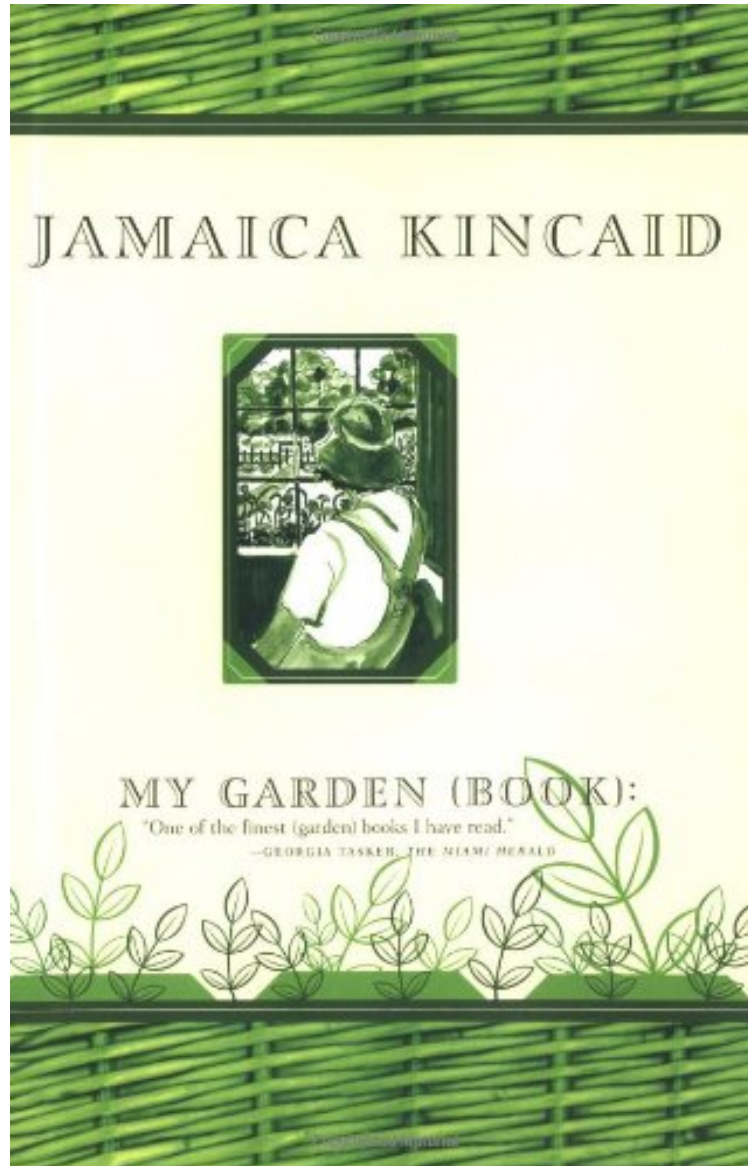


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My Garden (Book)

Jamaica Kincaid

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Jamaica Kincaid : My Garden (Book) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Garden (Book):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Good review from a surprising place By Darby Rose I was sitting in a tire repair shop awaiting bad news and reading Jamaica Kincaid's My Garden to while away the time. Suddenly, the young technician approached to tell me that things were not so bad after all - and better yet, he informed me that I was

reading a GREAT book! Who would have thought to receive a recommendation on a gardening book from a kid with axle grease on his hands! He went on to explain that his teacher had assigned the book in his writing class at the local college, and he found it enchanting. (That wasn't his choice of words, but you get the drift.) And indeed, it was an enchanting read. From her poetic mastery of the English language, to her transplanted Caribbean viewpoint, Kincaid writes from a different place - and don't we read at least partly to hear a different voice? Touching softly upon some very strong political sensibilities, Kincaid makes you think about earth's garden of souls as well as plants. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two Stars By Mary Good service! But don't like the book 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Samina Ali one of Kincaid's best

