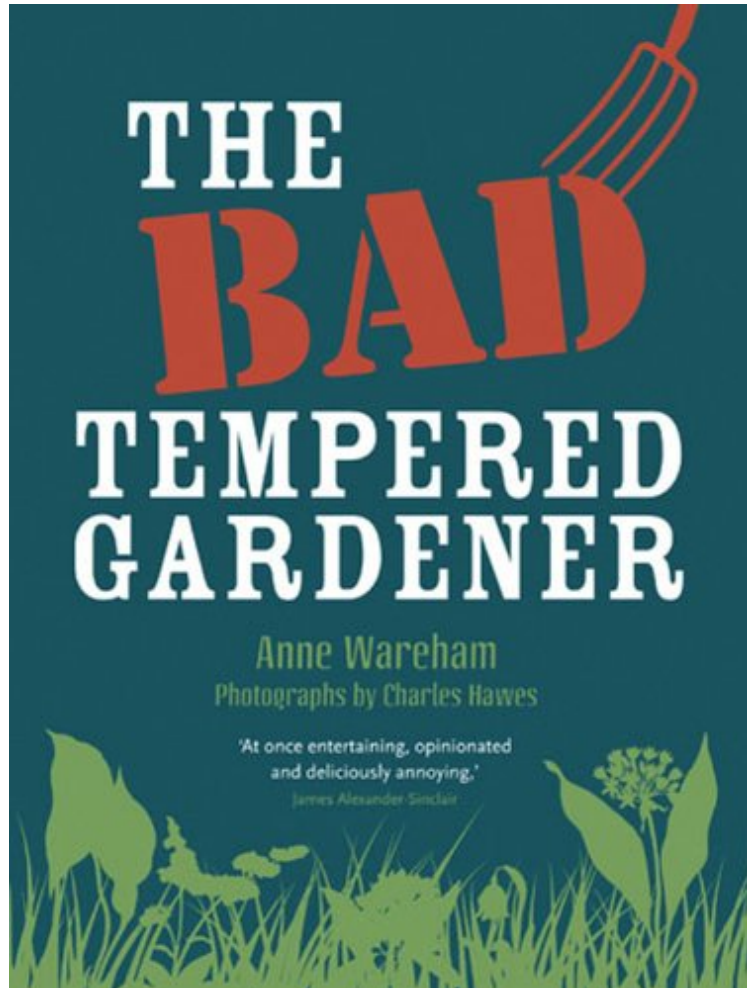


(Download pdf) The Bad Tempered Gardener

The Bad Tempered Gardener

Anne Wareham

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Anne Wareham : The Bad Tempered Gardener before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bad Tempered Gardener:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A garden book that almost reads itself. Hard to put down. By James R. Golden Anne Wareham's new book, *The Bad Tempered Gardener*, is irreverent, honest, funny, gossipy, and personally revealing. It's one of those books that practically reads itself. I didn't want to put it down. Anne isn't well known in the US, but in her home UK she has a reputation for stirring up quite a storm of controversy. She questions the status quo, the veneer of complacency that permeates the gardening world, the unspoken rule that one can say only polite things about gardens, never be critical or even honestly analytical. She annoys people--and many are important people in the British gardening firmament. Anne does have the manner of the elephant in the china shop, which she readily admits. She also sees the gardening media as being complicit in all this. Not to say they are evil; they need to

