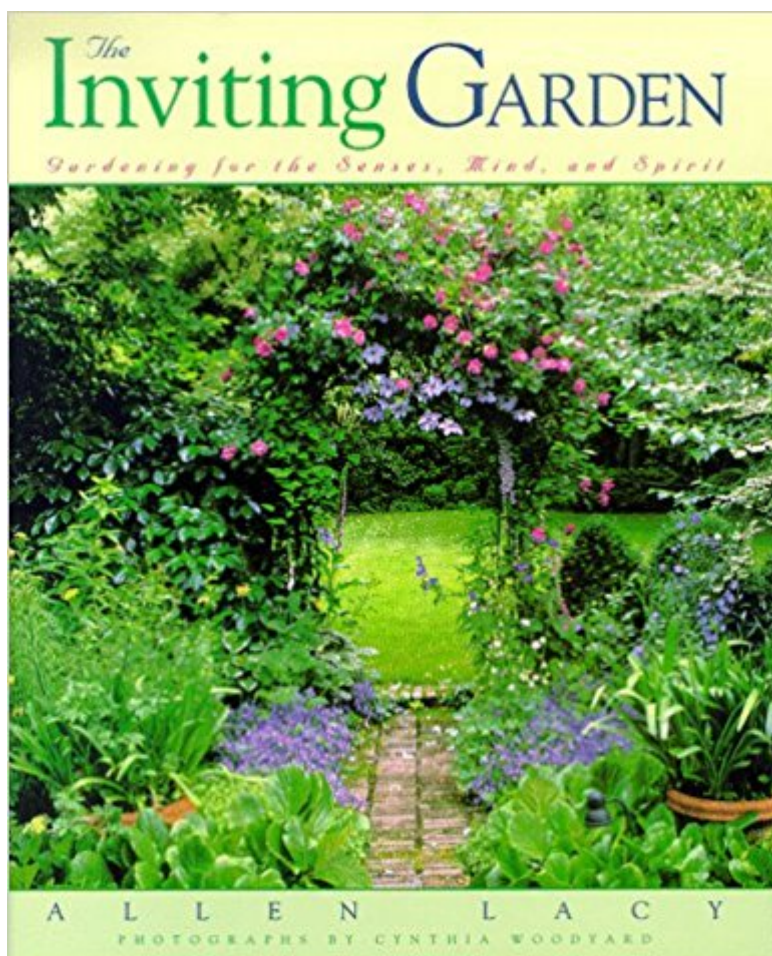


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# The Inviting Garden : Gardening For The Senses, Mind, And Spirit



## Synopsis

In *The Inviting Garden*, Allen Lacy speaks for the great number of dedicated and committed gardeners who share his passion for green and growing things and who take pleasure in all the rich satisfactions that the personal garden offers its makers. He also invites the beginner to take the plunge--to set forth on the lifelong journey that is the gardener's way of life. Gardening, Lacy explains with great eloquence and good humor, is much more than a hobby. It delights all the senses, each in its turn. It offers virtually less intellectual stimulation. It has a profound spiritual dimension, as a basis for the lifelong friendships that bind people together in the common and shared pursuit of making the earth flourish with beauty. Its joys are unlimited, for they engage its practitioners as whole persons, not partial beings. With the kind of tantalizing prose that makes you want to reach for a trowel, Allen Lacy gives us a deeply thoughtful book on the whole enterprise of gardening.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the grand scheme of things, a garden is a rather quotidian pleasure. Yet Allen Lacy finds a unique sensual delight in the very ordinariness of it: "It is sweet and pleasant to dig in the warm, slightly moist soil, to feel its grit and grain beneath the fingernails.... The rhythmic chore of pulling weeds soothes the soul like a mantra." The stimulation of the senses in the garden is a favorite theme that Lacy, the man who has been called "the dean of American gardeners," celebrates fully in *The Inviting Garden*, devoting a chapter to each. Lacy also proffers an affectionate look at gardening as an intellectual pleasure, with a longish but delightful discursion on botanical nomenclature, a slice of historical adventure in the story of how two rather different plants made their way from Asia to North

America, a short but sweet chapter on the language of flowers, and the currently obligatory examination of the American suburban landscape. But it's in the chapters on gardening and the spirit that Lacy's charming circuitousness seems most at home: "Horticulture is sometimes described as a science, sometimes as an art, but the truth is that it is neither, although it partakes of both endeavors. It is more like falling in love, something that escapes all logic. There is a moment before one becomes a gardener, and a moment after--with a whole lifetime to keep on becoming a gardener." --Barrie Trinkle

