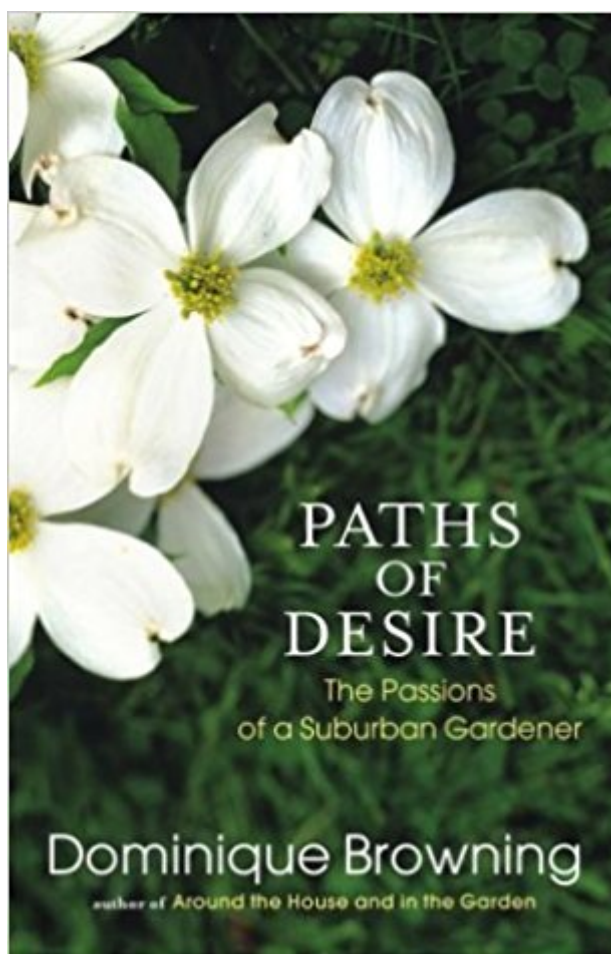


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# Paths Of Desire: The Passions Of A Suburban Gardener



## Synopsis

With the same warmth, wisdom, wit, and accessibility that readers have come to love and trust in her monthly column, House & Garden editor in chief Dominique Browning offers this lively, charming, and instructive story of restoring a neglected suburban garden. When a retaining wall in Browning's New York suburban garden collapsed, she was forced into action. *Paths of Desire* is the enchanting, amusing, and moving account of making a garden -- and confronting the essence of suburban gardening, with its idiosyncratic ecosystem. This meant struggling with depraved skunks and raccoons, marauding teenagers, plastic jungle gyms, toppling garbage cans, uncontrollable eyesores, potholed drives, and all the grinding, honking, and buzzing of the neighborhood. Browning's delightfully frank prose conveys the very sense of being deep in a garden, with all its organic smells and textures, and the myriad joys of deciding what to plant and watching as the vision is realized. It contains a rich store of advice and illustrative anecdotes for enthusiasts and novices alike, as Browning amusingly documents the missteps she took in the planning of her garden and the satisfactions of finally getting it right. In *Paths of Desire* she teaches us how to embrace our plots of land -- no matter their size, beauty, or proximity to the city -- and make them our own. But she also reminds us that the life of a garden can never be separated from the people who wander in and out of it: characters like the charming but useless children; the philosophical tree doctor and the band of Helpful Men; the neighbors -- legalistic on one side, aesthetically challenged on the other -- and, best and worst of all, the True Love. By the end of the book, Browning has transformed her garden -- and her life -- and has created a place of enchantment, which is most of all what a garden should be.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Desire paths," writes Browning, are defined by how people actually move from place to place, whether in physical space or emotionally and psychically. Browning (*Around the House and in the Garden*) recounts the creation of two desire paths: a "long and winding" one through her restored half-acre suburban garden, and an equally meandering one from the desolation of a broken marriage to the joyful rebuilding of both her garden and her life. Browning's century-old home may not be typical of today's suburbs, but what she contends with is. Raccoons, opossums and "neurotically evolved" skunks invade at night, as do beer-drinking teenagers. Dogs yap, horns honk and leaf blowers "grind all day." Warring with neighbors over "trees and walls and fences and garbage bins" is constant. Although "the suburban garden starts its life as a construction site," it is also a place where "nothing is impossible, and the only limitations on what you can do are your own will and imagination." Still, one needs "Helpful Men," a fraternity of roofers, masons, landscapers and tree surgeons who communicate by cell phone-almost exclusively with one another-and do not clean up. As Browning comes to rely more and more on "the Helpful Men" to fix the disorder in her garden, she gradually learns not to depend on "the True Love" to free her from the grasp of a rampant, flowerless wisteria and awaken her with a kiss. Instead, she discovers that her sons are showing "promising signs of usefulness" and sets out on an "endless" path in a "garden that springs from the heart." Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

People frequently spring into action only when their backs are against the wall. In Browning's case, the wall would actually have to collapse before she would begin to make much-needed major changes in her garden, and in her life. When the downpour of a sudden storm undermines the foundation of a beloved garden wall, Browning is forced to deal with the daunting consequences of ruined plants, altered vistas, and expensive reconstruction. Contrary to her lofty position as editor in chief of the venerable *House and Garden* magazine, Browning lives a down-to-earth existence in suburbia, replete with the problematic noisy and noisome neighbors, confounding critters, and trespassing teenagers so familiar to her readers. Such obstacles present creative and practical challenges whose solutions only reveal themselves when Browning ultimately learns to follow the paths of her own heart's desire. Just as her garden must be, Browning's intimately personal

chronicle is filled with lines of breathtaking beauty, simple in their understated elegance yet profound in their impact on the human psyche. Carol Haggas Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is probably my favorite of Dominique Browning's books. It's a little reminiscent of Mr. Blandings Builds a Dream House, only it's true and it all starts with a garden wall falling down. I found it, by turns, quirky, funny and deep. An added little bonus for the reader is a map of the garden at the start of the book, which looks like something out of a novel about an English village. I found myself continuing to refer to it as I read of the different chapters devoted to the trees, the neighbors, the driveway, the various beds, the fountain, etc. Like the garden that finally emerges at Browning's home, there is something utterly enchanting about this book.

If you are feeling adrift and lost in your thoughts and your garden is pressing in on you, read this book. You will gain insight and come out on the other side feeling hopeful.

Ms. Browning is a talented writer, you can actually identify with her frustrations. Miss the magazine she edited. Don't know if it is still being published or not. Would love to tell her about the camellia she described in the book. Think it may have been "Professor Charles S. Sargent". The description would fit. Since there are about thirty to fifty thousand named varieties, can't be sure. Did wonder if it survived the collapsed wall. Anyway, a great read.

I had read a review of her book in the NYTimes and am a fan of the magazine she edits, so I bought the book. I fell in love with the story of collapse, confusion and renewal. Frankly the metaphor of the garden served as many a problem in one's own life. Wrap it all up in gorgeous prose and a compelling (yes! she makes a garden wall collapse and the ensuing drama exciting!) story and I had a book, I couldn't put down. Romantic and sometimes funny it's a good read for the gardener and non-gardener alike.

I always remember the editorial comments of Ms. Browning when she was the editor in chief for House and Garden. I sort of followed her life thru them. I wanted to hear more from her, and in this book I was able to understand her in a more intimate way.

I love all her books. I'm reading "Slow Love" now and am enjoying it immensely. She is a wonderful

story teller.

Absolutely loved her new book - SLOW LOVE, and read this after that. She has a special way of writing. Her love for her home and garden and family is so evident. Thank you. Keep writing please.

It's an okay book but could have been more specific regarding plants, etc.

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