



## TWO HOURS ON THE VEG PLOT

*Allotment and kitchen garden books  
with big ideas, by Jack Wallington*

If there's one thing I like as much as growing veg, it's spending a couple of hours with a good book. And, when it comes to gardening, there's no shortage. Whether you're taking on an allotment this year or you're an old hand with veg, expand your horizons for 2020 and add some interesting reads to your Christmas list.

Rather than one book covering everything, I love those focusing on specific topics in more detail, like Jekka McVicar's new *A Pocketful of Herbs: An A-Z* (£12.99, Bloomsbury Absolute). Alys Fowler explores the many medicinal uses for herbs and other plants in *A Modern Herbal* (£20, Michael Joseph). Although it's more a cookbook, the beautiful *Leaf* by Catherine Phipps (£25, Quadrille) will make you think again about leaves to eat, from interesting salad leaves through to nibbling weeds.

Although soil structure can seem mysterious, we've begun to understand that it requires nurturing. Paul Stamets delves into soil-based fungal networks for plant growth in *Mycelium Running* (£27.50, Ten Speed Press).

If you haven't already signed up, join the legions of no-diggers (including me) in the *No Dig Organic Home & Garden* by Charles



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*& Garden* by Charles

Dowding and Stephanie Hafferty (£23, Permanent Publications) – you won't look back.

If short on space, *Veg in One Bed* by Huw Richards (£14.99, DK) explains how to pack lots in, and for those with even less space – sadly most people these days – Alex Mitchell's *Crops in Tight Spots* (£18.99, Kyle Books) fits the bill, covering compact plots of all types, up to and including drainpipe strawberries.

There aren't many new books dedicated to fruit, so best look to good old *RHS Encyclopaedia of Gardening* or the abridged *RHS Complete Gardener's Manual* (£40 and £22, DK).

For general monthly tips, Alan Buckingham's new *Allotment Month by Month* (£17.99, DK) is good for allotment beginners or general reminders.

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