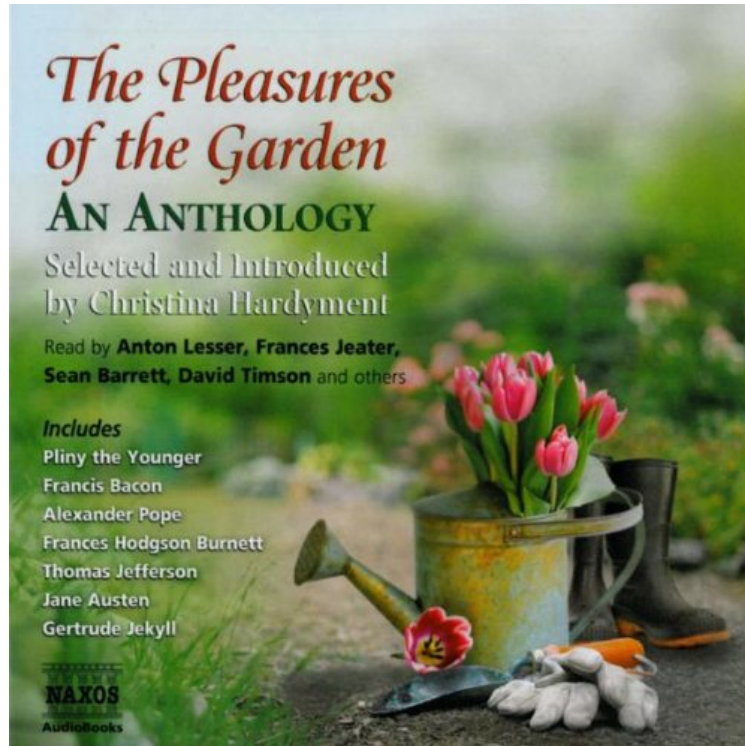


The Pleasures of the Garden

Christina Hardyment

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Christina Hardyment : The Pleasures of the Garden before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pleasures of the Garden:

This anthology begins with Homers account of Alcinous garden and ends with contrary little Mary Lennox opening an ivy-covered door in the wall in Frances Hodgson Burnetts The Secret Garden. It includes both legendary writers who were enthusiastic gardeners (Francis Bacon, Alexander Pope, John Evelyn, Addison, Henry Thoreau, George Eliot and Edith Wharton) and great gardeners who were excellent writers (Gervase Markham, Erasmus Darwin, William Lawson, John and Jane Loudon, William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll). There is poetry and pragmatism, fun and fanaticism, but the common link is the unending fascination and deep satisfaction of having a little Eden of ones own.

I frequently listen to audiobooks while I'm gardening, so it was a joy to come upon The Pleasures of the Garden - An Anthology, selected and introduced by Christina Hardyment. Read by some wonderful actors - Sean Barrett, Anton Lesser and David Timson, to name but a few - this collection of prose and poetry ranges in place from Ancient China to Hawaii, and from authors such as Pliny to Rudyard Kipling and beyond, and from the rich joys of the lusty month of May (Sir Thomas Malory), to the more prosaic musings on the pleasure of spreading dung by 9th century monk, Walafrid Strabo. The accompanying music - Delius, Mendlessohn, Purcell and others - is a richly rewarding addition

to this box of delights. - Kati Nicholl, Daily Express Over sixty delightful extracts spanning many centuries are created here by six voices accompanied by complementary music. George Herbert's 'shrivelled heart' recovers its 'greenness' in his garden, whilst for Malory, a May garden 'flourishes a man's heart'. Short-sighted Gertrude Jekyll identified birds by the sound of their wings. Kipling (who spent much of his 7,000 guineas Nobel Prize on laying out his garden in Sussex) extols potting sheds and grubbing for weeds. These reflections are as joyful and rewarding as visiting the gardens themselves. - Rachel Redford, The Oldie Real wilderness is hard to find in this country, but no one does the Small Outdoors better than the English. This delightful anthology of prose and poetry, mostly homegrown but with contributions from Pliny on the magnificence of the box hedges cut into a thousand animal shapes in his Tuscan garden (with hippodrome), the 9th-century Frankish monk Strabo on the cultivation of dung heaps, and Thomas Jefferson on his ever-expanding vegetable patch, is the perfect companion for weeding, dead-heading, pricking out and mulching. Choosing a quotation is hard. It's all wonderful, but Elizabethan herbalist Dr John Gerard's fabulous Orcadian Barnacle tree, from whose fruit, upon falling into water, barnacle geese were said to hatch, was just pipped by this poem in Punch to celebrate the arrival of the first lady gardeners at Kew in 1896: "They gardened in bloomers the newspapers said, / So to Kew without waiting all Londoners sped. / From the roofs of the bus they had a fine view / Of the ladies in bloomers who gardened at Kew. / The orchids were slighted, the lilies were scorned, / The dahlias were flouted till botanists mourned. / But the Londoners shouted What ho there! Go to! / Who wants to see blooms now you've bloomers at Kew?" - Sue Arnold, The Guardian The Pleasures of the Garden is not a random collection of garden poetry and essays. The selections are arranged into four categories: Lovers of Gardens and Lovers in Gardens, Grand Designs, Practical Gardening, and Solace for Body and Soul. Hardyment has reached far back in time to find works by classic writers such as Francis Bacon, Voltaire, and Jane Austen. There are poems, essays and letters written by Thomas Jefferson, Pliny the Younger, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and many others. Although some of the selections will be familiar, most of them are less well known. A few contain somewhat tedious listings of botanical names, but most of the selections are surprising, inspiring, and appealing. One feels compelled to head outdoors with a spade and some seeds after listening to the love of gardening expressed by the various writers. Each CD represents one of the four themes, and each reading is a separate track, allowing for easy replay of favorites. Hardyment introduces each selection, putting it in its context and providing information about the author. There are almost twenty readers, and their voices are nicely matched for gender and age to the particular work being read. All readers have pleasant, clear, trained voices. This audiobook is a distinctly British production, with English, Scottish and Irish accents. One should savor and revisit it, just as one would a real garden. - Mary Cummings, SoundCommentary