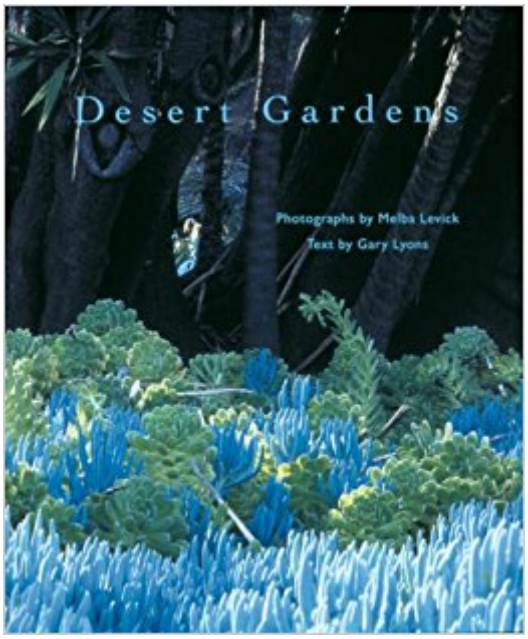
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Desert Gardens



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Synopsis

Whether explosive displays of columnar cacti and brilliant wildflowers cascading down sun-bathed hillsides, meditative, botanical expressions of an organic, spine-laden geometry set within the quiet, earthen walls of a Spanish colonial mission, or twilit, verdant groves evoking a prelapsarian topographythis book captures the numinous light and beauty of 18 unique and rarely photographed private and public desert gardens between San Francisco and San Diego. Featuring the most important desert garden in the world at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, as well as the Moorten Botanical Gardens in Palm Springs, Balboa Park in San Diego, and many exquisite private gardens, the volume celebrates the sculpturesque charms of cacti, aloes, and other succulent flora that have adapted to the extreme conditions of the desert. Combining spectacular garden views in idyllic settings and ravishingly beautiful images of particular specimens, with text by the renowned desert garden expert Gary Lyons that balances the poetics and technical aspects of this garden genre, the book serves as an inspirational guide to these horticultural treasures. Because interest in desert gardens continues to grow dramatically, the book also includes the addresses and visiting hours of gardens open to the public, and provides a bibliography of what one needs to know in order to create one’s own.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Levick’s 100 opulent color photographs capture the beauty of 18 private and public desert gardens in southern California. Among them are the garden in the Los Angeles City Zoo (200 species of

cacti and other succulents), the Huntington Desert Garden in San Marino (3,000 species), and the Balboa Park Cactus Gardens in San Diego with hundreds of species. Lyons, a much respected drought-tolerant garden designer, gives an informative history of the desert garden from the 1880s (the "cactus craze" era) to the present, and offers readers a personal tour of all 18. He apologizes for the excessive use of botanical names, explaining that many of the plants are so unusual that common names for them do not exist. This beautiful book also includes a garden directory, giving the addresses and visiting hours of the nine gardens open to the public. George CohenCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

Melba Levick is a widely published photographer who has over twenty books to her credit, including Rizzoli’s Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast, Beach Houses: From Malibu to Laguna, and Casa California: Spanish-Style Houses from Santa Barbara to San Clemente.Gary Lyons is an internationally recognized drought-tolerant garden designer, scholar, and conservationist. He is the curator of the Desert garden and Desert Plant Collection at the Huntington, a botanic garden consultant to the Los Angeles Zoo, a fellow of the Linnean Society of London, and an author of numerous articles on desert gardens.

Dry desert gardens are beautiful if people give them a chance. If you visited or even looked at photos from the Huntington Botanical Gardens, you will see the most important desert garden in the world other than the ones in nature. Gary Lyons is the curator at HBG so he was responsible for acquiring many plants in their collection.People are afraid of getting hurt by Cacti spines but I love them because it teaches us that we need to slow down to appreciate and respect nature. Roses have thorns also and when they are out of season, the thorny stems don’t look too good. Cacti produce some of the most amazingly beautiful flowers and when they are not in bloom you still have a wonderful sculpture garden with all kinds of colors and textures! It is important for people living in drought prone areas to plant cacti and succulents to save water. That is a logical point that many home owners ignore at their own expense. As mentioned in other reviews, this book is a great inspiration for landscape designers and homeowners since it features both large scaled and smaller private gardens. I’ve read this book several times and gone back to some sections for inspiration for my own garden design. The text is easy to read and photographs are great. This is a must have book for Southern Californians.

