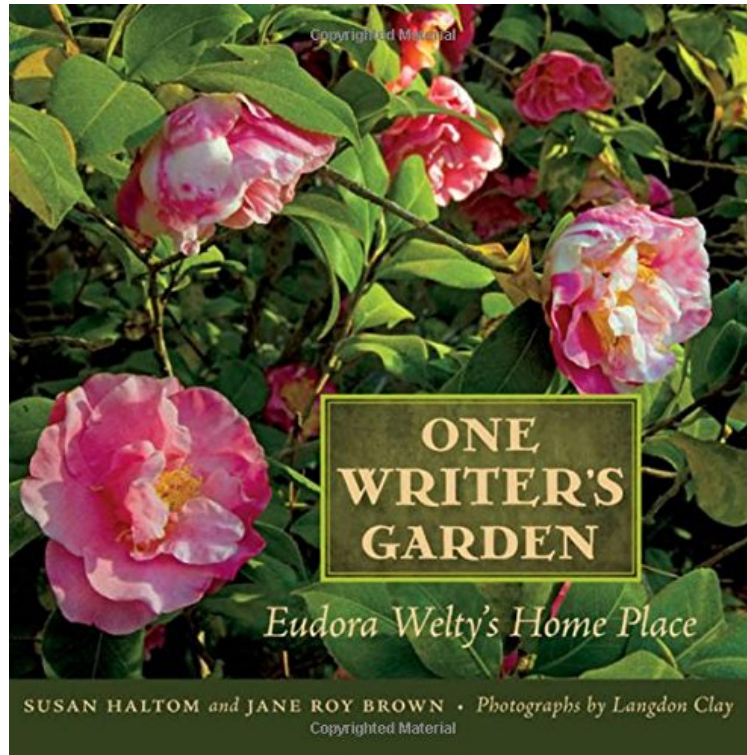


[Read free] One Writers Garden: Eudora Weltys Home Place

One Writers Garden: Eudora Weltys Home Place

Susan Haltom, Jane Roy Brown

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Susan Haltom, Jane Roy Brown : One Writers Garden: Eudora Weltys Home Place before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised One Writers Garden: Eudora Weltys Home Place:

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. a pleasant bookBy giLooking back at it, I'm not sure what I expected of this book, but a little more than it delivered. Certainly more than its cover, format, and publicity suggest.In it, the writers trace the creation and evolution of the Welty garden and put the design into the context of the early twentieth century. Using various resources, they suggest some of the meanings and values the garden had both for Eudora and her mother, Chestine Welty, who created it. The photographs are beautiful as well as ample, with most of the photographed plants identified properly. The writers also point out certain plants and descriptions of plants that appear both in Welty's fiction and personal writing.Yet when I had finished this book, I found myself a little puzzled. I felt I had read through several different books--the history of a modest garden, the gardeners' attitude toward it and one another, the story of a possible love affair that did not work out, the role of gardens in the early 20th century, and lots more. I had no central insights into the uniqueness of the gardeners or the influence of the garden on the writer's work. The authors depended on chronology as an organizing device and at times seemed uncertain of their task. Was it to report the history of a garden? Or---as the title certainly suggests---was it to show a gardener's relationship to her garden and to suggest what that relationship revealed about her and finally her work? In a word, this book lacks focus.The Welty garden is a simple garden, interesting primarily because it belonged to the writer Eudora Welty. Designed by her mother, then modified by her own interests in plants like camellias, it is finally modest, certainly by

