



Private Gardens of the Pacific Northwest

BRIAN D. COLEMAN

photographs by **WILLIAM WRIGHT**

'Private Gardens of the Pacific Northwest' is by Brian D. Coleman.

Green thumbs of the Pacific Northwest

A resource for horticultural inspiration and garden eye candy

Years ago, I gifted my mother, a wonderful gardener, with a sweatshirt that said, "When the world wearies and ceases to satisfy, there is always the garden."

I've since learned the quote is an abbreviated version of a line written by British poet Minnie Aumonier, who passed away in 1962.

But after a late summer filled with daily doses of geopolitical chaos, environmental "code red" and COVID-19, Aumonier's comment seems cogent in the 21st century, too!

Gardens do indeed provide green solace, and a new book called "Private Gardens of the Pacific Northwest" provides pages of balm. Perhaps it's more than coincidence that Seattle-based author Brian D. Coleman is also a practicing psychiatrist.

Together with photographer William Wright, Coleman gained access to 20 unique gardens for this project. These private properties are concentrated primarily along the I-5 corridor between Portland and Seattle, with an additional handful of gardens located on islands in Puget Sound.

There's just one outlier, a Lake Chelan garden, on the dry side of the Cascades. That region, which presents gardeners with a much different set of gardening conditions, really deserves a book of its own.

Some of the gardens in this book were developed on a grand scale, where money seemed to be no obstacle and layouts might be conceived in terms of acres. But there are also several in-city gardens that condense horticultural inspiration into every available inch.

One of the gardeners with considerable wherewithal is noted wildlife photographer Art Wolfe. Inspired by his expeditions to Asia, he wanted to transform the grassy yard around his Seattle home into a

Japanese-style garden infused with wilderness notes that reminded him of a sacred mountain he'd visited in China.

Wolfe hired a backhoe to create a streambed, and a mobile crane to place not only tons of boulders, but also several mature rhododendrons and Japanese maples.

However, that doesn't mean he's above getting his own hands dirty. Every spring, Wolfe candles his 25 black pines — this involves pruning back thousands of the long, slender buds. And in the fall he

keeps busy clearing the cedar detritus from his moss garden.

Other gardeners, too, share stories of clearing out invasives, digging their own ponds and creating paths and

seating areas. They've fashioned planters out of recycled materials and built treehouses and aviaries and stumperies (yes, stumperies). They've amassed plants that complement one another in terms of seasonal succession, color palette or growing characteristics.

In Portland, Loree Bohl's "Danger Garden" is a jazzy ensemble of spiky foliage. On the Kitsap Peninsula, Nancy Heckler's garden is a haven for hydrangeas. And in Maple Valley, Tony Fajarillo has created a serene sanctuary around his bonsai collection.

Wright's photography for this book is verdant eye candy, and if you want to try to replicate some of that magic, Coleman thoughtfully provides both common and Latin plant names in the photo captions. With this information, you can track down some specimens to add to a haven of your own creation.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbaralmcm@gmail.com

This week's book

'Private Gardens of the Pacific Northwest' by Brian D. Coleman

Gibbs Smith — 256 pp — hardcover, \$50; kindle \$22.49

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