

# BOOKS

Be inspired and informed with the latest garden design and horticulture releases



Image: Beppe Giardinio

Image: Vincent Callebaut Architects



Image: Chantier-Corbasson Architects



## GARDEN CITY: SUPER GREEN BUILDINGS, URBAN SKYSCAPES AND THE NEW PLANTED SPACE



**BY:** Anna Yudina  
**PUBLISHED BY:** Thames & Hudson  
**PRICE:** £40  
**ISBN:** 978-0500343265

**AT FIRST SIGHT**, this looks like a coffee table book – all stylish, picture-led design. But *Garden City* is so much more. Increasing numbers of people worldwide live in urban rather than rural areas, and the trend is set to continue. As humans, though, we need nature. How do we get nature into cities? This book is a compilation of projects from across the world, bringing together many brilliant minds.

Approaches vary: “Some designers have approached vegetation as a building material that should need as little maintenance as possible. Others have treated plants as the resident’s companions – the living beings one finds pleasure in taking care of. Still others have developed hybrid designs

in which biological organisms and digital technology cooperate within a single system.”

The projects are grouped into five chapters: Fusion, Expansion, Coexistence, Performance and Fusion 2.0, with the last perhaps the most futuristic or visionary, where cities are considered ecosystems in which “architecture works in unison with nature” and houses become “organisms for living in”.

Among the most impressive are a building proposed for New York called ‘Dragonfly’ and those for ‘Paris Smart City 2050’ (top right), both by Vincent Callebaut Architectures. They look like something from a sci-fi movie, but green in every sense of the word.

I hadn’t expected to find myself increasingly drawn in. The breadth and variety of ideas is exciting – some are almost mundane, while others fire the imagination to such an extent that you want to track their progress.

Author Anna Yudina’s background is not in any of the ‘green’ professions, however, and it shows. If you want to “knit vegetation into the very fabric of buildings”, you need to know about vegetation, yet there is scant mention of this and the professionals who might provide it. If architects want their visions to function in the long run, they will need plant experts, who should be involved early on.

**Stefanie Rudolph, horticulturist**



**BY:** Sophie Walker  
**PUBLISHED BY:** Phaidon  
**PRICE:** £49.95  
**ISBN:** 978-0714874777

## THE JAPANESE GARDEN

**THE STRIKINGLY ATTRACTIVE** cover of *The Japanese Garden* sets the tone for a book that stands out from the crowd. But this book isn’t just stylish; it’s also packed with thought-provoking content.

Sophie Walker became the youngest female designer ever at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2014 with her Fresh Garden, Cave Pavilion. She studied art history before becoming a ‘garden maker’, and this background is evident throughout the book. She has been drawn to the Japanese garden, she says, for its “aspiration to high art and its ability to engage complex conceptual and philosophical propositions”.

The book covers over 90 gardens that span more than 1,200 years of Japanese

garden history. It looks at the ideas behind dry gardens, the importance of religion – both Buddhism and Shintoism – on the beginnings and evolution of Japanese garden design, the status of gardens in Imperial Japan and how philosophies behind the designs and planting still have a place in modern-day Japan. The chapter ‘Inner Space: The Courtyard Garden’, for instance, offered interesting ideas about incorporating greenery and a connection with nature into an increasingly urbanised world.

The book is divided into thematic chapters, each featuring a selection of gardens, with photographs, paintings and sketches illustrating the theme. Essays from, among others, the sculptors Lee Ufan and Anish

Kapoor, the architect John Pawson and mathematician Marcus du Sautoy discuss elements of Japanese garden design and are interspersed throughout the book, offering a change of pace from the author’s text and the images. It concludes with a glossary of Japanese terms, key plants, a brief history and a map.

This is a challenging read, but in a good way. It’s the deeper meanings that suffuse Japanese gardens that set them apart from those in the West, and this book helps to unlock this intriguing culture. As Walker explains: “As always with the Japanese garden, the visitor must work at perception – the garden is not a passive experience to be simply absorbed.”

**Louise Curley, garden writer**



**BY:** Harry and David Rich  
**PUBLISHED BY:** Century  
**PRICE:** £16.99  
**ISBN:** 978-178089714 7

## LOVE YOUR PLOT: GARDENS INSPIRED BY NATURE

**GIVEN THE RICH BROTHERS’** profile as TV garden designers, the first half of this book’s title might lead the reader to expect a garden makeover guide. In fact, *Love Your Plot* is a series of well-narrated case studies in concept development and the use of habitat references for garden design. It will be especially useful for garden design students and tutors, and established designers who want to refresh their process.

The book unpacks garden design processes and methodology in a detailed and accessible way. Presentation is high-end throughout, with ample illustrations, including many lovely hand-drawn sketches and diagrams. The opening sections on Principles and Elements of Design provide a refreshingly clear

summary of the basics, with sketched examples.

The largest part of the book is a series of landscape-based design case studies: Woodland, Grassland, Coastal, Mountain and Freshwater. Each habitat covered is defined as a series of specific sub-divisions, characterised by topography and types of vegetation. The design possibilities of one Principle and one Element are explored for each habitat, and then a paper design exercise is provided for each one, with annotated concept development sketches and photographs tracking the authors’ creative process.

Each of the case studies includes a library of plants suitable for the habitat, and the following chapter on Planting Principles offers

a framework for drawing out plant choices from design concepts. The final chapter describes elements of the design and build processes of the Rich Brothers’ 2014 and 2015 RHS Chelsea show gardens.

That final chapter, and the occasional photo spreads of the authors in appropriate habitats (and attire), push the book in a personality-driven, TV-friendly direction, but the strong balance of its content is much more thoughtful and valuable, and presents complex ideas clearly and in detail. *Love Your Plot* is a book to read right through and then dip into again to bring a particular idea or method of working back into focus.

**Mary Swan, Pre-Registered SGD Member**