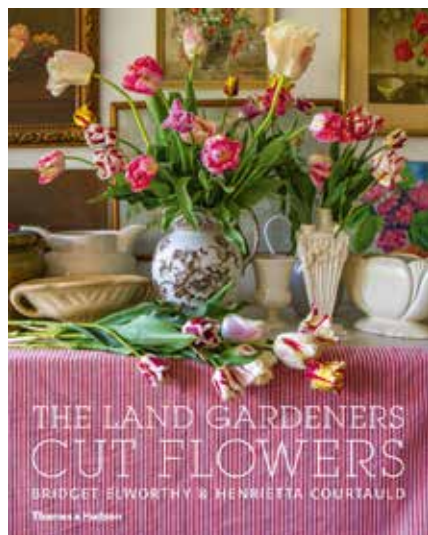


The Reviewer

A selection of the best writing on the shelves this month



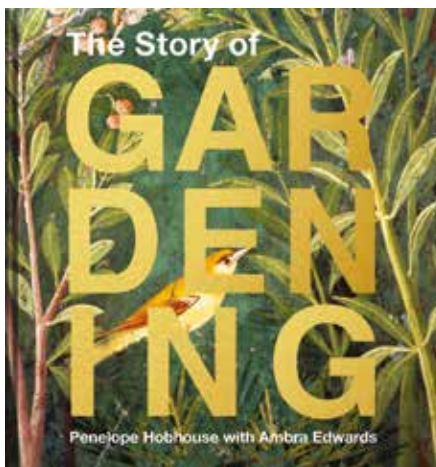
The Land Gardeners Cut Flowers

by Bridget Elworthy and
Henrietta Courtauld
Thames & Hudson, £39.95

It is difficult not to love abundant country house gardens and fulsome floral arrangements. Throw in a potting shed, cut-flower room and a dose of Constance Spry and Willow Pattern and you soon have a coffee-table centrepiece.

This would be the case with the latest offering from growers Bridget Elworthy and Henrietta Courtauld, who supply floral designers Shane Connolly and Vic Brotherson. However, their interest is also intensely focused on gardening organically. What could be a light read in fact bears satisfying detail enhanced by image after beautiful image from Clive Nichols, Andrew Montgomery, Hugo Rittson-Thomas and others.

The history of the gardens at Wardington Manor is outlined here, from the days when it supplied the likes of Mayfair florists Pulbrook & Gould, taking in the life of the cutting gardens across the seasons. There are pointers on making a cut-flower garden (covering compost, green manures and tools) while dedicated gardeners may wish to study the Walled Garden plans. Others may favour the plates of favourite flower varieties arranged by type and colour.



The Story of Gardening

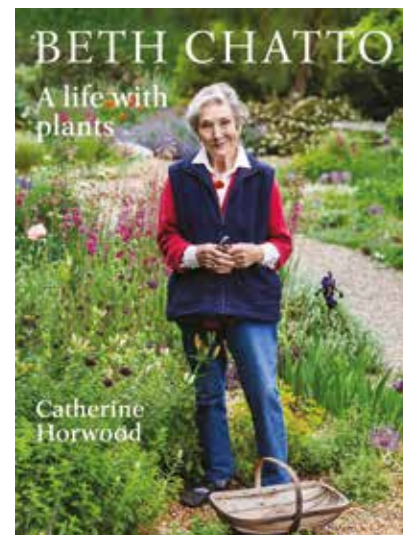
by Penelope Hobhouse
with Ambra Edwards
Pavilion Books, £35

To garden is to be part of a tradition extending as far back as humans have settled in one place. And it links a community of similarly minded people around the world. With our herbaceous borders and parterres, our perennial waves and dry gardens, we take on bit parts in a performance larger than it is possible to imagine.

Such are the themes that emerge in *The Story of Gardening*. First published in 2002, it has been updated by Penelope Hobhouse and Ambra Edwards, with the support of Koos Bekker, owner of The Newt in Somerset, which was formerly Hadspen House.

Hobhouse is a consummate garden historian who has earned her place in the gardening firmament. The pairing with Edwards has brought a contemporary finish to this important work, which now includes such matters as the New Perennial Movement, sustainability, greening and ecology, and repurposing brownfield sites.

