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The Garden Primer: Second Edition



Synopsis

The most comprehensive, entertaining, down-to-earth one-volume gardening reference ever, and highly praised: "Barbara Damrosch delivers the goods." "Chicago Tribune" "Best of the crop." "House Beautiful" "Barbara Damrosch's writing has the snap of a good snowpea and the spice of an old rose." "The Seattle Times/Post Intelligencer" "Covers just about everything you could think of and then some." "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution" "An extraordinarily comprehensive guide." "The San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle" "Takes your soaring visions of garden splendor and plants them firmly in the ground." "The Toronto Star" Now the beloved classic is revised front-to-back. The new edition has gone 100% organic, which in Barbara Damrosch's hands also means completely accessible. It reflects the latest research on plants, soils, tools, and techniques. There is updated and expanded information on planning a garden, recommended plants, and best tools. Ecological issues are addressed much more extensively, covering lawn alternatives, the benefits of native species, wildlife-friendly gardens, and how to avoid harmful invasive species. More attention is paid to plants appropriate to the South, Southwest, and West Coast, while cold-climate gardeners are given detailed advice on how to extend the growing season. Simply put, the book is a richer and fuller compendium than ever before, with more text, more illustrations and garden plans, expanded plant lists, and gardener's resources. But Barbara Damrosch's core of practical, creative ideas and friendly style remain "she is still an "old-fashioned dirt gardener" at heart.

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Customer Reviews

Twenty years ago I remember discovering Barbara Damrosch's *The Garden Primer* at the local library. It was full of practical advice dispensed in such an engaging manner and I ended up buying myself a copy. *The Garden Primer* is a rare exception of a gardening book that can benefit gardeners no matter where they live. It is especially helpful to novice gardeners who want to start a garden but are not exactly sure where to begin. The first chapters deal with the basics - what plants need in order to grow properly, how to prepare your soil, starting your own seeds, proper planting methods and how to deal with insects and diseases. A chapter on gardening gear covers tools, what to wear and how to organize it all. Damrosch then goes into plant specifics with chapters on Annuals, Perennials, Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, Bulbs, Roses, Lawns, Ground Covers, Vines, Shrubs, Tree, Wildflowers and Houseplants. Each section discusses how to buy plants, how to plan your site (with some planting scheme plans included), how to grow the plants and maintain them. She then includes an encyclopedia of specific plants with descriptions and basic growing advice. The vegetable section is even more extensive with details on growing and harvesting. If plants are more suited to certain areas of the country, it is mentioned. Another element of this book that I enjoy are the wonderful illustrations. They are black-and-white, simple and yet so effective. And I'm so glad they kept the illustration of the garden shed on the endsheets. I've always admired that and maybe this year I will finally get my own tools organized like it! The second edition, which has just been published (March 2008), has been updated to include new varieties of plants, more efficient methods and techniques and more up-to-date trends. More plants have been included, especially native plants which are so popular today. The book is "100% Organic"! Damrosch claims in her forward that she set out to write a "simple" book on gardening. Her engaging writing style and clear instructions do just that but this 820 page book is so much more than that. It provides a wealth of information for beginning gardeners and has proven to be a book that I return to again and again. I highly recommend it.

My copy of *"The Garden Primer"* is worn, tattered, and never on the shelf with the rest of my gardening books. I refer to Barbara's sage advice for everything. It's has allowed me to try new plants, techniques, and garden designs - all without feeling I don't know what I'm doing. It's like having a master gardener watching over you. Be forewarned though - she writes most (if not all) of her gardening experience from a Connecticut/zone 5 background. Those in the desert regions of Arizona may find most her advice useless. Buy it - you'll never need another gardening book again.

Barbara Damrosch is a self-confirmed 'old-fashioned dirt gardener.' And, she's does organic gardening to boot. This book is a comprehensive, easily understood guide to all aspects of gardening; it even includes a chapter on houseplants. I like that Damrosch prefers hand tools over power tools. And, that she uses her hands to pull weeds at times. The chapter on "what plants need," was terrific--covers the basics and gave me a firm understanding of what plants require to thrive. The book contains all you need to grow annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs, trees, shrubs and vines. Indispensable! from the author of the award winning book, *Harmonious Environment: Beautify, Detoxify and Energize Your Life, Your Home and Your Planet*

My copy of Barbara Damrosch's "Garden Primer" is splattered with mud and rain and has seeds stuck in the binding. This is not a coffee table book. This is a read it, use it book. There are no pretty photographs; there are no photographs. Just great road-tested advice on soil, tools, flowers, vegetables, shrubs, etc. No one subject is covered in depth, however, it covers every subject well and gets right to most important information. Like the "Joy of Cooking" in the kitchen, this is your all-purpose, when-do-I-plant- the-broccoli, how-do-I-spray-the-roses, where-do-I-put-the-fig-tree, kind of book. Would make an excellent housewarming gift for first time homeowners.

I live in the the Northeast and a friend recommended this as the go-to resource for gardening in our area. The author obviously loves her subject matter and has years and years of experience. However, this book reads like she has so many years of experience that she can't lay out the most basic of information for beginners and seasoned gardeners. Want to know the optimum temperature for planting pea seeds? It's not in this book. Need to find out what to do with your root knot nematode problem? There's only a fleeting mention of this pest. How does one harden off seedlings that have been started inside without killing them? Only a short, sparse description of this tricky process, without even an acknowledgement that sudden moves from inside to outside can burn a plant to death. Most gardeners prefer to spend the bulk of their time outside gardening. They consult books to gain valuable information like when to plant what and how to deal with pests. A book that lays out this information in an easy to read, easy to access format is so much more helpful than a text like "The Garden Primer." I'm sure the author is a nice person and I don't doubt that there are people who will keep this tome by their bedside for a little pre-sleep reading (especially in winter when the garden is dormant). But there are better resources out there. If you're seduced by the word "organic" in this book's description and obsessed with having a book marketed as being exclusively eco-friendly, Tanya Denckla's "The Gardener's A-Z Guide to Growing Organic Food" is

both concise and thorough. If you want a book that spells out the basics of vegetable gardening (organic or non-), then Mel Bartholomew's "Square Foot Gardening" is actually quite helpful.

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