

## Seeds Of Inspiration At Snow Library

by **Kaimi Rose Lum**

There's a small patch of snow-drops in the garden behind the library, a gift from Green Briar's Wildflower Garden at the Thornton Burgess Society in Sandwich. We've been checking it every morning, crooking thumb and forefinger in the air to show how high the shoots are when the discussion in the library's back room turns to the change in the weather, the signs of spring. Between the weeding and cataloguing of books there are bits of conversation about seedlings keeping warm under heat lamps back home, or the size of the buds on the daffodils in our yards. Wistful remarks about last spring's bluebells. Our librarians are a flower-loving lot.

You may have it too — the itch to be out and pottering among plants — especially after months of COVID-19 restrictions that have made winter feel extra confining. Cape Cod's fitful spring weather tends to prevent full immersion in the physical garden, but when April easterlies chase you indoors you can still tend to the abstract one—the ideal garden that lives in your head. Such labor involves planning, dreaming and plenty of reading. Here the library can help.

There are the how-to books, for starters. CLAMS libraries have plenty of those, and you can explore them on [clamsnet.org](http://clamsnet.org) by looking up any subject in the horticulture field (call number 635), clicking on a title that appeals to you and scrolling down to the virtual shelf, which lets you browse materials located in that section by navigating to the right or left. In Snow Library's non-fiction collection you'll find practical guidance on everything from growing microgreens to training fruit trees, pollinator gardening to permaculture, edible landscaping to ikebana. C.L. Fornari is a popular author of advice-dispensing books for local gardeners, "The Cape Cod Garden" being a staple in many libraries (we own four copies in Orleans). New titles are beginning to trickle in, too, such as "Fearless Gardening" by Loree Bohl, its cover splashed with a yellow cactus and the subtitle, "Be Bold, Break the Rules, Grow What You Love."

Reading for pleasure's sake, not with anxiety about the pH level of your soil, can help galvanize your garden prep if the author inspires or simply reminds you that to love and fuss over and be distracted by little growing things is to be human. Colette does this beautifully in "My Mother's House and Sido," her 1953 memoir of her childhood in Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye, France. Woven through it are ravishing depictions of Sido's (her mother's)

sprawling garden, "swathed in a mantle of wisteria and bignonia too heavy for the trellis of worn iron-work" and filled with geraniums, roses, red hot poker and "mauve autumn crocuses, those dim lanterns of cold twilights." Sido is the frazzled earth goddess who presides over this world, tuned in to every butterfly and breeze, guarding her pots of lupin seedlings and hibiscus cuttings, shoeing cats, making pets of spiders, admiring the impishness of a blackbird who steals fruit from under the nose of a scarecrow she's hung in her cherry tree.

Gertrude Jekyll's "Children and Gardens" also takes you back in time — to the English gardens Jekyll

played in in the early 1900s — but is so saturated with wonder at the sights, smells, shapes and textures of the floral landscape, wild or cultivated, that it feels timeless. Written for children, or for adults who wish to encourage their children to engage more with the outdoors, she devotes a whole chapter to playhouses, including a recipe for fairy cakes, provides a list of flowers recommended for your garden, and pens a section on "Pussies in the Garden," complete with amusing photographs of cats rolling in the catmint and her own drawings of "Pinkie" drinking from his water-bowl.

Ramble with Penelope Lively among the tulips and roses in "Life in the Garden" (Viking 2018). Lively's memoir recalls the eucalyptus-shaded courtyard of her childhood home in Egypt, introduces readers to her English gardens in Oxford and London, and meditates on the role of gardening in literature and art. Touring the painted gardens of Monet and the "written gardens" of Virginia Woolf, Lewis Carroll, Willa Cather and others, her book pays tribute to the landscapes that we cultivate in real life as well as the ones that bloom in our imagination.

Last but not least, Karel Capek digs into the squirrely psychology of the gardener in "The Gardener's Year," a month-by-month study of the obsessions, frustrations, absurdities and pleasures that come with tending the soil. You'll never see so much beauty in manure as through Capek's eyes. It's a breezy read, accompanied by humorous drawings, and the 2002 Modern Library edition (the book was written in 1929) includes an introduction by Verlyn Klinkenborg.

All of the above titles are available through curbside pickup at Snow Library and may be requested through [clamsnet.org](http://clamsnet.org), or by calling the library at 508-240-3760.

*Kaimi Rose Lum is the assistant director at Snow Library.*

