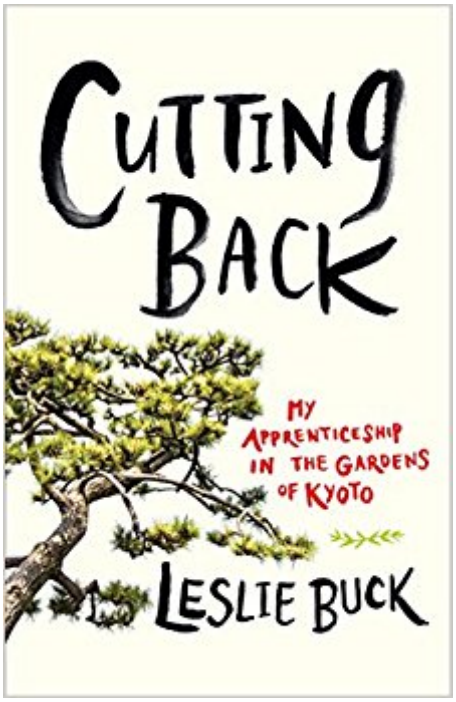
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Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship In The Gardens Of Kyoto



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“An unusual and entertaining memoir.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •New York Times Book Review At thirty-five, Leslie Buck made an impulsive decision to put her personal life on hold to pursue her passion. Leaving behind a full life of friends, love, and professional security, she became the first American woman to learn pruning from one of the most storied landscaping companies in Kyoto.Ã Â Cutting BackÃ Â recounts BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s bold journey and the revelations she has along the way. During her apprenticeship in Japan, she learns that the best Kyoto gardens look so natural they appear untouched by human hands, even though her crew spends hours meticulously cleaning every pebble in the streams. She is taught how to bring natureÃ¢â ¬â„¢s essence into a garden scene, how to design with native plants, and how to subtly direct a visitor through a landscape. But she learns the most important lessons from her fellow gardeners: how to balance strength with grace, seriousness with humor, and technique with heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Leslie BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s compelling story bring together three themesÃ¢â ¬â •a womanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s journey in life, adaptation to a new and strange culture, and discovery of a career that fulfills through its challenges. The connecting threads are Japanese gardens and gardening. Gardening is both BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s profession and a metaphor for BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s reflection on her life as a cycle of planting, nourishing, and pruning to achieve rich yet balanced growth. These familiar themes feel fresh in BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s light yet sensitive prose that transmits her adventurous

spirit yet reflective soul. Japanese gardens have long been recognized as special, almost magical, places that inspire and nourish. Leslie BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s memoir gives them a human dimension.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Kendal H. Brown, author of Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Leslie Buck offers a graciously pruned story about learning garden care in Japan, where no-one-telling-you-how leads to intimately discovering for yourself whatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s what--a learning that is Ã¢â ¬Å“entrenched in your body.Ã¢â ¬Â• Leslie tells her story with charm and good-humor.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Edward Espe Brown, author of Tassajara Bread Book Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Gardening in Japan is traditionally a male-dominated occupation. It is awkward and certainly not easy for Japanese women to enter, let alone a young woman from a foreign country. Ã Â LeslieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s strong conviction to learn Japanese pruning enabled her to dive into this uncharted world. Most impressive of all, however, was her bold move to select Uetoh Zoen in Kyoto, one of the oldest and most highly acclaimed landscape companies in Japan, as her host gardener. The Ã¢â ¬Å“secretsÃ¢â ¬Â• of Japanese gardening are subtly yet evidently revealed throughout the memoir, in describing such things as the way we handle pine tree branches, and the way we examine and correct the performance of a novice gardener. Her undeterred enthusiasm has opened a new door for her and for her followers.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Sadafumi Uchiyama, head curator at the Portland Japanese Garden, and third generation Japanese gardener Ã¢â ¬Å“An unusual and entertaining memoir . . . . she learnsÃ¢â ¬â •about durability and resilience. She learns to prune trees exquisitely. Most of all, she learns that Ã¢â ¬Ëœan apprentice must . . . be the good student.Ã¢â ¬â„¢ Not a bad lesson for any gardener.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •New York Times Book Review Ã¢â ¬Å“Her writings, inevitably, are a reflection on the contrasts between the roles of the gardener in two very different cultures.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington PostÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Buck has as good an eye for cultural dissonance as she does for pines that need pruning. . . . This is an absorbing read about the formative interplay of humans, cultures, and gardens.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly starred review Ã¢â ¬Å“The descriptions of the gardens the author tends while in Japan will transport readers; it is an armchair touristÃ¢â ¬â„¢s treat to wander the temple gardens as she describes them.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Library Journal Ã¢â ¬Å“Read Cutting Back for insight into Japanese gardening culture, for descriptions of naturalistic Japanese gardens, or if you enjoy travel memoirs.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •NYBGÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Plant Talk Ã¢â ¬Å“If you love losing yourself in natural settings, this memoir is definitely for you. . . . the life lessons Buck learns away from her pruning shears will appeal to any reader.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Bustle Ã¢â ¬Å“Told with beautiful, carefully crafted language and a perceptively candid voice. . . . the bookÃ¢â ¬â„¢s core is its intuitive appreciation

