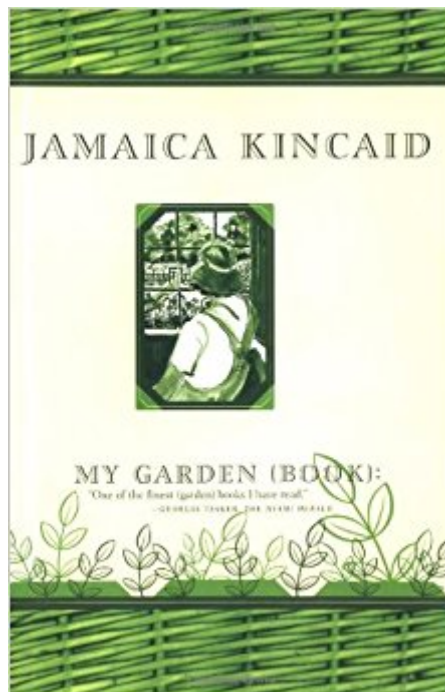


The book was found

My Garden (Book)



Synopsis

One of our finest writers on one of her greatest loves. Jamaica Kincaid's first garden in Vermont was a plot in the middle of her front lawn. There, to the consternation of more experienced friends, she planted only seeds of the flowers she liked best. In *My Garden* (Book): she gathers all she loves about gardening and plants, and examines it generously, passionately, and with sharp, idiosyncratic discrimination. Kincaid's affections are matched in intensity only by her dislikes. She loves spring and summer but cannot bring herself to love winter, for it hides the garden. She adores the rhododendron Jane Grant, and appreciates ordinary Blue Lake string beans, but abhors the Asiatic lily. The sources of her inspiration -- seed catalogues, the gardener Gertrude Jekyll, gardens like Monet's at Giverny -- are subjected to intense scrutiny. She also examines the idea of the garden on Antigua, where she grew up. *My Garden* (Book): is an intimate, playful, and penetrating book on gardens, the plants that fill them, and the persons who tend them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind's eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know and even now do not know." Celebrated novelist Kincaid (*The Autobiography of My Mother*) should delight fans of her fiction and connoisseurs of the literature of horticulture with this personable and brightly descriptive, if somewhat rambling, book-length essay, most of it about her own garden in Vermont. Kincaid (who last year edited the anthology *My Favorite Plant*) shuttles constantly and with ease between the practical, technical difficulties of gardening and the larger meanings it makes available. She asks herself why her new weeping wisterias won't look right on

her stone terrace; why her *Carpinus betulus Pendula* looks so lonely amid poppies and "late-blooming monkshood"; what's wrong with roses, and what's good about Blue Lake green beans; and how to stack up stones. But she also coaxes from her plot of earth more philosophical and psychological questions--inquiries about geography, heritage, marriage, motherhood, power; "how to make a house a home"; whether and for whom "to name is to possess." Kincaid's Antiguan upbringing recurs as a point of comparison, a source of political insights and a focus of nostalgia: "it dawned on me that the garden I was making... resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it." A botany-centered trip to Kunming, China, gives the last chapter a welcome change of scene. Kincaid, her publisher and their designers have made of her meditations a remarkably attractive physical object, suffused outside and in by shades of green and decorated throughout with illustrations by Jill Fox. (Dec.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kincaid blends a fertile inner life, botanical and colonial history, gardening lore, and her long gardening experience to create a rich, rewarding read. She contrasts the colonial specimen plants of the botanical garden of St. John's, in her native Antigua, with the wild, unruly garden she's created at her current home in Vermont. This garden, says Kincaid, reflects her passions and interests. "When it dawned on me that the garden I was making... resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it... I only marveled at the way a garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of getting to a past that is my own." Kincaid is a hopeful, imaginative gardener who lazily pages through catalogs during the long Vermont winters and plans trips to China, Giverny, and Sissinghurst to further feed her passion for plants. "I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind's eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know. And this must be why: the garden for me is so bound up with words about the garden, with words themselves, that any set idea of the garden, any set picture, is a provocation to me." Is her ideal possible? "I shall never have the garden I have in my mind but that for me is the joy of it; certain things can never be realized so all the more reason to attempt them." Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I was sitting in a tire repair shop awaiting bad news and reading Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden* to while away the time. Suddenly, the young technician approached to tell me that things were not so bad after all - and better yet, he informed me that I was reading a GREAT book! Who would have thought to receive a recommendation on a gardening book from a kid with axle grease on his

