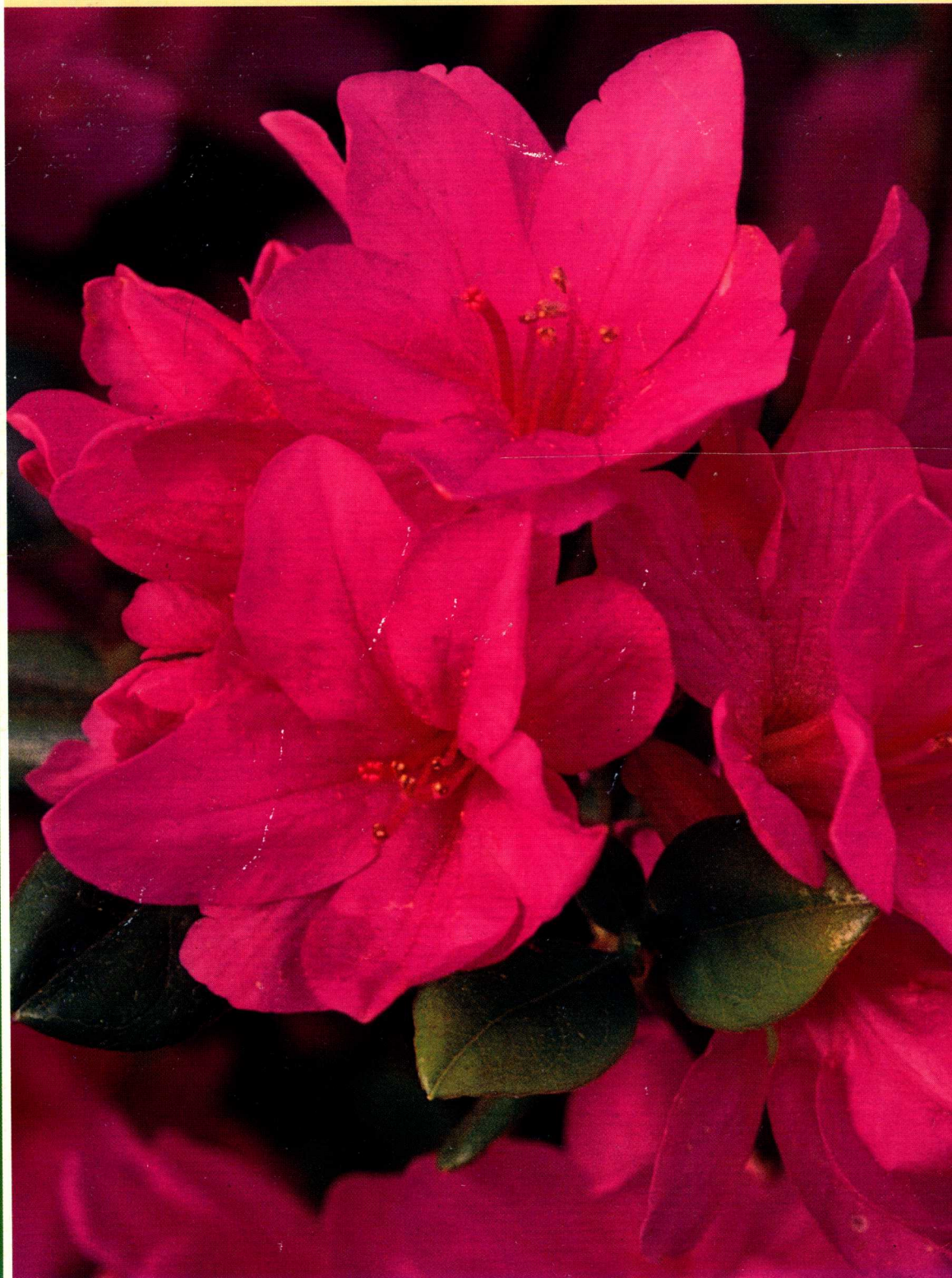


# THE Southern Living<sup>®</sup> GARDEN BOOK

The Complete  
Encyclopedia of  
MORE THAN  
5,000  
SOUTHERN  
PLANTS





# THE Southern Living<sup>®</sup> GARDEN BOOK

Edited by Steve Bender,  
Senior Writer, *Southern Living*



Oxmoor  
House<sup>®</sup>



Hollyhocks and poppies surround a French olive jar

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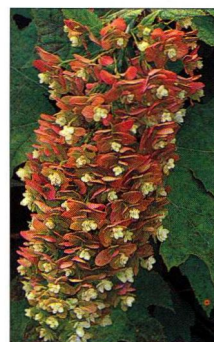
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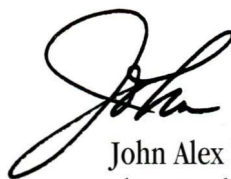
# Foreword

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Every month, *Southern Living* magazine appears in the homes of more than two million families. In the 30-plus years since its founding, the magazine has become a faithful resource for Southerners who enjoy home, food, travel, and gardening. A hallmark of our philosophy is that good gardening and good design go hand-in-hand. In the many beautiful gardens featured in our pages, we've tried to set the tone for good practices throughout the South.

