How to GROW a GARDEN



MAGIC CAT PUBLISHING



To Horatio and Sacha, my two wonderful nephews,
who helped me turn a book into an adventure—F.T.

For my niece Ava, who I hope will enjoy
pointing at everything—C.A.



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INTRODUCTION

The natural world is a magnificent, magical place.

We often look without really seeing the incredible sights that greet our eyes. If aliens landed on this planet they would think they had found the most beautiful place in the universe. And yet it's so easy to miss what surrounds us.

Each page of this book has a different type of garden to explore, from places filled with flowers, to deep, dark woodlands, secretive hedgerows, vegetable patches, silvery streams and even hot, humid glasshouses.

As you move through each garden, discover which plants are perfectly adapted to grow and survive in the different conditions you find there – from hot to cold, and wet to dry, there really is a plant for every place.

Turn the pages and you will see that within these gardens is a whole other world, where species live and work together – and suddenly the magic of the world becomes more and more clear. At the end of each chapter you will find activities to help you grow, harvest and care for some of these plants in your own garden.

So, let's begin our mysterious journey of unpicking what you see and making sense of nature.

Because the more you understand it,
the more magical it is.
Trust me.



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FLOWERS & HERBS

Here is a place filled with shrubs and flower beds.
These spaces bring together beautiful colours,
scents and sounds – all for you to enjoy!

Most of the flowers in this section are 'hardy ornamentals'. As a general rule, if the plants are growing outside but not in a woodland, or in other forgotten areas, then they will be hardy ornamentals.

'Hardy' means that a plant can withstand very cold temperatures, while 'ornamental' means that they are attractive to look at. (In our opinion this is a bit silly to say, as many plants, like vegetables, are just as beautiful.)

Let's go and discover some together!



FLOWER GARDEN

This is a world filled with flowers in the summer...

But by winter, they will all be gone. The flowers come in all kinds of colours and sizes. Some are tall, others are tiny and hug the ground. They grow in flower beds, which are sometimes called 'herbaceous borders'.

In winter, some of the stems stay upright and are covered in *seeds* the birds can eat.

HOLLYHOCKS

SISYRINCHIUM

CROCOSMIA

DELPHINIUM

Herbaceous plants are *green* and *soft*, and die back each year when the weather turns cold, to regrow in spring.

Leave all these plants here through the winter to help caterpillars, beetles, worms, flies, spiders and slow-worms, who live in the soil and *dead plant material* on the floor.

Irises have a little flap that knocks *pollen* off a bee's back as it climbs into the flower, fertilizing it. The bee climbs back out, covered in the plant's own pollen, and carries it to the next flower.

RUDBECKIA

It's easy for *weeds* to hide and grow here! But we don't mind them too much – everything is welcome in our garden.

IRIS

Some of the flowers here, like delphiniums and hollyhocks, are *big* and *tall* so that the bees can see them from a long way off.

HERB GARDEN

In our Mediterranean herb garden, water is scarce.

Plants here are baked by sunlight and the soil is full of rocks, so even if rain does fall, the water quickly soaks away. In this bright, light landscape, you can see for miles, so plants produce colourful flowers that the bees can see from far off.

EUCALYPTUS

Many of the plants here have *medicinal properties.*

Lavender makes us feel *calm.*

Rosemary improves our *memory.*

HYSSOP

Hyssop helps fight off *coughs* and colds.

LAVENDER

ROSEMARY

TEA TREE

These plants often grow furry, or small, *waxy* leaves that help them hold on to the small amount of moisture that's here.

Some *insects* even use these plants to make themselves feel better!

THYME

OLIVE TREE

The warm air is filled with the thick *scent* of herbs and the sound of buzzing insects.

WHITE HOREHOUND

Many of these plants have developed strong-smelling leaves that are delicious to us, but put *animals* off eating them.

DITTANY

PINE

VERBASCUM

APPLE MINT

Biomes are regions with similar climates that support similar plants and animals. The Mediterranean biome includes the Mediterranean Basin, California, central Chile, southern Australia and parts of South Africa.

ROCK GARDEN

Here, plants cling to the edges of rocks and clamber over stones.

The plants have specially adapted suckers and pads to climb up vertical rocks, rubble and boulders, but their roots have little space while the light is bright and strong, so nothing grows too tall.

VIRGINIA CREEPER

ROSEMARY

IVY

BLUE STAR JUNIPER

MOUNTAIN PINE

DELOSPERMA

SEA THRIFT

DIANTHUS

These plants have small but *strong root systems* that cling to tiny soil patches, but stay strong in high winds.

FLEABANE

THYME

HYDRANGEA

SPEEDWELL

PASQUE FLOWER

CLIMBING HYDRANGEA

LITHODORA

LILACBUSH

In the nooks and crannies between the rocks, all kinds of *creatures* hide away from predators.

Plants grow *short* and *stocky* here, so the wind doesn't rock them out from the shallow soil.

SEA LAVENDER

BALKAN ANEMONE

PHLOX

SPRING

Plant for Pollinators: Sow a Sunflower Seed

Fill a pot with compost, wet it, then make a hole in the centre with your finger. Put a sunflower seed into the hole, cover it over with compost and firm it down with your fingers.



Keep your pot warm and slightly damp until the first shoots poke through the compost.

Once the weather really warms up, slowly get your plant used to being outside by putting it out during the day for one week and bringing it in at night. Then, plant it in the garden and wait for the bees to buzz by!

SUMMER

Healing Herbs: Grow Mint

Fill a little pot with compost and water it so it's damp. Then, make a hole in the compost.

Cut a sprig of healthy growth off some mint. Snip the bottom of your stem just below a set of leaves. Then, remove all the leaves and any flower buds, leaving only the top set of leaves. Put this stem into the hole in the compost and firm all the compost around it so it's gently touching the stem.

Keep it on the windowsill, and water it when it dries out. In a couple of months, roots will appear at the bottom of the pot.



You can pick some mint leaves and pour hot water over them to make a healthy mint tea.

AUTUMN

Plant Daffodils for the Spring

Go to the garden centre and buy some daffodil bulbs. They look brown and papery with a pointy top and a rooty, flat bottom.



Dig a hole that's three times the length of the bulb. Place the bulb into the hole with the rooty end down. Bury it in the ground and smooth over all the soil so you can't even see where it is. It'll be a lovely surprise when it grows and flowers in February or March!

If you don't have a garden, you can plant bulbs into pots in exactly the same way, just make sure you keep them outside as they don't like to be stuck indoors.

WINTER

Welcome the Wildlife

Don't cut everything back and make your garden too neat. Winter is a perfect excuse to be messy!

Brown stalks, mushy stems and leaves on the ground provide all kinds of places for small animals and creepy crawlies to hide – and all kinds of foods for birds and little creatures to eat when it's cold.

Wrap up warm and try sitting very still and see if you can spot any creatures.





TREES

Trees are some of the biggest things to have ever lived on Earth – bigger even than dinosaurs!

Trees can be ancient, too. The Fortingall Yew in Scotland is one of the oldest living things in the world. Some experts think it could be 5,000 years old! Just think of what it has lived through... centuries passing, battles raging, villages and towns springing up across the countryside and crumbling back to the ground again.

It is quite mystifying.

