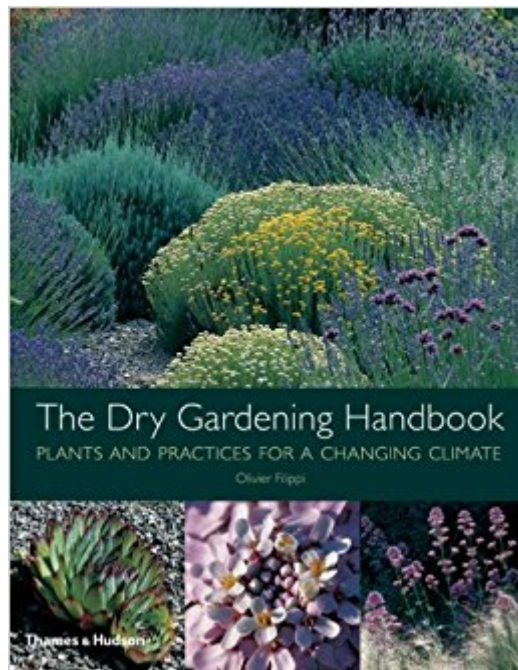


The book was found

The Dry Gardening Handbook: Plants And Practices For A Changing Climate



Synopsis

A complete and beautifully illustrated guide to creating a garden in the face of water shortages and dry conditions. A garden that can withstand summer drought and requires little watering is the dream of every gardener who is conscious of the need to conserve water and who wants to create a garden in harmony with the environment. That dream can become a reality with the help of this indispensable new reference book which provides concrete solutions to the questions and hurdles faced by gardeners coping with dry conditions. Abundantly illustrated with more than 400 original color photographs, this is a vital book for novice and experienced gardeners alike. It includes an A-Z list of more than 500 drought-resistant plants with details on the plant's scientific name, geographical origin, height and width, exposure and hardiness, foliage, ideal soil conditions, and related or complementary plants, and provides techniques for soil preparation, planting, and maintenance of gardens and landscapes. More than 400 full-color photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The detailed entries—over 400 of them, with illustrations—make this intriguing book a valuable handbook and resource.” — Green Daily

Olivier Filippi has been running a nursery in France that specializes in drought-resistant plants for over twenty years.

I've never read a book that approaches mediterranean gardening in this way. Yes, there are many books about choosing the right plant for the right place, but the very premise of this book is unique.

Oliver Filippi points out that there is a natural organization in plant communities. He explains and then uses that method to aid us in choosing plants that will not only grow, but thrive in our gardens. Follow his directions and your neighbors will think you have a green thumb -- not a new book. Waver from his directions and you'll continue to struggle with failures. You must be willing to ignore plants that are simply not meant for your climate if you want to see the robust results pictured in the book. The beauty photographs he chose to include can be fascinating. Planning on including Ballota in your plant list? Look on page 85 to see a hill in Greece covered with Ballota living in it's natural environment. Or go to page 158: it's a full-page photograph of Phlomis growing wild on a hillside in Crete. This way of representing plants is typical throughout the book. And the planted gardens he includes are excellent examples of successful groupings of mediterranean plants. Yes, there ARE a handful of California native plants included, but this book isn't about that subject. Instead, the book invites you to combine plants originating from similar climates all over the world, then stand back and watch how effortlessly and successfully they live together. How difficult is it to find a quality hard-cover book today? The Dry Gardening Handbook is a weighty, 208-page book with 400 original photographs; that means you'll not have seen these images anywhere else. And the color shows perfect reproductions of all the plants. Yay! One last word. If you like this book I recommend Beth Chatto's book, Drought Resistant Planting. Containing no plant encyclopedia, it is instead the story of how she created a gravel garden on a site that used to be a parking lot. But even though there is no encyclopedia, the book is filled with the names of plants she used -- or should have considered -- as well as her story about each plant and how well it grows through a series of years. Beth discusses her failures as well as her successes and explains why the failures occurred. It is a detailed account through time, and it opened my eyes about what is necessary when preparing the soil to ensure that a low-water garden will flourish.

It is just a few weeks into the damp season here in Southern California. I'm happy to report that my garden came through the Summer without any watering. None. Zero gallons. No irrigation. No dragging around the hose. Almost every plant not only survived, but now looks the picture of health. I came across Oliver Filippi's The Dry Gardening Handbook last winter. I have been planting an assortment of drought-tolerant greenery in my small yard for several years. Filippi gave me the courage to put the entire assortment to the test. Filippi is a plantsman in Mediterranean France. The Mediterranean climate is characterized by hot, completely dry summers and cooler winters with more or less rain. The length of the dry season varies across the Earth's Mediterranean climate zones, which include Southern California. We think of ourselves as England with better weather

when driving through thousands of acres of trim suburban lawns and masses of tropical flowers. We maintain this illusion by importing huge amounts of fresh water, most of which is spread over a landscape we otherwise see as desert. But we are not in a desert. We just don't get much rainfall. What we do get is concentrated in short periods of days or weeks sprinkled from October to May. Filippi maintains that much of the problem gardening in this climate is that we mistakenly water our gardens in the Summer even with drought-tolerant plantings. Well, how else would we keep the plants alive? Filippi maintains that plants which evolved in these climates exhibit many strategies for coping with Summer. They switch to conservation mode in the Summer and back to growing mode in the Winter. If we water them in the Summer, we trick the plants back into Winter mode. In one of a dozen perverse examples, we encourage plants to develop shallow root systems which dry out quickly in hot weather. When pushed into Winter mode during the Summer, plants frequently die from environmental stress even with frequent watering. They cannot operate in two modes at once. We literally water our Mediterranean gardens to death. Last Summer I took the pledge. I put away the hoses, turned off what little irrigation remained. Whatever died would die. Faced with a dead spot, I vowed to plant something different in the fall. I am simply amazed at what actually happened. By late September most of the plants were still alive but clearly dessicated. The fat, shiny leaves on my jade plants were thin and dull. But they had not fallen off. We have had a few moist days now during the last three weeks. Mostly this has not been "measurable precipitation" as they call it. Mostly rain at this time of year looks like fog that is just a little too dense to stay completely in the air. The street may look wet in the morning, but the gutters are empty and all will be dry well before noon. We are still getting a few hot days in a row in mid-October. And to my great amazement, the plants look great. Leaves full and plump, you would never guess they looked near death a month ago. I was prepared for the plants to react to the rain, but not this fast. They waste no time getting back into growing mode. Last Summer was on the mild side here, climatically speaking. It was not quite as hot for quite as long, but the garden may not have fully adapted to my new, hands-off policy either. New plantings, Filippi observes, may need special care for the first year or two. I will take special care to leave the hose in it's dusty pile. I will not water in the Winter either. I will encourage my dry garden to put down deep roots, to adapt to the small amount of water we get in Winter. Next Summer the garden will be even more ready to survive my total neglect.

I bought this after reading a glowing LA Times review. The author does a great job moving beyond the plant-by-plant guide to talk about the philosophy of dry-climate gardening, including the somewhat counter-intuitive logic (e.g. when it's really hot, don't water). The photos are compelling,

and the gardens are fascinating. This isn't cactus and yucca plants. Highly recommended for people living in appropriate areas, especially Southern California.

The book is mostly nice pictures without any real substance or actionable advice on xeriscaping design or dry landscaping tips.

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