Great book

I especially liked the O’Neill garden

This author is highly respected for his desert-garden designs. This book is a nice overview of his work, mostly in California.

Great book. Good ideas for gardening and great pictures as well. My husband has a gardening hobby and the book gave him great ideas.

This book was a disappointment. The text is uninspiring and the photos do not convey the gardens they supposedly portrait. The quality of the photos is very good, but most of them show small sections of the gardens or even just a few plants. Moreover, often the plants shown are rather common.We were hoping to see photos that give an overview of each garden so one gets a feeling for the organization of space, layering of plants, depth, etc. None of that. Just pretty pictures. A few close-up of specimens is great as a complement, but not as the only photos.We know two of the gardens rather well and feel that the photos just don’t even come close to conveying any of these gardens’ interests. Too bad, should have saved the money for a better book...

This fine large-format book covers public and private gardens in (mostly) coastal Southern California. Unusually for a coffee-table book, the text is more interesting than the photos. The photographs are quite nice, though the color-reproduction could be better. Author Lyons, formerly curator of the fabulous Huntington Desert Garden, is a marvelously knowledgeable, opinionated and entertaining writer. We learn that old Mr. Huntington didn’t like cacti at all, due to some unfortunate prickly-pear encounters in railroad construction work -- but, once won over, he built a railway spur to his garden, to bring in rock, soil and plants by the carload.....When asked about cacti, an old Mojave prospector told Lyons "I know every one of ’em. There’s the ’Full of Stickers,’ ’Stick and Stay In,’ ’Stick ’em Alive,’ ’Stick ’em Dead,’ ’Stick and Fester,’ ’Rattlesnake Fang’..." "I could probably add to the list," notes Lyons.Lyons relates the story of a cactus garden he planted for the Los Angeles Zoo, next to Sampson the elephant’s cage: "He never missed an opportunity to hit a moving target (and was a good shot) with chunks of flying feces... An unforgettable experience."A very entertaining book, recommended for all garden-book fans.Happy reading--Peter D. Tillman

My husband has a decided dislike of any plants in the "out to get you" category, and since I share

his loathing of thorns we have neither cacti nor roses in our garden. That being said, if you think "desert garden" means little more than prickles and sand let me assure you that this beautifully-illustrated book will change your mind.As Melba Levick's stunning photos so clearly show, gardens composed primarily of low-water plants can be beautiful and, more perhaps importantly, can be touchable as well. Although great care needs to be taken with many of the cacti (especially those species with barbed spines), there are supple succulents with no dangerous protrusions, and other user-friendly plants combine to great advantage in the 18 gardens shown.Occupying a relatively narrow area of coastal Southern California (with just a few exceptions), these private and public gardens showcase the passions of their owners. I've visited a number of them and find the descriptions of those to be both accurate and evocative, with their successes and shortcomings (in the author's view) both pointed out. Author Gary Lyons shares with these gardeners a love of things spiny and weirdly twisted (his own garden is one of the 18 featured), and he makes clear his belief (which I share) that plants should be allowed to grow in a setting which suits them best and not primarily used in an overly-controlled manner (as in the new Getty Museum gardens).I especially liked reading about the gardeners and how they came to develop their passions for these particular plants, and it would have been especially nice if a small photo of each gardener was included. One minor quibble I have is that the book should have been subtitled "of Southern California," as I was disappointed to find that it had a rather limited geographic scope. On the plus side, it has made me want to re-visit The Huntington Gardens and spend more time checking out the desert section rather than heading straight for the sub-tropical jungle areas. And I was inspired by it to acquire a few aloes this week to tuck into my Mediterranean front yard, and a couple more succulents for the drought-tolerant section, too.

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