Summer meadow
Matthew Wilson’s practical guide to growing your own meadow

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Book reviews

ON GUERRILLA GARDENING: A HANDBOOK FOR GARDENING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES
Richard Reynolds Bloomsbury Publishing (978-0747590811) £14.99

Urban areas are full of uncared for, unloved land: road verges, traffic islands, vacant lots, derelict sites. Guerrilla gardening aims to take over such areas and fill them with lush, green, life-affirming plants – without the permission of the owners.

Like all guerrilla struggles its tactics are small-scale, secretive, inventive and unexpected. Its weapons may be flowers, trees or – particularly in poor communities – vegetable or cereal crops.

This book describes a movement which has taken root in the USA, Britain and a surprising number of other countries. With any luck, it will encourage many more people to sneak out at night to rotavate and plant up abandoned borders, sow wildflower or annual seed on roundabouts or hurl seed bombs from car windows onto verges. Guerrilla gardening is about citizens taking responsibility for their surroundings and daring to beautify them, in the face of official indifference or hostility.

On Guerrilla Gardening is part account, part polemic and part manual; with quotes from Mao Tse-tung and other practitioners of guerrilla warfare, it constantly plays with the military metaphor. Active guerrilla gardeners are given names and numbers, which keeps up a rather breathless tone of adventure and derring-do. There are many examples from around the world, and a lot of practical advice on both the horticultural aspects of the struggle and the political – every guerrilla fighter knows

‘Fighting and gardening are natural human pastimes, so combining the two involves no great contortion’ RICHARD REYNOLDS

the value of propaganda: leaflets, signs, press publicity, events and sometimes even the ultimate goal – official recognition and legitimacy.

Probably the most unusual garden book of 2008, On Guerrilla Gardening is well-researched, thorough and truly inspirational. La lotta horticultura continua! Noël Kingsbury is an author and leading expert on contemporary planting design.

book offer