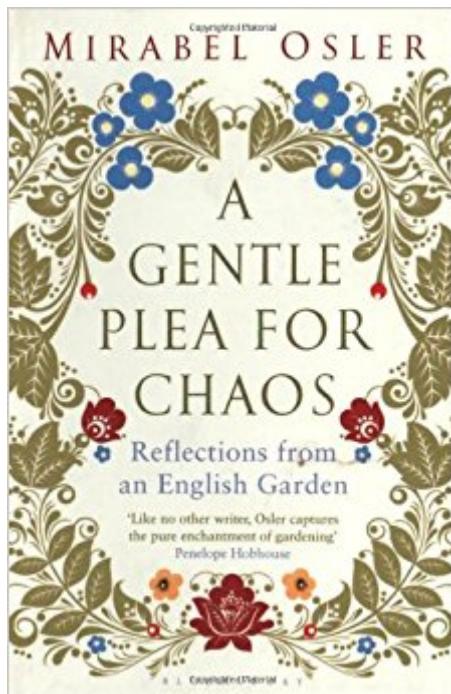


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A Gentle Plea For Chaos: Reissued



Synopsis

In this book the author describes the way her garden evolved and how, without meaning to do so, she let it take over her life. She suggests moving away from planning, regimentation and gardening with the mentality of a stamp-collector. Frequently funny and always stimulating, she writes of the alchemy of gardens, of the 19th-century plant-collectors and plant illustrators and of the gardening philosophers, all fertilizing great thoughts along with their hollyhocks.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Osler's plea is not so gentle; rather, its opinionated (though never dismissive), bell-clear, wickedly humorous, brilliant--a call for cultivated anarchy in the garden that turns an oxymoron into a sensuous, sensible act. ``Why garden? God knows . . . Damn those fine mornings. It's then that guilt seeps in like bad gas," groans Osler, one of England's best-known gardeners. Don't buy it for a minute. Her love of gardening is obvious, even if ``a great number of gardening jobs are pure slog.'' And her garden, eclectically wanton as it is, enemy of everything regimented and overly neat, shot through with the native vitality of plants for atmosphere and mystery, brings her to her knees much of the time; untidiness requires work. She wouldn't have it any other way. She likes a rude edge, to blur and enchant, the unruly ``quality that adds an extra sensory dimension.'' She loves hedges, walls, and paths--``the bones of a garden"--as long as they don't rob the garden of its sensuality. Here she offers not so much advice as the experience of her Shropshire garden: trees for their summer crowns and bare winter branches, stone for its texture and floral affinities, water for its

attractiveness to humans and kingfishers and newts, bulbs for their individuality and scope. She's not tethered to flowers, but she loves them too ("`who can go outside and kick a lily?"). Like her garden, Osler will not be confined, and she delights in moving off in many directions, to weather wars and the transporting quality of scent, botanical illustrations and the patron saints of gardening (Osler suggests a small figure of one in the garden ``might be just as efficacious as a blast of Phostrogen"). Osler's thinking is original, intuitive, and sharp as a tack; as a gardening writer she rightly sits up there with Henry Mitchell and Eleanor Perenyi. -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

...a smart, spirited, gorgeously written and above all funny book ... open-minded (her outlook is refreshingly international), personal and passionate... -- The New York Times Book Review, Michael Pollan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This account of one couple's experience in creating their garden in the English countryside is entertaining and afforded me many opportunities to think, "Isn't that just the way it is!" But imagining all the physical work they supposedly did on their own really exhausted me. I do really appreciate their approval of letting plants be "natural" to their surroundings and like its justification of the lovely mess I keep.

This delightful book has been my favourite garden book for many years. I made the mistake of loaning my original copy and never got it back. It's been out of print so I was thrilled to find it online. Beautiful photos of a lush British garden.

Mirabel has given me the mental freedom to allow my garden to "drift" and not be so perfect....WOW!

Chaos in the garden? That's something I can relate to, so this title grabbed my attention. The photo of the author on the back cover depicts a middle-aged woman, barefooted and wearing a straw hat and a frumpy outfit backed by ferns. What the photo could not convey was that what the author might lack in fashion sense, she more than made up for in literary style. As a garden writer, I've quoted frequently from these eloquent pages.

Ms. Osler wrote this book after her best seller 'A Breath From Elsewhere' so maybe my disappointment is owing to reading number two. I honestly can't see why everyone is so excited about this author. It's a nice book and pleasant to read before you go to sleep, but not particularly insightful (Jim Nollman, Allen Lacey), funny (Henry Mitchell), filled with useful information (Miss Elizabeth Lawrence) or historical tidbits (Anna Pavord). It's a good read, but doesn't deserve 5 stars.

On the enchantment of gardening, Mirabel Osler writes, "Somewhere, invisibly and very powerfully, I am being got at by something very pushy...I know that when I walk into my garden and start working, I am drawn across an invisible threshold I never knew existed until I began to grovel." Warm and insightful, this book belongs with the classics of garden literature.

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