

buy local,” which has become a rallying cry of the sustainable agriculture movement, takes on subtle new meanings.

At the heart of this book are three comparative case studies, focused in California, Wisconsin, and Vermont. Here is where the book is much more personal, and Trubek’s training as an anthropologist shows through in the observational detail of what now becomes a travel narrative as well as an analysis. These pages include encounters with and profiles of winemakers, farmers, and chefs, along with an insightful discussion of the contradictions of modern agribusiness versus small-scale, sustainable approaches to growing, cooking, and eating. Trubek’s characters muse on the evolution of regional cuisines, contributing special insights based on the idiosyncratic experiences of their own careers and the intimate details of their locales. These narratives demonstrate that the notion of *cuisine du terroir* or “cooking from the land” requires a certain fidelity to place and region, and hence to seasonality, as well; and we realize that the goal of cultivating regional self-reliance represents a daunting challenge, accustomed as we are to having foods shipped and imported across such great distances.

The Taste of Place is a surprisingly comprehensive treatment of the issues and aspirations of the sustainable agriculture movement. Trubek’s predilection for historical exegesis serves the reader well in providing the context needed for a nuanced analysis. She does not shy away from the romantic and utopian dimensions of the story while also showing the pragmatism and tenacity necessary for the practitioners she meets to be able to persist and succeed, at least modestly, at their chosen vocations, even as they come up against the inertia of the conventional food system. The deep sensibility of place that the concept of *terroir* teaches provides an edifying way of thinking about one’s relation to the local landscape and what is produced there. This is an important and exceedingly enjoyable book.

—Tim Vos, Ph.D., Santa Fe, NM

On Guerrilla Gardening: A Handbook for Gardening Without Boundaries

Richard Reynolds

London: Bloomsbury, 2008

256 pp. Photographs. \$25.99 (cloth)

When, in 2004, Richard Reynolds planted a decorative garden outside his South London apartment complex without permission, he didn’t have much of a sense of the world of guerilla gardening. But after he had registered the domain

name of guerillagardening.org and traveled to Switzerland, Libya, and beyond, this freelance advertising executive met an entire legion of illicit gardeners who are united by a desire to transform unused or neglected public spaces into gardens planted with food and flowers. In *On Guerrilla Gardening*, his sprawling, baggy memoir and manifesto, Reynolds cursorily describes hundreds of growing projects, all carried out by individuals to whom he gives code names, as if to emphasize clandestine camaraderie. Thus we meet Saddiq 754, an Uighur from Afghanistan who grows saved melon seeds at the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay; and British activist Paul 1119, who has planted hundreds of pansies to commemorate incidents of gay-bashing.

The roots of gardening without permission can loosely be traced to the Diggers, a group that dug common land to plant crops in Surrey, England, during record-high food prices in 1649; their spirit was later revived by a counter-cultural group in San Francisco with the same name. But Reynolds writes that the roots of surreptitious planting can actually be traced to the Gospel of Matthew, to a parable about an enemy seeding weeds in a field of wheat (13:25). Reynolds’s take on history and culture is groovy and wired; his prose feels as though he is cultivating a 1960s-era Diggers vibe that seems more in keeping with Berkeley’s 1969 People’s Park or New York’s 1973 artist-run Green Guerillas community garden. He excitedly runs through a pastiche of popular theorists, extensively quoting Mao Zedong on matters both tactical and ideological and offering sage advice on propaganda from Che Guevara. He even reinterprets Johnny Appleseed as a guerilla marketer. Fears of global food shortages have rekindled the do-it-yourself gardening movement; Reynolds is the chatty, self-appointed public-relations advisor who is ready for the bright lights and film crews.

Reynolds is a hobby gardener, the kind of participant who beautifies cities with tulips while drinking chilled glasses of Pinot Grigio. He mentions few failed projects in his book, and news about the destruction of gardens at the hands of developers or drunks rarely warrants more than a sentence. Much of his scholarship is similarly brisk. Experiencing what seems like a perpetual buzz from excess consumption of tea (his stated source of inspiration for his original garden), Reynolds’s agrarian metaphors collide: authorities become “wasps” (p.177), and seeds transform into both grasses that “magically” stick to pants legs (p.79) and weapons “[m]ore sophisticated than the most devastating WMD” (p.122). But even as all these acid-bright flowers bloom and idyllic auras appear around the troops of underground gardeners, Reynolds writes that his motivation and

ideology are actually quite simple. Growing plants on someone else's underused land is just plain common sense.