I am pleased to introduce our first comprehensive gardening book for the people of the American South. The *Southern Living Garden Book* showcases plants that form the backbone of Southern gardens. Spearheaded by Senior Writer Steve Bender, an active gardener and horticulturist, it describes more than 5,000 plants that fit the needs of gardeners across our region. We hope our book, which includes helpful climate maps and outstanding plants selection guides, will become the Bible of Southern gardening.

Whether you live in Lubbock, Texas; Hagerstown, Maryland; Fort Smith, Arkansas; or Tampa, Florida, you'll find this book invaluable. I hope you enjoy reading and using it as much as the *Southern Living* gardening staff enjoyed producing it.



John Alex Floyd, Jr.  
Editor, *Southern Living*





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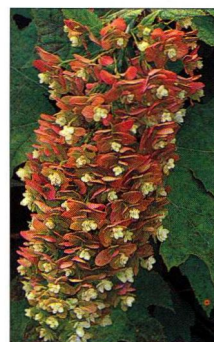
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*Trey and Valerie Vaughan garden  
Atlanta, Georgia*



# The Spirit of Southern Gardening

## *What Makes a Garden Southern?*

It's more than geographical location; it's more than a practiced style. True Southernness grows from a fervent quest for continuity—an instinctive recognition that the seeds we sow and the bulbs we share tell the world who we are and where we've been.

One hundred years ago, the majority of Southerners earned their living from the land. Farmers belonged to a noble, honored profession and were lauded by Thomas Jefferson as “the chosen people of God.” Their beliefs, values, and practices shape our gardens still.

*“God Almighty first planted a garden. And indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures.”*

Francis Bacon  
“Of Gardens”



*Planting corn, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia*





*Homegrown bounty*



*Coneflowers and Queen Anne's lace*



*Garden tool art*

Farms of a hundred years ago were truly “out there.” Neighbors lived far apart, roads were poor, and news and transportation moved slowly. About the only time people got together on a regular basis was on Sunday for church. Families had to rely on themselves.

This isolation and self-reliance produced a conservative outlook, not only in politics and religion, but also in gardening. Thus, today's Southern gardeners aren't trendy—we don't pine for the latest scientific gardening techniques like hydroponics or tissue culture. And we don't trust any ornamental grass that can't be mown.

Instead, Southerners go with what works. We prefer the plants our parents grew, whether these be native or long-established exotics. Oh, from time to time we may flavor the stew with something new, but we never forsake the old family recipe.

Our garden designs are conservative, too. Granted, some of us assault the neighborhood with garish colors and bizarre geometric shapes. But in general, Southerners like gardens that fit in. The most satisfying examples pay homage to local topography, native vegetation, and regional style. Their distinctive looks tell us instantly where we are.

Conservatism doesn't translate into regimentation, however. If it did, how would we explain the glorious anarchy of the classic Southern cottage garden, where flowers and found art conquer all? Every garden needs that spark of innovation, that willingness to bend the rules a little to show that the gardener is alive. In the words of Rufus T. Firefly, author of the epic *White Trash Gardening*, “Garden planning never works. It's just like family planning—if everybody did it, it'd never happen.”





*Insect-eating pitcher plants and wildflowers at the Minamac Wildflower Bog in Silverhill, Alabama*

We often hear that the South is a region that celebrates its eccentrics. If so, it celebrates eccentric plants as well. In addition to azaleas, hollies, roses, crepe myrtles, hydrangeas, and other mainstream plants, Southerners treasure those that are just a bit odd. We prize the flower of the angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia*) as it pinwheels open at night. We tout the pregnant onion (*Ornithogalum caudatum*), which splits open to give birth to babies. We covet the explosive touch-me-not (*Impatiens balsamina*), which showers the unwary gardener with seed. Why? Because having a plant your neighbor doesn't have makes it a conversation piece. And conversation to a Southerner is like oxygen to an astronaut. Without it, life is short.

*"Gardeners cheat. If we can grow a plant that's not hardy, we do. And if we can grow a plant out of season, so much the better."*

Linda Askey  
Birmingham, Alabama





*Vicki and Alex Cureton garden  
Tallahassee, Florida*







# The Never-Ending Challenge

As a group, Southerners spend more time gardening than do people in almost any other region. Gardening here isn't a summertime diversion. In much of the South, men and women garden ten, eleven, and even twelve months out of the year.

It isn't always easy. Most of our soils are harder than bronze. A new generation of ravenous insects knocks at the gate every thirty seconds. The merciless weather plagues us with droughts, pelts us with hailstorms, and slicks us with ice. No wonder that halfway through another steamy summer most of us would like to throw in the trowel.

Yet we persevere. For Southern gardeners can no more cast off their heritage than a coon dog can give up the chase. Coaxing plants from the soil is inborn. And although we sometimes fail, we revel in every attempt.

"There are no green thumbs or black thumbs," wrote Henry Mitchell, the late, great columnist for the *Washington Post*. "There are only gardeners and non-gardeners. Gardeners are the ones who ruin after ruin get on with the high defiance of nature herself, creating, in the very face of chaos and tornado, the bower of roses and the pride of irises."

Or, as Mississippi author Felder Rushing likes to put it, "Gardening is an attitude, not a skill."



*Ornamental cabbage  
and paper whites*

*"Once I touch a  
plant, I have no  
concept of time.  
I can go on gar-  
dening forever."*

Jim Powell  
Jackson, Mississippi



*Alice and Don Williams garden  
Atlanta, Georgia*