hands! He went on to explain that his teacher had assigned the book in his writing class at the local college, and he found it enchanting. (That wasn't his choice of words, but you get the drift.) And indeed, it was an enchanting read. From her poetic mastery of the English language, to her transplanted Caribbean viewpoint, Kincaid writes from a different place - and don't we read at least partly to hear a different voice? Touching softly upon some very strong political sensibilities, Kincaid makes you think about earth's garden of souls as well as plants.

Good service! But don't like the book

one of Kincaid's best

Don't be fooled by this title. This is not a garden book but rather a book about self indulgence and showing off the knowledge of Latin names for plants and trees. Anybody who complains about a nest of young robins chirping at 5:30 in the morning (I should be so fortunate to have such an alarm clock), who nearly drowns a raccoon in a Have A Heart trap, and fantasizes about snapping the necks of bunnies in her yard should not live in Vermont nevermind claim to be a gardener. Ms. Kincaid loves her garden in full bloom and color as we all do but with her () eye for beauty, fails to see it in her garden the rest of the year. If you want to read a satisfying garden book, I suggest the following; "Onward and Upward in the Garden" by Kathrine S. White, "Thoreau's Garden" by Peter Loewer or "Faith in a Seed" by Thoreau himself. Or better yet, read a seed catalogue, the writing will be better and you'll get the Latin names to boot with out the pretentiousness. But if you insist on reading "My Garden (Book)", wait a few weeks. It will be in the bargain bin soon enough. After reading Ms. Kincaid's book, I would never read anything by her again.

What a strange book this is. What a strange person this is, who has written this book. What a strange presentation of herself this is, by the person who has written this book. Latin name, Latin name, Latin name, anger, annoyance, complaints!!!

I must confess to having never read any of Ms. Kincaid's earlier work, but having enjoyed this book as much as I did, I will certainly seek out her other writings. This book is an open, descriptive peek into the pleasures and peeves of gardening, and into Ms. Kincaid's own idiosyncratic - alternately heartwarming and annoying - view of herself, her family, her friends and acquaintances, and history. It takes the "garden as metaphor for life" theme into entirely new and thought-provoking

directions. Her style (writing as the novice Kincaid reader that I am) was unusual - very conversational, sometimes rambling and disjointed - and took some getting used to. But once I got into the essays, I found it entirely engaging. She delivers an honest appraisal of her strengths and her weaknesses, as a gardener and as a person. Her enemies (insect, animal and human) became my enemies, her heroes became my heroes (I've registered for a symposium featuring Dan of Heronswood Gardens already!), and her ideas never failed to generate my own questions and (sometimes) answers. I highly recommend this book, as an adjunct to the winter plant catalogues and "how-to" books into which we addicted gardeners usually immerse ourselves during the "off" season. No great font of gardening information (by her own admission, she usually breaks the mold, if not the rules), it will not fail to inspire your own efforts come spring.

How did anyone ever pick up this pseudo-writing publication? This stream-of-consciousness, enormously tedious writing is an insult to anyone who has ever attempted to write, to all gardeners, and to all hired help. Professor at Harvard in English? So much for Harvard. Perhaps she teaches better than she writes. Why so angry about it? Because of the insult to anyone who has ever attempted to write, to all gardeners who actually do the work themselves, and to all hired help.

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