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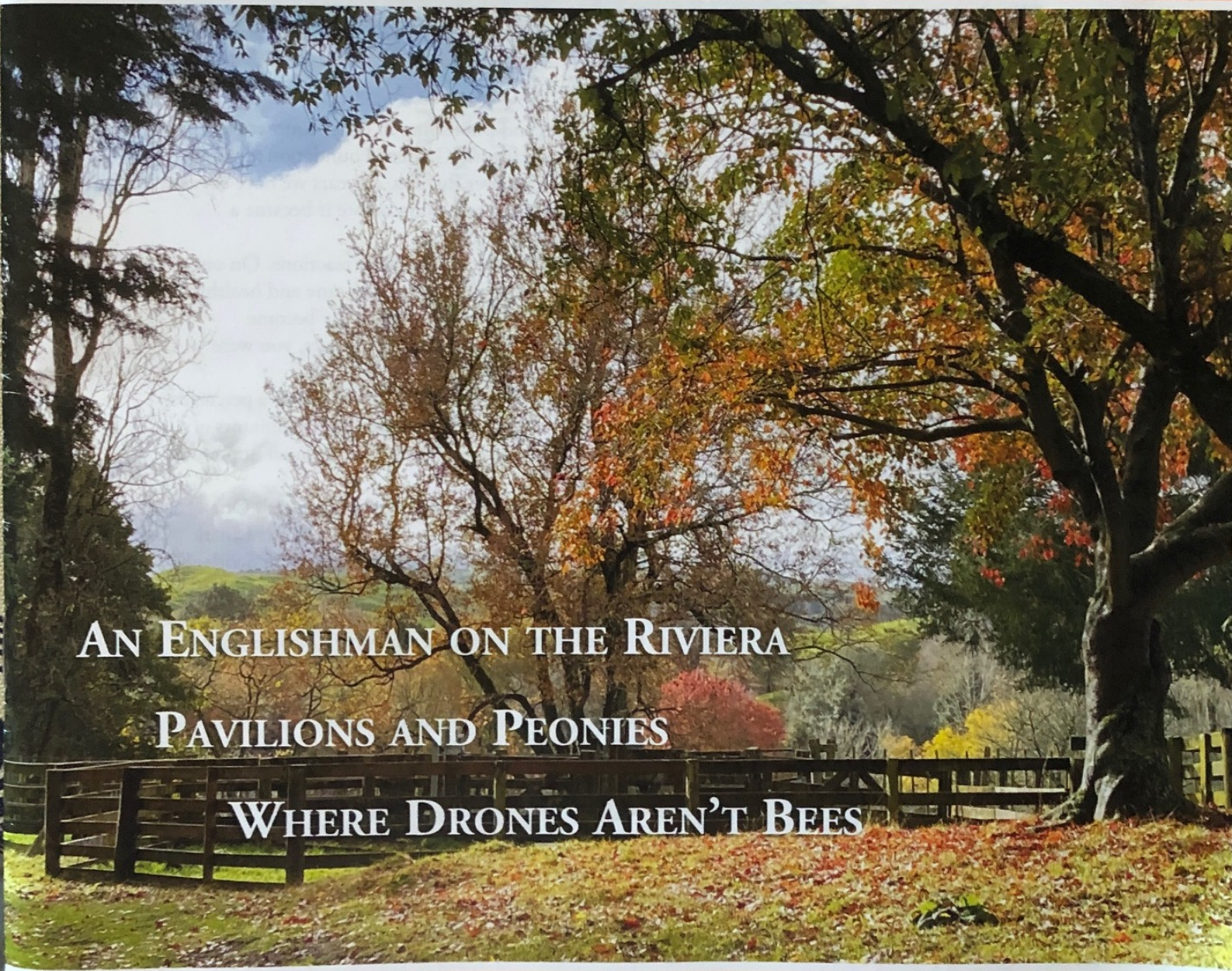
HISTORIC GARDENS Review



An Englishman on the Riviera

Pavilions and Peonies

Where Drones Aren't Bees

THE VOICE OF HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS WORLDWIDE

Il Giardino del Palazzo Reale di Torino (1563-1915)

Edited by Paolo Cornaglio
Leo S. Olschki. 238 pages. €60.00.
ISBN 978-88-222-6634-7.

The Italian Risorgimento of 1859-1861 was, in reality, a takeover of the rest of Italy by the Dukes of Savoy who became monarchs of a united Italy. But they started small. The Duchy of Savoy encompassed what is now French Savoy and, on the other side of the Alps, most of modern Piedmont.