for nature.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Forward MagazineÃ¢â ¬â Ã¢â ¬Å“As much a story of bravery and the challenge of adapting to an unfamiliar culture as it is of horticulture. Anyone contemplating a brave career gamble will learn from it.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •San Francisco ChronicleÃ¢â ¬â Ã¢â ¬Å“Cutting Back describes the work and skills of a Japanese crew, but it is not a how-to book in any sense except possibly the joy ultimately found when you cast aside your fears and move on to fulfill a dream.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Recorder Ã¢â ¬Å“This is a great read, particularly so for those who appreciate the thoughtfulness woven into so much of Japanese culture.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Choosy Traveler Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Engaging account. . . of being a female worker in a traditionally male-dominated professionÃ¢â ¬â •and the lessons [Buck] learned at the intersection of art and nature.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •East Bay Times

Ã¢â ¬Å“Leslie goes all the way, immersing herself in JapanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s gardening culture to master a craft to its fullest. I admire her dedication and this beautiful book is a testimony to her success.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Alice Waters, owner of Chez Panisse restaurant and founder of the Edible Schoolyard Project Ã¢â ¬Å“In well-pruned prose, Buck has written in turns a hilarious, informative, and culturally revealing tale of coming of age as a gardener.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Liza Dalby, author of Geisha and The Tale of Murasaki: A Novel Ã¢â ¬Å“Gardening in Japan is traditionally a male-dominated occupation. It is awkward and certainly not easy for Japanese women to enter, let alone a young woman from a foreign country. LeslieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s strong conviction to learn Japanese pruning enabled her to dive into this uncharted world. Her undeterred enthusiasm has opened a new door for her and for her followers.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â • Sadafumi Uchiyama, garden curator at the Portland Japanese Garden and third-generation Japanese gardener Ã¢â ¬Å“Leslie BuckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s compelling story brings together three themesÃ¢â ¬â •a womanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s journey in life, adaptation to a new and strange culture, and discovery of a career that fulfills through its challenges.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Kendall H. Brown, author of Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America, and professor of Asian Art History, California State University, Long Beach Ã¢â ¬Å“Leslie Buck offers a graciously pruned story about learning garden care in Japan, where no one telling you how leads to intimately discovering for yourself whatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s what.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Edward Espe Brown, American Zen teacher and writer

Even though I’m not a gardener, I found this book to be charming, entertaining and educational. It’s an account of the author’s apprenticeship in Kyoto, Japan pruning trees and working in the city’s beautiful and historic gardens. Yes, there’s lots of information about plants, but I loved the cultural

insights about the people, the food, their homes, habits and more. Especially interesting is the astonishing work ethic and pace of her Japanese colleagues and the rigid employee hierarchy by which it operates. Read it if you want to broaden your horizons and gain a deeper appreciation of how great gardeners enhance the natural beauty all around us.

My husband and I lived in Japan and also love gardening. He is reading this delightful book out loud and it is an interesting and fun memoir.

Vivid and unrelentingly honest, this thrifty and well-written memoir follows Leslie Buck through her internship as a Kyoto gardener. As an American in Japan, and as a woman in a traditionally man's world, she is doubly a stranger. Buck registers her frustrations and triumphs in a compelling narrative.

Okay, it was a gift for an inveterate gardener -- but she still have not stopped talking about the book, and about how much she relates to the spirit in which the book was written. Absolutely the best gardening book she has read! Loved it! Fifteen stars! If there's dirt under your nails and seeds wearing away in the soles of your sandals, this is the book for you!

Interesting book. Would love to have seen her drawings or photos of the gardens though.

Excellent, especially since I used to live in japan

Totally entertaining. I'm interested in Japanese gardens and design but do none of it (don't know what most plants are, don't prune, etc.) and saw an article on the author in the Washington Post. I took a chance on this book and ended up reading it all July 4 weekend - the author's quest to improve her craft in a culture that teaches by watching and following more than through feedback (and anyway, she didn't speak much Japanese) was very, very engrossing to me. I came away wanting to learn more about horticulture and design for my own yard, if nothing else.

The book was very good.

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