There is fascinating detail throughout and as a reference work *The Story of Gardening* has few rivals. It deservedly claims its position on the bookshelf.



Beth Chatto - A Life with Plants

by Catherine Horwood
Pimpernel Press, £30

How does one begin to put into writing a long life well lived? We remember Beth Chatto for inspiring the 'right plant, right place' ethos but like all great figures, her life and work were multifaceted.

She began as Betty Little, the bright daughter of an Essex policeman, who trained as a teacher. During the war she met and later married Andrew Chatto, scion of the publishing firm. There were children and grandchildren and a decades-long affair that exacted a toll on her 56-year marriage, and throughout were medicated spells of depression. Yet she was above all a gardener and it was gardening for which she was famed. It brought her into contact with the likes of Elizabeth David and George Harrison, as well as her great pals Christopher Lloyd and Cedric Morris.

All this is deftly related by social historian Catherine Horwood, who was already working on this authorised biography when Beth died in May 2018. As much as it is a record of the life of a prominent gardening figure, this is also a compelling and rewarding read, enhanced by Catherine's talents for research and telling a good story.

Q&A

Painter Rosie Sanders studies the beautiful forms of garden roses in their different stages of life in *Roses*, a new release that follows the success of *The Apple Book*



How did this book come about?

I was going to have an exhibition with Jonathan Cooper and I wanted to do something new. We had fantastic summers in 2017 and 2018 and the roses were stunning, but as I wandered around the garden, I realised I loved them as they were fading and about to drop. I thought I would make that the focus of my exhibition. The book itself grew from the success of my previous book, *The Apple Book*. There was a proposal to reissue that, but I asked my publishers if they were interested in a book about roses instead.

What are the more difficult aspects of your work?

Finding the subject, which takes time. Once I've found it, it's simply a question of labour. On average, each rose took a week to complete. I start in the morning, then take the dogs out in the afternoon and carry on in the evening. How long it takes also depends on the subject: an agapanthus is more complicated to paint than a rose, for example.

Would you call yourself a botanical artist?

No. I paint flowers before they're flowers: I paint shapes and forms that happen to be floral.

Technically, the subject could almost be anything because it's the light, shape and texture that appeals to me most. I'm not interested in botany but if something catches my eye, I'll paint it. I do like plants and natural things but I'm always thinking about the next thing. I couldn't imagine going up the Amazon because I'm not a botanist in that way.

How do you work with your subject?

I always paint from life, so I begin with what I've seen. The roses were in the garden and I'd see them all the time: sometimes there was nothing to paint, but at other times I couldn't get them into the house before they'd dropped, so I'd make a quick sketch while I was out there. Because I work from life, I scale up the painting with a pair of dividers and sketch it out where I want it. Then I just paint: I start somewhere and carry on. I look at the painting as a flat surface and relate everything to what's next to it, as if it's a kind of mosaic of shape and colour. I don't draw it all out terribly carefully beforehand – I have an idea, but it is not set in stone.

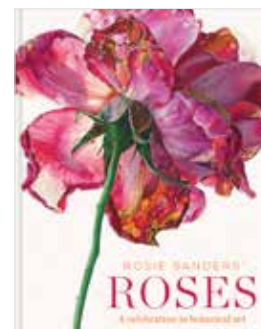
What is the most important aspect of painting for you?

Shape, especially negative shape, is very important. I have lovely dahlias in the garden, but they are rather round. I do cheat sometimes and make the shapes do something they aren't doing on their own... it is more creative that way. Colour, too: I like a good contrast, and tone variations excite me.

What has kept you painting?

Things have happened by coincidence rather than by design in my life. That's how it's always been. Life has directed me rather than me directing it, but I've been extremely lucky in that I've painted and earned my own living from painting. You've got to feel excited about doing something otherwise it's not really worth doing. Painting takes an awful lot of time and you have to feel excited to sustain the days and days you spend sitting there doing it. ■

See Rosie's exhibition *By Any Other Name*, which runs from 26 September to 12 October at Jonathan Cooper. Tel: 020 7351 0410; jonathancooper.co.uk



Roses
by Rosie Sanders,
Batsford, £30