this day's gardening standards. When the writers have had their go at it, it appears to have little distinctive about it. Yet every garden that is the product of a gardener, not some anonymous design firm, is distinctive. The maker's choice of plants is either conventional or idiosyncratic, driven by personal preferences and needs, reflecting a worldview that extends beyond the garden gate. For instance, I immediately noted that Welty the gardener was far more interested in plants than in design. She learned to root and graft plants. She brought back cuttings from her WPA documentation trips around the state, begged plants from the yards of country gardeners who continued to nurture and propagate old species and varieties. She dug native plants from the countryside without serious twinges of conscience. She observed that little country towns all over Mississippi were characterized by different varieties of camellias that grew there, local plants having been disseminated from cuttings of a common parent plant, and she smiled that she was assembling them all in one place. Passalongs. And she participates in that tradition. While Welty corresponded with sophisticated gardeners like Elizabeth Lawrence and sometimes ordered from regional nurseries, she seems to have been far more interested in the old-fashioned passalong plants that were staples in Southern gardens than in newer varieties that were more floriferous or that had larger blooms. Her choices deserved attention. In her writing, Welty often uses gardens as characterizing devices, reflections of their makers' personalities and station. I think the authors of this book would have done well to have paid more careful attention to the practice of the writer whose garden they purported to study. Anyone who reads her stories recognizes immediately that Welty uses plants and garden design to do more than establish place. That Sister demands the fern and pulls up some of the four-o'clocks from the star-shaped bed in front of the house when she moves her residence to the Post Office in "Why I Live at the P.O." or that she immediately installs there strings on which beans and morning glories might run reveals a lot about Sister and the world in which she lived. That she knows she can tantalize her mother by mentioning the mail order offer of "1000 seed, no two alike" tells a lot about both mother and daughter. Throughout Welty's work, one sees her use gardening not only in metaphor, although plants provide some of her finest metaphors. A book this size and on this subject should have sought more assiduously to find the gardener in the garden. That is not to say the book is bad. Those who love Welty's work will find things of interest in it and will draw conclusions about her practices on their own. The writers have also used newly available letters and photographs. I enjoyed my ramble through this book and I was glad to learn more specifically about some of the plants Welty grew, but I felt the book needed the hand of a strong editor. In my view, this book would have benefited from more focus, more exploration and more insight. 17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully written and illustrated! By JPB This is a fascinating history, well illustrated with historic photos as well as images of the garden in its current, beautiful state. This volume deserves a place alongside "The Orchard: A Memoir" by Theresa Weir, on any bookshelf! The best garden book I have read in a long, long time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Another prize book By Jean A. Hartley What a great book, couldn't wait to share it with friends who are also Eudora Welty admirers

By the time she reached her late twenties, Eudora Welty (1909-2001) was launching a distinguished literary career. She was also becoming a capable gardener under the tutelage of her mother, Chestina Welty, who designed their modest garden in Jackson, Mississippi. From the beginning, Eudora wove images of southern flora and gardens into her writing, yet few outside her personal circle knew that the images were drawn directly from her passionate connection to and abiding knowledge of her own garden. Near the end of her life, Welty still resided in her parents house, but the garden-and the friends who remembered it-had all but vanished. When a local garden designer offered to help bring it back, Welty began remembering the flowers that had grown in what she called my mothers garden. By the time Eudora died, that gardener, Susan Haltom, was leading a historic restoration. When Welty's private papers were released several years after her death, they confirmed that the writer had sought both inspiration and a creative outlet there. This book contains many previously unpublished writings, including literary passages and excerpts from Welty's private correspondence about the garden. The authors of *One Writer's Garden* also draw connections between Welty's gardening and her writing. They show how the garden echoed the prevailing style of Welty's mothers generation, which in turn mirrored wider trends in American life: Progressive-era optimism, a rising middle class, prosperity, new technology, womens clubs, garden clubs, streetcar suburbs, civic beautification, conservation, plant introductions, and garden writing. The authors illustrate this gardens history and the broader story of how American gardens evolved in the early twentieth century-with images from contemporary garden literature, seed catalogs, and advertisements, as well as unique historic photographs. Noted landscape photographer Langdon Clay captures the restored garden through the seasons.

About the Author Susan Haltom, Ridgeland, Mississippi, is a garden designer and preservation and maintenance coordinator of the Eudora Welty garden. She has published in Mississippi Magazine, Mississippi Gardens, Old House Journal, and Magnolia, the journal of the Southern Garden History Society. Jane Roy Brown, Conway, Massachusetts, is a freelance travel and garden writer with a focus on historic gardens and landscapes. She is also director of educational outreach for the Library of American Landscape History. She has published in Horticulture, Preservation, Garden Design, and the Boston Globe, and she serves as a contributing editor to Landscape Architecture. Langdon

Clays photographs have been featured in such publications as Jeffersons Monticello by Howard Adams and From My Chateau Kitchen by Anne Willan. His art photography can be found in museums in Paris, London, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and Jackson, Mississippi.