Noted garden writer Lacy (*The Garden in Autumn*, Holt, 1995) invites all gardeners to contemplate gardening as more than just a physical activity. As he explains, gardening also satisfies a need in humans for sensory enrichment, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual fulfillment. Lacy starts his text with chapters on the senses of touch, scent, taste, hearing, and sight in home gardens. This is followed by a section on gardening for the mind, in which Lacy discusses the history and nomenclature of plants. The careful attention that botanists and horticulturists gave to plants is included in this historical discussion. Then in the final essays, Lacy explores the rhythms that people experience that place them within the natural world. This gardening-for-the-spirit section provides an opportunity for the reader to think about all the obscure reasons for gardening. Lacy writes well, and his thoughtful book is recommended for all collections. Dale Luchsinger, Milwaukee Area Technical Coll. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I was expecting a bit more botany as well--other wise, quite good.

I own and have read all Allen Lacy's books and recommend them to anyone who wants to be better acquainted with the how-to aspect of gardening. I also recommend Lacy's books to those who seek a deeper experience with the natural world. Allen taught philosophy for years, and although his books mainly focus on horticulture, he includes relevant historical antecedents and existential angles in his writing that may help one better understand why humans imagine paradise is a garden. I read *THE INVITING GARDEN* when it was first published a few years ago, but it is as timely and relevant today as it was when it was first published--why it has been reprinted. Compared with his other books, *TIG* contains many more photographs and much less text, but the photographs are some of the most beautiful I have seen in a garden book, and I am a garden book junkie. Because many of his garden shots include children, the book is a real pick-me-up. Lacy shows his own granddaughter on his deck in New Jersey, a little boy poking branches into the soft bottom of a creek bed, and

children here and there in various gardens in the U.S. and Europe. I especially like the shot of a very little girl with her arms around a huge tree at Versailles. With her feet placed on a protruding root, she is poised as if she is about to climb the tree, which is at least five feet across at the base. The imagination of children is a wonderful thing, but it also opens up my imagination and helps me appreciate why trees figure so prominently in human mythology and religion. Lacy has written elsewhere that he thinks trees are sentient beings and I do to. Lacy has organized his book according to the five human senses. Chapters cover the garden and the sense of sight (there are many beautiful shots of gardens around the country and in England and France); smell (shots show flower examples from Roses to Nicotiana (flowering tobacco), shrubs like Winter Jasmine, and herbs (one photo shows a box garden in Charleston with Rosemary accents); touch; taste; and hearing. Hearing?? What can one hear in the garden? Well to start with of course one can hear bird calls, buzzing bees, and wind chimes. But one can also hear the breeze blowing through high trees and grasses, as well as the burbling of water in a creek or manmade pond. Photos from a garden in California show a clay face mask lying underwater on the floor of a pond. Moss grows over the mask and bubbles of air pass through mouth to make lovely gurgling sounds (according to Lacy). In another shot, a clay mask is positioned among grasses so that the wind passing through emits a whispering sound. Whether you garden or not, this wonderful book can help you push away the blues.

Inviting Garden indeed invites one into the wonderful world of gardening with the whole person. Approach the garden - or any outdoor environment - with all five senses alert. Discover the hidden histories plants quietly carry into one's yard. Ponder the connection between the good earth and the good soul within. Lacey opens a lattice gate to a world of wonder right before us and invites us to walk through.

The Inviting Garden did just what it set out to do: invite me to explore all my senses as a gardener. It isn't a picture book of perfect gardens, although the photographs are very nice. Rather, Mr. Lacy uses the same techniques to construct his book as he might use to design his garden. He balances his own personal stories with bits of plant history and botanical reference and every word begs to be read. This is a delightful book and deserves to be on the bedside table of every dedicated or aspiring gardener.

I just returned from my first foray at my local garden center. The scents of plants in full fragrant

bloom almost overwhelmed me. Indeed there is the moment before becoming captured by the garden and the everlasting moments thereafter. I love Lacy's Gardener's Eye and this most recent book. Both come to me after that first flicker of what a garden can be.-Linda Fry Kenzle, author of Gathering

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