



Women Gardeners: A History

Yvonne Cuthbertson

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Women have always tended the land. Early woman scratched the earth with a pointed, fire-dried stick to plant seeds she had gathered in the wild. Female slaves toiled to establish fragrant flowers and exotic fruits in the gardens at Luxor and Thebes. Women of the Elizabethan nobility displayed their elaborate, formal gardens as symbols of their wealth and position. During World War II, patriotic women dug up every spare piece of land to plant vegetables and herbs to support the war effort.

Women's role in the garden has been a fluctuating and complex one-dependent upon their social class and the degree to which they have been able to break free of the restrictive social and moral conventions of the day. This story of women gardeners is interwoven with a gradually emerging feminism and the cultural, social, and political events of the times.

The book reveals a colorful array of gardeners-the social elite, women landscape architects, and those who wrote gardening books or started horticultural schools. But it also looks at those who lived hand to mouth-black women slaves toiling from dawn to dusk on southern plantations and war-weary British women struggling to feed their families off tiny plots of land. The book contains color reproductions of famous works of art depicting women's role as gardeners throughout the ages as well as garden plans and instructions.



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