One of our finest writers on one of her greatest loves. Jamaica Kincaid's first garden in Vermont was a plot in the middle of her front lawn. There, to the consternation of more experienced friends, she planted only seeds of the flowers she liked best. In *My Garden* (Book): she gathers all she loves about gardening and plants, and examines it generously, passionately, and with sharp, idiosyncratic discrimination. Kincaid's affections are matched in intensity only by her dislikes. She loves spring and summer but cannot bring herself to love winter, for it hides the garden. She adores the rhododendron Jane Grant, and appreciates ordinary Blue Lake string beans, but abhors the Asiatic lily. The sources of her inspiration -- seed catalogues, the gardener Gertrude Jekyll, gardens like Monet's at Giverny -- are subjected to intense scrutiny. She also examines the idea of the garden on Antigua, where she grew up. *My Garden* (Book): is an intimate, playful, and penetrating book on gardens, the plants that fill them, and the persons who tend them.

From *Publishers Weekly* "I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind's eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know and even now do not know." Celebrated novelist Kincaid (*The Autobiography of My Mother*) should delight fans of her fiction and connoisseurs of the literature of horticulture with this personable and brightly descriptive, if somewhat rambling, book-length essay, most of it about her own garden in Vermont. Kincaid (who last year edited the anthology *My Favorite Plant*) shuttles constantly and with ease between the practical, technical difficulties of gardening and the larger meanings it makes available. She asks herself why her new weeping wisterias won't look right on her stone terrace; why her *Carpinus betulus Pendula* looks so lonely amid poppies and "late-blooming monkshood"; what's wrong with roses, and what's good about Blue Lake green beans; and how to stack up stones. But she also coaxes from her plot of earth more philosophical and psychological questions--inquiries about geography, heritage, marriage, motherhood, power; "how to make a house a home"; whether and for whom "to name is to possess." Kincaid's Antiguan upbringing recurs as a point of comparison, a source of political insights and a focus of nostalgia: "it dawned on me that the garden I was making... resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it." A botany-centered trip to Kunming, China, gives the last chapter a welcome change of scene. Kincaid, her publisher and their designers have made of her meditations a remarkably attractive physical object, suffused outside and in by shades of green and decorated throughout with illustrations by Jill Fox. (Dec.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Kincaid blends a fertile inner life, botanical and colonial history, gardening lore, and her long gardening experience to create a rich, rewarding read. She contrasts the colonial specimen plants of the botanical garden of St. John's, in her native Antigua, with the wild, unruly garden she's created at her current home in Vermont. This garden, says Kincaid, reflects her passions and interests. "When it dawned on me that the garden I was making... resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it... I only marveled at the way a garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of getting to a past that is my own." Kincaid is a hopeful, imaginative gardener who lazily pages through catalogs during the long Vermont winters and plans trips to China, Giverny, and Sissinghurst to further feed her passion for plants. "I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind's eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know. And this must be why: the garden for me is so bound up with words about the garden, with words themselves, that any set idea of the garden, any set picture, is a provocation to me." Is her ideal possible? "I shall never have the garden I have in my mind but that for me is the joy of it; certain things can never be realized so all the more reason to attempt them." Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Kincaid's exuberant writing style complements her wide-ranging ruminations on gardens and the pursuit of gardening. Plant life is mysterious; specimens that should flower but do not do so raise questions that beg to be answered. Winter is not Kincaid's cup of tea, but the season allows time to enjoy inspirational seed and plant nursery catalogs. Insofar as her involvement in making a garden goes, Kincaid acknowledges both "satisfaction and despair." Readers who garden will recognize those feelings as the predictably contrary states of mind when we cultivate the land. Kincaid tours London's Chelsea Flower Show, Monet's Giverny, and Gertrude Jekyll's Munstead Wood, and she recalls unusual plants and observes the behavior of individuals from the past and the present. Still, Kincaid's views extend beyond the musings found in your usual garden journal. She ponders the history of slavery, the arrogance of the ruling classes, and the fact that ornamental gardens are a luxury, offering a great deal to savor and reflect on. Altogether, a fascinating cornucopia to consort with on nights when the garden is at rest. Alice Joyce