Calhoun, focuses on the “plants, rocks, colors, and watering methods that bring the grandeur and intricacy of the wild Southwestern landscape into home gardens.” Just to be clear about the territory addressed in the book, Calhoun notes that it is where the mulch of choice is gravel, which “happens to lie mostly within the boundaries of the three hottest American deserts: the Chihuahuan, the Mojave, and the Sonoran.” Calhoun’s vibrant photographs nearly steal the show, but his engaging text and willingness to share his horticultural experience help readers get their “desert eyes” on so they can better appreciate this region’s unique beauty and learn to incorporate some of it in their gardens.

Viveka Neveln, Associate Editor