On Guerilla Gardening aspires to become a manual, a practical primer for those who take Reynolds's arguments seriously. He recommends a few dozen plants, advises against confrontation, and tells gardeners who have been caught to admit to what they are doing. But like his ideology, his advice leaps around. A section on signage for gardens becomes a short rumination on graffiti that involves a moss graffiti artist in Vancouver. In another section, Reynolds raises the question of soil polluted with heavy metals but offers little advice on the wisdom of consuming the vegetables or fruits grown in it. Is it safe to eat an apple grown near the Interstate? With space at a premium, should food even be grown or harvested illicitly in urban areas? How does one go about collecting urban horse manure for compost? While Reynolds weighs the ideological risks of forgoing legitimate, municipally sanctioned community gardens and staying underground, he doesn't really offer much in the way of practical diagrams, tools, or instructions for food production. Those looking for examples of where his scattershot ideas have come to fruition will have to look elsewhere—or, as Reynolds seems to suggest, take matters into their own hands.

—Peter Andrey Smith, Portland, ME

The Complete Book of Garlic:

A Guide For Gardeners, Growers, and Serious Cooks

Ted Jordan Meredith

Portland, OR: Timber Press, Inc., 2008

330 pp. Illustrations \$39.95 (cloth)

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is a food plant with an enigmatic history. My own experience with this *Allium* varies from almost complete absence in the 1950s kitchens of my early childhood to the spicy garlic cooking of ethnic foods, which began to take prominence in the 1970s. Later I encountered garlic in unexpected forms on my travels: roadside stands high in the Andes that exclusively sold large one-pound bags of peeled garlic; or the amazingly unexpected find of garlic ice cream sold in Merida, Venezuela's famous Coromoto ice cream store that now boasts well over eight hundred flavors. So I welcomed Ted Meredith's *The Complete Book of Garlic: A Guide for Gardeners, Growers, and Serious Cooks*, which uses informative text liberally peppered with exquisite photos to explain many of the mysteries of garlic.

The job of explaining the many dimensions of garlic is not easy. As Meredith points out in the very beginning of his book, garlic is *not* just garlic—but comes in many different varieties, each with its own different subtleties of flavors, storage properties, geographic locals, and growing needs. His book is a detailed view of garlic from A to Z.

A major theme of the book is garlic diversity. Meredith emphasizes diversity throughout the book—starting with the first chapter, where he poses the question, “Isn't garlic just garlic?” The answer, of course, is a resounding “No!” In Chapter 7 (“Taxonomy and Diversity”) Meredith details the evolutionary history that produced the many garlic cultivars. Most excitingly he includes new DNA analyses, which have transformed our understanding of the evolution of garlic, including the pinpointing of its origins (most likely Tien Shan in Central Asia). The most direct illustration of garlic diversity is in Chapter 10 (“Garlic Groups and Cultivars”), where Meredith describes 148 cultivars, which sort into twelve major groups (e.g., the Rocamboles, Purple Striped, and Silverskins, to name a few). Most of us are familiar only with the common supermarket garlic—over 80 percent grown in California and appropriately named “California early” or “California late”—who would have guessed that garlic varieties extend to well over one hundred, and perhaps beyond?

Chapter 2 (“Natural History”) and Chapter 5 (“Structure and Function”) cover the botanical details of garlic. Every plant has fascinating features and behaviors, and garlic does not disappoint. Meredith's book is filled with interesting tidbits. Among the many features covered are the anatomy of the garlic clove (actually a series of modified leaves!) and the curious behavior of the flowering stalk, which in many varieties spirals around, looping into an elegant “O” while it is developing, and then uncurls, straightens, and elongates before bursting into bloom. Meredith also reminds us that garlic is the second-most-eaten *Allium* (after the common onion, *Allium cepa*), and he devotes whole chapters to garlic's chemistry (Chapter 9, “Composition and Chemistry”) and therapeutic benefits (Chapter 4)—must-reads for those interested in its culinary and therapeutic qualities. Though no recipes are included, Meredith's coverage of the variations in flavors and the effect of heat on garlic's chemistry will enhance any chef's cooking.

Finally, Meredith covers the practical aspects of growing garlic. Chapter 6 (“Cultivation”) and Chapter 8 (“Diseases and Pests”) give the how-tos of raising garlic. The cultivation chapter—over fifty pages long—thoroughly covers how to grow garlic, from preparing the soil and propagation to commercial growing. Chapter 8 gives the reader insight into