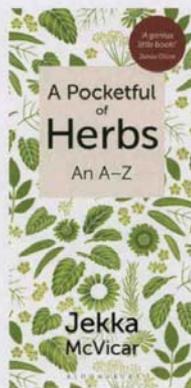


BOOKS

# The Reviewer

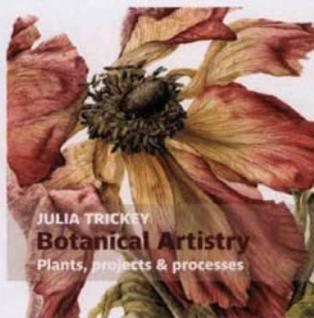
A selection of the best writing on the shelves this month



**A Pocketful of Herbs**  
by Jekka McVicar  
Bloomsbury, £12.99

Of growing herbs, there is little Jekka McVicar doesn't know. The doyenne of British herb growing was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour for services to horticulture in 2017 and grows some 650 herbs at her farm near Bristol. Her *Complete Herb Book*, published in 2009, has sold in the region of one million copies. All this is, of course, as much an indicator of her expertise as it is of our appetite for these culinary and medicinal plants, the properties of which have been cherished for centuries, with new effects continuing to be discovered.

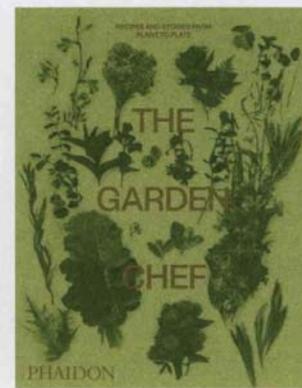
Jekka's most recent publication is an A-Z of herbs, published in a handy pocket size for easy reference when at a nursery or visiting a garden. Cover illustration is by her talented daughter, Hannah, and the photography inside is by Jekka herself. As a pocket book, it doesn't exhaust the topic but is comprehensive, with notes on over 400 herbs, including 26 types of lavender for example. This permits quick reference to a particular plant with brief notes that include such details as appearance, size, growth habit, and preferred growing conditions.



**Botanical Artistry**  
by Julia Trickey  
Two Rivers Press, £15.99

There is something incredibly poignant about Julia Trickey's studies of faded, desiccated flowers. They manage to capture the sadness and inevitability of the blooms' demise while simultaneously celebrating their inherent beauty, even as they descend into decay. Trickey's art may already be familiar to you – she widely exhibits her award-winning watercolours at RHS flower shows and botanical art exhibitions, and they've even been used on Royal Mail stamps. But this new book gathers them in one place. It's the first in a series of four featuring distinguished botanical artists, all of which have been edited by Trickey.

What sets *Botanical Artistry* apart are the fascinating insights into Trickey's methods – for example, how her composition changes when she's painting to create a scientific record of a plant, or a more contemporary piece destined to be enjoyed in its own right. This is beautifully accurate, botanical art with a twist – dying flowers, leaves rather than blooms, or dramatic black backgrounds – and a refreshing way to look at a centuries-old method of documenting plants.



**The Garden Chef**  
by Phaidon Editors  
Phaidon, £29.95

*The Garden Chef*, a new tome from Phaidon, offers a tour through the kitchen gardens of some of the world's most esteemed chefs championing provenance and seasonality. Britain is well represented here, in restaurants such as L'Enclume, The Sportsman, The Ethicurean and brand new Heckfield Place, but part of the joy of this is to see how vegetables are grown and used by renowned chefs around the world, in Iceland, Peru, France and Italy.

Chapters include thoughts on the chefs' motivations and the growing circumstances peculiar to their locations. Stephen Harris, of The Sportsman in Seasalter, for example, includes tips for a shoreline allotment as well as his favourite varieties – 'Kelvedon Wonder' peas, 'Defender' courgettes and 'Firestorm' runner beans.

The work is lavishly illustrated without seeming beyond the reach of the home gardener. So too, are the recipes contributed by each of the 40 chefs. While the only snails most of us will encounter are the garden variety and not those worthy of confit, the ingredients for a sorbet of rhubarb and bindweed leaves are in abundant supply.

