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Sarah Whittingham

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THE VICTORIAN FERN CRAZE

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Sarah Whittingham : The Victorian Fern Craze (Shire Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Victorian Fern Craze (Shire Library):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Satisfying little book with great illustrations By Perpetually studying Spanish The illustrations and captions alone make this little book worth buying. It's a quick read and would make a great gift for a gardener who enjoys history. Note that the print is small and so not suitable for someone with poor vision.

Fern Fever (or Pteridomania, to give it its official name), hit Britain between 1837 and 1914 and peaked between 1840 and 1890. Although in previous centuries ferns played an important role in customs and folklore, it was only in this

period that they were coveted for aesthetic reasons and that man's passion for them reached its zenith. The craze for collecting ferns reached such epidemic proportions that it affected the very existence of some species. The fern craze started to gather momentum in the 1840s; books and magazines maintained that fern growing was a hobby that anyone could enjoy as ferns would grow in the glazed fernery, garden, shady yard, window box or even indoors in Wardian Cases. The mania also spread from the living plant to depicting it in architecture and the decorative arts. Even roads, villas and terraced houses were named after the fern. This book, the first to deal exclusively with the subject for nearly forty years, looks at the how the craze developed, the ways in which ferns were incorporated into garden and home, and the spread of the fern through Victorian material and visual culture.

"Searching out the story of a far-reaching plant hobby that began in Britain during the early nineteenth century, British architectural historian Sarah Whittingham has brought to light a fad that went across all segments of society. Discovering, cultivating, and displaying ferns was aided and abetted by amateur naturalists, botanists, nurserymen, and street vendors who urged society to grow these tender plantings in specially designed glass cases, conservatories, and glass houses. The rage for this greenery even reached into nineteenth century fashion, from jewelry, glass, and chinaware to building ornamentation. Although this craze slowly dissipated, the author draws attention to some contemporary examples of pteridomania." -Marilyn K. Alaimo, Chicago Botanic Garden Journal of Current Books on Gardening and Botany (March 2010)"Sarah Whittingham's book is a fascinating, lavishly illustrated look at this fern craze, examining social factors such as the rise of the amateur, middle-class urban gardener, the wealth of botany books and periodicals that sprang up in the mid-Victorian period (many specifically devoted to ferns) and to the fern as a popular motif in decorative art - pottery, greeting cards and even designs on buildings." - Lidian, The Virtual Dime Museum / www.thevirtualdimemuseum.blogspot.com (April 2010)About the AuthorDr Sarah Whittingham is an historian who specialises in the social history, architecture and gardens of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sarah is the expert on the Victorian fern craze. As well as lecturing on the subject (including at literary festivals), she has appeared on BBC radio and television programmes talking about Pteridomania, and has written articles on it for a number of publications, including the Victorian Society's Journal, the National Trust magazine, Country Life, The English Garden and Heritage. Her book, The Victorian Fern Craze, was published in 2009. The first edition sold out, and it has been reprinted. In February 2012 Frances Lincoln published her major illustrated book, Fern Fever: The Story of Pteridomania, which has received great reviews in the New York Times, Saturday Telegraph, Scotsman magazine, Sunday Times in Ireland, Daily Mail, House Garden, The English Garden, BBC Gardens Illustrated, The Lady, Cumbria Life, Oxford Times, The World of Interiors, and Country Life, among other publications. Sarah's other books include Wills Memorial Building (2003), The University of Bristol: A History (2009) and Sir George Oatley: Architect of Bristol (2011), which has been shortlisted for the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion for the best architectural history book in 2012. She has lectured widely on architectural history and the fern craze for the University of Bristol, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society, among others. In 2009 she curated the exhibition 'The University of Bristol's Buildings: Past, Present and Future' at the Architecture Centre, Bristol.