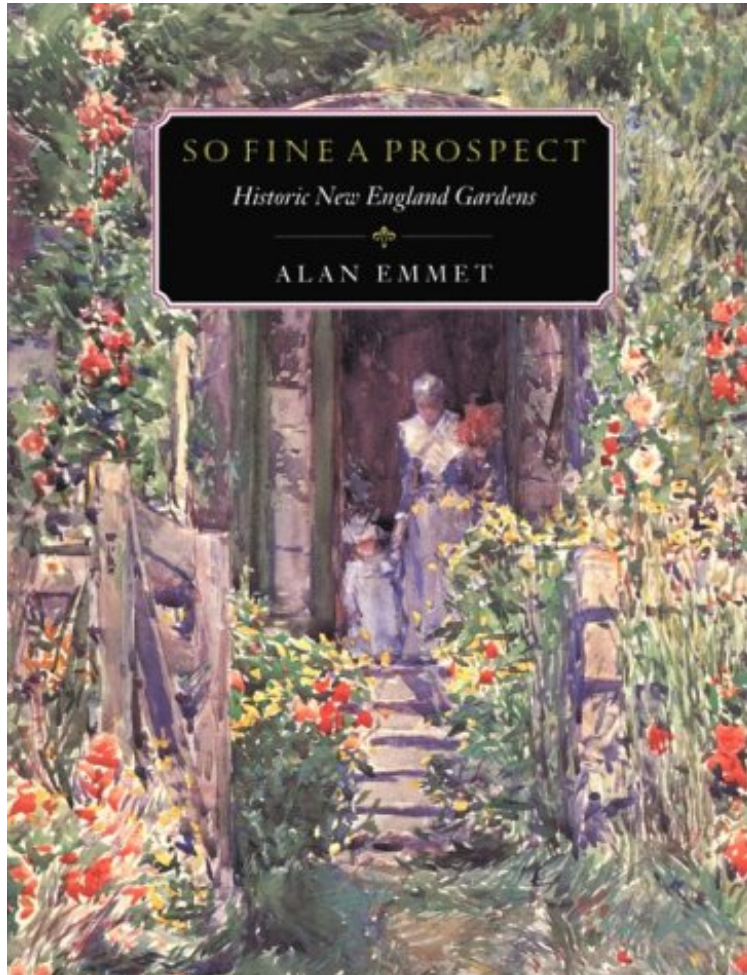


(Free read ebook) So Fine a Prospect: Historic New England Gardens (Library of New England)

## So Fine a Prospect: Historic New England Gardens (Library of New England)

Alan Emmet

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**Alan Emmet : So Fine a Prospect: Historic New England Gardens (Library of New England)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised So Fine a Prospect: Historic New England Gardens (Library of New England):

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful book, very helpful and detailedBy Bird That FlewI bought this book to learn more about historical gardens and what was in them. While this isn't the purpose of this book, it is so detailed in its descriptions of its historic New England gardens that you could certainly use it for this purpose. It also has a wealth of information about historic New England estates, who lived there and took care of them, and of course the gardens found on the estate. Just reading the stories about their former residents was fascinating. Lots of historical photos, too, so you can put everything into context. This book would interest a student of New England history, a

gardening fan, an old house fan, and more. Highly recommended!

Oh, the comfort, the delight I have had in my garden, an octogenarian grande dame of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, recalls in an 1888 memoir. Alan Emmet's glimpse into more than two dozen gardens that graced New England's towns and countryside from just after the American Revolution into the twentieth century has delights of its own. Drawing from diaries, correspondence, historical records, sketch maps, and paintings, Emmet treats the garden--ranging from small urban retreats to ornamental estates of thousands of acres--as an art form and examines its evolution from the utilitarian to the ornate. Along with the useful--greenhouses, peach walls, and pergolas--are found the whimsical and the idiosyncratic. She describes teahouses, topiary trees, fountains, mazes, marble nymphs, and a three-story viewing tower. And ever-present, of course, are the plants themselves: roses, lilies, tree peonies, orchids, even southern magnolias, as well as towering elms, massive lindens, peaches, pears, and boxwood. But as Emmet delves more deeply into who built these gardens and why, another story unfolds. The gardens, it seems, parallel their owners' lives, and embedded in their history is the saga of families and their rising and falling tides. We see great houses inhabited by gentle ghosts, the boom and subsequent decay of the port towns, the emergence of a mercantile class, the metamorphosis of the cities into sprawling urban centers, and the establishment of institutions like the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Carefully chronicled, entertaining, and generously illustrated, Emmet's garden tour is very much worth taking."

.com If May Brawley Hill's *Grandmother Garden* and Mac Griswold's *Golden Age of American Gardens* weigh heavily on your shelf of classic foliage histories, Alan Emmet's study of New England private gardens from the 18th and 19th centuries should take its place alongside them. Emmet shows how the more extreme climate, the looming presence of the frontier, and the moral fiber of Puritanism combined to shape an American vernacular gardening style as distinct from the venerable hedge-and-fountain traditions of England. The Italianate garden at Wellesley, Massachusetts, designed by Hollis Hunnewell, and the Impressionist bouquet by Cecil Thaxter on Appledore Island, Maine, demonstrate that early Americans were transforming European traditions in landscape architecture at the same time they were adapting those in politics, arts, and literature. From Publishers Weekly Emmet may not be the most polished literary stylist in the garden-writing world, but her love for historic gardens and her relish for their attendant lore are so infectious that readers will forgive her occasional narrative stumblings. Reading this rambling, detail-packed work is rather like conversing with a feisty old gardener over the back fence: one gets as much local history and family scandal as solid information about when and how a garden was laid out and what plants grew in it. Here we learn that early orchid fancier Wright Boott of Boston, whose father had one of the city's first hothouses, became a mad recluse before shooting himself in 1845; that Celia Thaxter, renowned for her garden and salon on Appledore Island, off the coast of southern Maine, was probably nearsighted; and that Edith and Teddy Wharton took Henry James motoring through the Berkshires. Garden lovers will be inspired to visit the enthusiastically described properties that are still extant, as well as mourn those that remain only in images and words. Pictures not seen by PW. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Emmet, a member of the Advisory Committee of the Garden Conservancy and a trustee of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, describes gardens from Colonial times into the 20th century, from small urban retreats to large estates. She concentrates on some two dozen gardens that survive or are well-documented in diaries, correspondence, historical records, plans, and paintings. It is instructive to compare her approach with May Brawley Hill's *Grandmother's Garden* (LJ 11/15/95), which covers a specific type of garden in a more limited time period but over a broader geographical range. Both authors describe Celia Thaxter's famous island garden off the coast of Maine. Hill features six full-page reproductions of paintings of the garden; Emmet gives more attention to Thaxter's life but does include a plan of the garden and information about its restoration. In general, Emmet spends more time on the biographies of the creators or owners of these gardens and less on the gardens themselves, but she still accomplishes her aim—to examine the evolution of New England gardens from the utilitarian to the ornate—and does so in a well-written and well-designed volume. Each chapter has extensive endnotes, but a bibliography would have been useful. Recommended for all gardening history collections. Daniel Starr, Museum of Modern Art, New York Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.