

Book Views: Farming and Gardening



LOCAVORE: From Farmers' Fields To Rooftop Gardens: How Canadians Are Changing The Way We Eat

by Sarah Elton

The "local" food movement is on the upswing across the country. We see it in the increase in farmers' markets and 100-mile stores to be found in towns on the Escarpment like Creemore and Meaford. "Locavore," a new word in 2003, is defined as someone who subsists on foods grown and produced nearby.

Sarah Elton is not a purist but rather a realist who would like to see profitable and sustainable small farming across the country and food consumed mostly where it is grown rather than Canadians eating U.S. carrots while ours are sent hundreds of km south of the border and also shipped to other countries. But that doesn't mean we can't enjoy our spices, coffee, tea and chocolate! Did you know that almost all our apple juice and fruit juice medleys contain concentrate from Chinese apples?

Elton's travels take her from coast to coast visiting farms, cheese producers, restaurants and food markets and talking to many who share her interests and who

are making it work where they live. In this book you will meet many fascinating people and be inspired by this grass-roots movement which is truly changing the way we eat and the way we think about food. Whether you live in the country or in the heart of a city or operate a farm, patronize the local markets or plant your own containers of herbs and tomatoes on your city patio, you are part of this movement.

This very interesting book is especially pertinent in this season of growing, harvesting and enjoying the bounty of the land.

HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009, \$29.99.

Reviewed by Catherine Randall



Queen Elizabeth: The Queen Mother: The Official Biography

By William Shawcross

The Queen Mother was 102 when she died in 2002, as old as the century, it was said. She was at the centre of many historical events, which is why her biography is so substantial, a full 3¾ inches thick. At times it is difficult to read simply because of its size. You almost need to read it at a table or with a pillow on your lap.

Yet the actual reading of it, save for a few chapters, is easy, interesting and entertaining. The highlights of the book are the most dramatic times: the abdication of Edward VIII which led to his brother and sister-in-law taking the throne, the new king and queen's strength

during W.W.II, and the plural crises around the Princess of Wales.

We learn much more about Queen Elizabeth in her younger life than about her as Queen Mother, likely because more documentation was kept of her when she was directly involved in every important event involving Britain. Once she became widowed and her daughter was crowned Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen Mother stepped back a bit from the historical record. So the chapters that are a wee bit dull are the ones that briefly list her favourite horses, races, Commonwealth tours, and the many organizations of which she was patron.

The most enjoyable parts of the book seem to recreate actual experiences, quoting from reports, journals or the many letters that people wrote in those days.

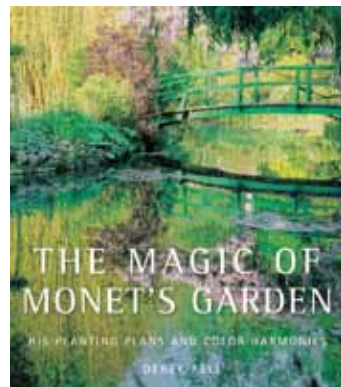
When we seem to be inside the room with Churchill, the Duke of Windsor, King George VI, Princess Margaret, Prince Charles, poet Ted Hughes and others, the writing is actually gripping.

The smaller moments of her life may be even more fascinating. It's true that she enjoyed drinking, champagne and gin in particular, although not together. When a new widow, she bought a derelict castle in the far north of Scotland and spent too much money fixing it up. The Queen paid her mother's bills at times because as "the last great Edwardian," she lived in a style that no one dared suggest she give up.

This is required reading for students of 20th century history and fans of royalty.

HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009, \$39.99.

Reviewed by Gloria Hildebrandt



The Magic of Monet's Garden

By Derek Fell

A stunningly beautiful book, its photographs are breath taking. Of course, the roughly three-hectare property consisting of a flower garden, vegetable garden and water garden is the result of a lot of money and hired help, so duplicating even parts of Monet's fabulous garden

will be impossible for most people.

Yet gardeners can dream and everyone can appreciate artistic perfection. This book analyzes the gardens for such techniques Monet used, as including flowers with black centres to suggest spots of shade, and small white flowers planted throughout large beds to create the famous "Impressionist shimmer."

Author Derek Fell points out that what can more

easily be created in gardens of any size, even window boxes, are Monet's unusual colour combinations: yellow and purple, orange and blue, and red, pink and silver. Monet was fond of pansies and forget-me-nots, underplanting them lavishly, which is another idea within reach of all.

Firefly Books Ltd., 2007, \$35.00.

Reviewed by Gloria Hildebrandt

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