sell books, magazines, TV shows, and of course everyone wants to see pretty garden pictures; almost no one wants serious discussion or critical analysis; this is a sign of our times. Anne is one of the few, apparently, who is bothered greatly that gardening is relegated to an irrelevant place in our culture. She asks why that is. She apparently can't stop herself from wildly gesticulating and pointing lewdly when she sees the Emperor walking naked in the street. Anne Wareham takes "The Garden" seriously. She wants the garden to return to the important position it held in past times and cultures. I think she's on to something: the diminished importance of the garden as an artistic and moral work in our culture--now viewed as a hobby, like making model airplanes, or at the opposite extreme, as an expensive trophy of the wealthy--is a symptom of something out of kilter at a much deeper level. (I should admit my bias here; I'm on her side of this issue.) A miscellany in the good sense, with a bit of biography, soul searching, garden history, media criticism, funny stories ("I hate gardening"), all presented as a series of generally chronological essays, varying widely in subject and tone, it's just the kind of book you can dip into at any time of day or night; great for commuters. A collection of thematically related essays, generally covering the making of her garden, The Veddw, on the border of Wales, The Bad Tempered Gardener, to my mind belongs with a group of fine, lesser known works, some classics. At the moment only a handful immediately come to mind, and they are all personal and idiosyncratic in some way-- Eleanor Perenyi's Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden, though you would probably have a hard time imagining two more different sensibilities, Mirabel Osler's A Gentle Plea for Chaos, likewise a vastly different style and voice from Anne's, G. F. Dutton's Some Branch Against the Sky. They may disappear from sight for long periods, then be found again, bob to the surface on some metaphorical seashore, perhaps to be republished, or used copies will be ordered from or Ebay. They're like messages in bottles, simply there in the mass of garden media "noise," carrying messages that may be found by like minds in the future, perhaps to spark new ideas at a more propitious time. As I was looking through the latest issue of Gardens Illustrated this week, I was wowed by the photos, but the text hardly registered as anything more than a neutral ground against which to display the photos. Even when I read an article, I was left thinking, 'What's the point of this?' Perhaps someone designed, or had someone else design, a beautiful garden, but to what end? A few pleasant places to sit? Pretty vistas and plant pictures? Dramatic allees of hornbeams or pristine topiary? A spectacular display of garden talent? Why is there no consistent concern with meaning, with aspiration for making something more than pretty gardens? There's no slickness in The Bad Tempered Gardener, no "garden porn," though Charles Hawes' small garden photos give us helpful windows into The Veddw. I think of the glossy garden magazines, innumerable books displaying the gardens of the wealthy or famous--all surface glitter, stimulating unrealistic aspiration among the less well-to-do, giving The Garden a romantic glow but no meaning beyond the appreciation of a well designed stage set. We need more books full of words about gardens. This one is funny, annoying, stimulating, and immensely sad. Please read it with an open mind and see if you don't find much to think on.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I love to garden and read on someone's blog about this ...By Laura Munoz I love to garden and read on someone's blog about this book. It was okay. Kind of like eating oatmeal without sugar.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Loved it By A. Pratt Absolutely love this book, which is funny, original, and at times, irritating. And at last, permission to cut off the hosta flowers before they bloom!

Seeing gardening as a serious and even outrageous art form has placed Anne Wareham well outside of what usually passes for discussion of gardens. Impatient with received ideas, eager to provoke, The Bad-Tempered Gardener is the story of her development as a thinking gardener and the creation with her husband, Charles Hawes, of their acclaimed garden in the Welsh borders, the Veddw. From the strange (plant obsessives, a bizarre debut as a television presenter) to the everyday (deadheading, sharing a garden), with frequent paeans to favourite plants and thoughtful pieces on show gardens and status, this is an intelligent, pugnacious and engaging book. It also unflinchingly conveys the challenges, the hard work, triumphs and failures behind the creation and development of a substantial contemporary garden.

This book is refreshing for being resolutely contrarian. The author's searing honesty will earn instant respect from many readers - we have all felt like the chapter headed 'I hate gardening', but few of us admit it. The Garden About the Author Anne Wareham has been living and gardening in the Welsh borders with her husband Charles Hawes for over thirty years. She has written occasional pieces for the Financial Times on gardens since 1998 and accompanying articles to Charles Hawes' photographs in magazines such as The English Garden and Gardens Illustrated. She contributed a chapter to the Frances Lincoln book Vista and is a founder member of thinkinggardens, set up with the support of the RHS to encourage and develop a broader, more enquiring attitude to gardens. Charles Hawes' photographs of gardens regularly appear in the best gardening magazines. He has won several prizes in the annual RHS open photography competition, and was an exhibiting finalist in the 2008 International Garden Photographer of the Year Competition. He supplied all the photographs in Stephen Anderton's recent book Discovering Welsh Gardens, shortlisted for a 2009 Garden Media Guild award.