In 1559, Duke Emanuele Filiberto managed to get his Duchy back from the French and in 1563 he decided to move his capital from Chambéry (now in France) to Turin. He took over the old Bishop's palace and turned it into the new Ducal Palace, with gardens laid out along the ramparts in the current Renaissance style. The Palace was greatly extended by the succeeding Dukes and the chapel built which now houses the Holy Shroud of Turin.

The gardens were also expanded towards the east of the Palace and went through a series of transformations: baroque (with plans by André le Nôtre), then a touch of English landscape, some romanticism when the French occupied the Duchy during the Napoleonic Wars (Napoleon installed his mother Letizia in the Palace), and some homage to the Crystal Palace in the greenhouses.

Il Giardino del Palazzo Reale di Torino (1563-1915) is a series of monographs by specialists, each on a particular period in the garden's history from its foundation down to 1915, when it was split in two by the creation of a major road. What remains is a combination of formal French parterres and an evocative landscape park.

Produced to Olschki's usual impeccable standards, the book is particularly strong on contemporary maps, plans and designs.

Richard Mawrey

Above: Susan Hamner by an unknown artist. Note that her book is resting on a copy of Gerard's *Herbal*.

The Domestic Herbal
Plants for the Home in the Seventeenth Century

By Margaret Willes
Bodleian Library. 224 pages. £25.00.
ISBN 978-1-85124-513-0.

In 17th-century England the most famous authors of published books about plants, known as Herbals, were men, Nicholas Culpeper and John Gerard and all doctors, surgeons and apothecaries were then male as well. Yet women of all classes played their part in the emergence of botany, the study of plants and their uses, as a science rather than a dark and dodgy skill, akin to witchcraft.

Women mentioned by Margaret Willes in this absorbing book range from the noble – Elizabeth Dysart, Duchess of Lauderdale, Lady Elinor Fettiplace, Lady Ann Fanshaw, Lady Margaret Hoby, Susan Hanmer, wife of Sir Thomas Hanmer (himself a keen plantsman) – through the middle classes – Mary Doggett, Elizabeth Burkitt – to Margaret Kennix, "a poor woman".

Every housewife, even if she had servants, needed to know which plants could be eaten and how they were best cooked; which were poisonous and which were medicinal; which could be woven or used for dyeing or for scenting clothes and rooms. So women who were literate could compile their own notebooks, often passed down in the family. The details that emerge are fascinating: I had no idea that bay leaves could be used to soothe stings.

GM

Roman Gardens

By Anthony Beeston
Amberley. 96 pages. £14.99.
ISBN 978-1-4456-9030-8.

"The Romans loved gardens." These, the opening words of *Roman Gardens* by Anthony Beeson, are not only true but also surprising. We tend to think of the Romans as stern men in togas ruling their mighty empire with an iron fist, but they were the first people in Western history to create and enjoy gardens for pleasure and for show and not just for food.

Romans enjoyed mixing formality with nature and had all our gardening tricks two millennia earlier: water features, planters, fountains and cascades, sundials, wind chimes and statuary (which often came perilously close to garden gnomes).

Gardening spread right down the social scale: wealthy aristocrats with villas, the town houses of urban middle classes and artisans with their flower pots.

Beeson's excellent book is written from the viewpoint of an archaeologist and art historian and is thus a better all-round guide than the more specialist plant-based studies. It also benefits from the author's own illustrations, which give a clearer impression than computer re-creations.

RM

100 20th-Century Gardens and Landscapes

Edited by Susannah Charlton and Elain Harwood
Batsford. 256 pages. £25.00.
ISBN 978-1-84994-529-5.

The words "20th-century" in this book's title are something of a misnomer, as it actually covers 1914-2014. Some of the earlier gardens and landscapes look back to 'Arts & Crafts', while the latest ones put plants rather than hard landscaping at their heart. Apart from an occasional foray into Scotland, all are in England.

The range of sites is wonderfully wide: as well as parks and gardens, both public and private, we find green spaces around housing estates, cemeteries, sanatoriums, universities, reservoirs, factories and even power stations, whose cooling towers can be appreciated as elements in a picturesque landscape.

As well as the pages on individual sites, the book contains valuable essays on overall themes. I particularly enjoyed Johanna Gibbons on the modern urban landscape and its interlocking with the surrounding architecture. She laments the fact that so few landscapes from the last 75 years are 'listed' and so protected. Some of those included here have already been lost – and I wonder how many will survive?

Margot Clement