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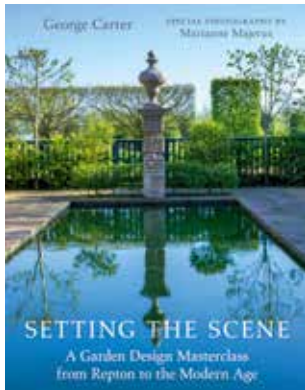
Book reviews, crossword, back issues, reader offer



Discover how disassembling plants, such as this crown imperial (*Fritillaria imperialis* 'Aurora'), can reveal unexpected insights in Robbie Honey's *The Accidental Botanist*, reviewed on page 114.

ROBBIE HONEY

BOOK REVIEWS



**SETTING THE SCENE:
A GARDEN DESIGN
MASTERCLASS FROM
REPTON TO THE
MODERN AGE**

by George Carter
Photographs by
Marianne Majerus

Pimpernel Press Ltd, £50
ISBN 978-1910258590

Idiosyncratic style manual from one of the UK's leading formalist designers inspired by the great Humphry Repton.

Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

This is the ideal book for anyone who might feel a little wearied by the seemingly endless parade of fashionable New Perennials gardens, filled as they are with a familiar palette of veronicastrum and other late-summer thrusters.

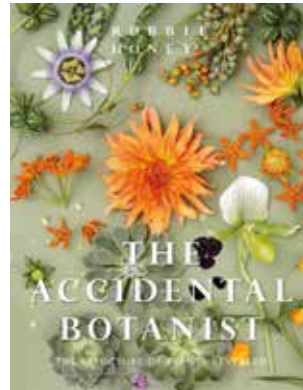
As a rare formalist sitting in the middle of this sea of naturalistic planting, George Carter has long been a valuable figure on the British garden scene. This crisply realised book is presented as both an insight into his method and an ideas manual for those who might sympathise with Repton's dictum that, 'The colour of gold... makes everything pleasing.'

As a self-help garden-design manual the book falls somewhat short, since the scattergun approach means that the author never dwells for long on any particular topic ('light and shade' probably deserves more than a few paragraphs). In addition,

a rather monomaniacal adherence to the example and writings of Humphry Repton (alone) means the text – and reader – soon feel shackled to the Regency designer.

This shortcoming can be dismissed as an allowable eccentricity, however, given the sheer originality, verve, wit and invention bursting from the images on these pages. The author modestly tells us about Repton – but it is Carter from whom we learn. He gives the amateur designer the confidence to experiment with ornament and be bold with evergreen shapes.

Two garden projects are given much deeper treatment: Oxnead Hall, Norfolk, and Penshurst Place, Kent. At the latter Carter has made long, mixed borders that are strictly colour themed in a manner that might be described as deeply unfashionable at the moment, and are all the more innovative for that.



THE ACCIDENTAL BOTANIST

by Robbie Honey

Clearview Books, £20
ISBN 978-1908337443

A visual deconstruction of the favourite flowers of a florist, interwoven with a bit of botany and a sprinkling of autobiography.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

Robbie Honey is hard to categorise. A background in horticulture, in garden and interior design, floristry and perfume-creation have all been driven and inspired by his love of plants. Every gardener knows that looking closely at flowers, carefully analysing their structure, brings unexpected insights, and it is these that Honey shares in his book.

He has taken some of his favourite flowers from around the world, disassembled their constituent parts and photographed them. The result is a collection of beautiful, often intriguing, images. He points out that his deconstructions are neither academic nor complete representations of each flower but rather what he considers the subject's most beautiful attributes.

His technique is to take the flower apart and lay out its parts in an aesthetically pleasing way. The style of the layouts of the specimens are painterly. While

the lines are strong, it is colour and texture that are favoured, with the result that some plates look as if they have been painted. In fact, surprisingly, the images were taken on an iPhone using natural light.

The book is also part autobiography and, as well as an introduction that recounts the story of a journey that began in rural Zimbabwe, he weaves anecdotes about his life throughout the book. Alongside most plant plates there is a brief story about where he found the plant or his relationship with it. Honey also gives a brief description of each plant, its distribution, uses and history.

This book is not, as the blurb claims, botany 'transformed for a modern audience'. It is a gentle meander, looking at captivating flowers in the company of someone with a passion for flowers and plants, an eye for beauty and who has interesting stories to tell along the way.