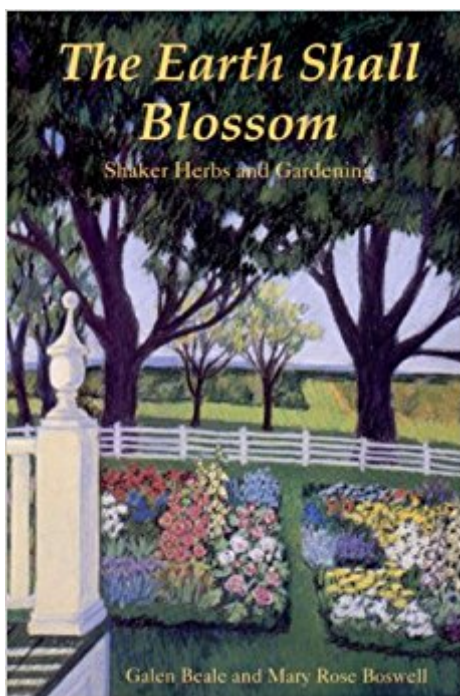


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The Earth Shall Blossom: Shaker Herbs And Gardening



Synopsis

The Shakers endlessly fascinate us; they seem always to offer something new. We are drawn again and again to their philosophy of simple, resourceful living, to their artifacts, and to their architecture, music, furniture, and agriculture. This book explores the Shakers' herb gardening heritage. It combines colorful history, practical growing and harvesting advice, and a guide to existing Shaker gardens. You will learn here how to plan and plant your own Shaker garden—a garden you will enjoy all the more by understanding its links to a tradition that began in 1774. "The Earth Shall Blossom" provides:

- * Designs for your own color, fragrance, tea, culinary, or medicinal gardens
- * Gardening tips from the 19th-century Shakers' Manual as well as up-to-date advice on growing and preserving herbs
- * Descriptions of restored Shaker gardens from Maine to Kentucky
- * Shaker herbal recipes for kitchen, bath, and medicinal use
- * Over 60 illustrations, including period prints

All of this is woven in with the entertaining and engaging history of the Shakers' agrarian life and their pioneering herb and herbal remedy business.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Galen Beale and Mary Rose Boswell both worked for many years at the Canterbury Shaker Village in New Hampshire, Beale as the herbalist and Boswell as the curator of Shaker collections.

So far, appears to be an interesting read on Shaker gardening.

This book is very interesting. Anyone who's interested in gardening would find this a informative read. The layout ideas are intriguing.

The Shakers movement started in the United States with the arrival of nine believers from England in 1774 with the purpose of increasing the work of God and establishing the Millennial Church. They established a large number of villages, many of which have died out, some have been preserved as museums and two continue to operate as active communities. Devoted to creating a more perfect spiritual heaven on earth, the isolated communities with mills, factories, meeting houses and farms offered men and women a secure home where they could perfect their talents for a higher purpose. They were entrepreneurs with an ability to understand trends that allowed them to provide quality goods at competitive prices, one of which was the seed, herb and herbal remedy business - the subject of this book. We are told that: "Every commune, to prosper, must be founded, so far as its industry goes, on agriculture. Only the simple labors and manners of a farming people can hold a community together." Their goal was to live separately from the world and to be self-sufficient, which in turn dictated their land acquisition policy and the establishment of the herb trade that was one of their most successful financial endeavors. Everything made or sold had to be perfect and "The Shakers' seeds and herbs gave the members a reputation as excellent horticulturists. Eventually they mass-produced these products for sale throughout the World, and their businesses evolved and lasted into the twentieth century."The Shaker physicians were excellent botanists to select the correct plants, understand soil types, weather, pests and when to harvest. To avoid mixing, they collected only one variety of plant at a time, at the peak of its growth, and only the part that was needed. Flowers were taken at their first opening after the dew had evaporated but before the day grew too hot. Great vigilance was required as the gardeners were competing with birds and other wild life. As the demand for their products increased, sales expanded beyond the local area, capitalizing on the need for large quantities of pure, conveniently packaged herbs for the pharmaceutical trade. To meet demand they planted gardens, growing plants under carefully controlled conditions. "For vegetables such as squash, cucumbers and melons, the Shakers cut the pulp out of the skins and put the meat into barrels to ferment. They stirred the mixture for about five days. When the seeds sank to the bottom of the barrels, they rinsed them in sieves. After the seeds dried, the Shakers packaged them for sale." Early in the year hot beds were filled with dung ready for spring planting. By the 1830s they had published their first catalogue offering 137 herbs for sale, followed in 1843 with the Gardeners' Manual with instructions to purchasers for growing their seeds. It is from these records that we have been provided with a book of great knowledge and

accumulated wisdom. Chapter 5 is "Persevering Faithfulness: Creating Your Shaker Herb Garden" with details of a herb tea garden with 18 teas, a culinary herb garden with 23 herbs, a medical herb garden with 25 herbs, a flowering herb garden with 20 herbs, and a fragrant herb garden with 21 herbs. There is information on preparing the soil, starting seed indoors, dividing plants, hot beds, transplanting, starting seed outdoors, cultivation, mulches, pest control, harvesting, storing and preparing the garden for winter. Other chapters tell us about the Shakers' medical practices, cosmetics, dyes and other household uses for herbs. The Shakers' agrarian lifestyle supported their large communities and fitted well with their belief in "hands to work, and hearts to God". Throughout the Shakers' history, their lands supported a variety of profitable enterprises. Today, the benefits of creating a well-kept, healthy garden are still as numerous as they were 100 years ago. This book is an excellent gift for the avid gardener, a useful guide for those not making full use of the garden space and an excellent reference for those who are considering using their surplus ground to start a small business. The Shakers developed a tremendous amount of valuable expertise that is contained in this book. Their business declined as the big seed companies moved in with more sophisticated advertising and promotion. Today, when our choice of seed varieties is much reduced, when the big seed companies have wrested too much power and impose upon us genetically modified crops, the Shakers would undoubtedly have provided a welcome alternative today. This book is a great help in taking back some of that power into our own hands.

I really enjoyed this book. The Shakers' work with plants is an often overlooked but fascinating part of their legacy.

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