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Island Garden



Synopsis

In her last year of life, Celia published this work, in which she lovingly describes her Appledore garden and its flowers.

Book Information

Hardcover

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (30 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This is a delightful book that should appeal to anyone with a passion for gardening. Written in 1893, the year before her death, Celia Thaxter takes the reader on a descriptive journey through every phase of tending her beloved garden on Appledore Island. Situated among the Isles of Shoals, Appledore Island is located some ten miles off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Although portions of her life were spent on the mainland, Celia's emotions were as deeply rooted in this rocky island as were the roots of her plants. She describes the entire process of her gardening techniques, from the indoor winter planting of seeds on the mainland; to the spring planting of seedlings on the island; and, finally, to the summer fruits of her labor--the colorful, lush blossoms. She omits nothing, and several pages dwell on the problems created by her garden "enemies." Her methods for ridding her garden of slugs and insects, or for keeping seed-eating birds at bay, are quite resourceful. Would that she were alive today, she might delight at the variety of insecticides, pesticides and garden remedies available to the modern gardener. This book is beautifully illustrated by American Impressionist artist Childe Hassam, whose paintings so aptly match the author's written descriptions. While he paints with oils, she paints with words. All the colors and fragrances come to life for the reader and one gets the feeling that she bestowed human-like qualities to each and every plant. Her garden, completely restored in 1977, is still in existence today and is on display throughout the summer months. This book might inspire any avid gardener to embark on a memorable journey across the sea to view this spectacular garden--a trip that I intend to make soon.

Reading *An Island Garden* by Celia Thaxter has become a yearly ritual for me, to inspire and prepare me for yet another hopeful year of gardening. Ms. Thaxter's intimacy with the pleasures and plagues of each variety of perennial, biennial or annual she grows (mostly of the old-fashioned varieties) is astounding. This book has become a guidebook for me in replicating an old-fashioned "grandmother's" garden. Her poetic descriptions of her "flower children" and fervor in protecting them is both endearing and amusing. At times, it seems as though she is joking when she describes the lengths at which she'll go to ward off the pests which threaten her Island garden. Reading *An Island Garden* will bring you back to the gentle times of the Victorian Era and is especially perfect seaside or verandah reading. This is definitely for people who love their gardens and consider them as human as a member of the family!

Sorry folks, Tasha Tudor didn't write the introduction to this fine book. Allen Lacey wrote it. That doesn't detract from the book, but it does correct the listing above. The illustrations are photoengravings of the original stone lithographs. Stone lithographs (chromolithographs) can take up to 30 stones to reproduce the color of the original. Chromolithographs, like wood engravings, are an original art form in and of themselves. They are, naturally, the size of the book itself, and not meant to substitute for the original paintings. This is an exquisite little book, issued in a slip case, and makes a nice gift for those interested in the aesthetics of gardening.

In the closing years of the Nineteenth Century, Celia Thaxter (1835-94) lived on Appledore, one of the Isles of Shoal off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Contemplating the lovely garden that she had created there, she decided to write down her thoughts and share them with us. Taking the form of a yearlong calendar, she walks us through her experiences in her garden, as she tends it and protects it throughout the year. This is an absolutely wonderful book! Celia obviously loved her garden and all of the green growing things around her. This love shines through the narrative, such as when she wrote, "He who is born with a silver spoon in his mouth is generally considered a fortunate person, but his good fortune is small compared to that of the happy mortal who enters this world with a passion for flowers in his soul." As I said before, this book covers a year in the life of Celia's garden, but is not written as a simple chronology. Instead, the book covers Celia's work and her thoughts, moving from advice to poetry with a wonderful casualness. The boxed edition of this book is handsomely decorated, with Childe Hassam's illustrations setting just the perfect tone for it. This book makes a wonderful gift for the gardener in your life, and I can't recommend it enough!

I love how she explains things as she writes, talking to her flowers, describing each little flower's personality. I especially love how she describes the ocean waves as they break on the shore. It is like you are there with her and living every little detail. Fascinating book, I read it over many times because I just want to "live" there in my dreams.

For gardeners or anyone who loves a garden. Classic life style comes through loud and clear...edifying in itself, but information about specific techniques and flowers is invaluable as well as encouraging in its simplicity. My neighbor and I read it aloud in her two and a half acre garden...hiding from the world...like a vacation! A fun read. It's a keeper.

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