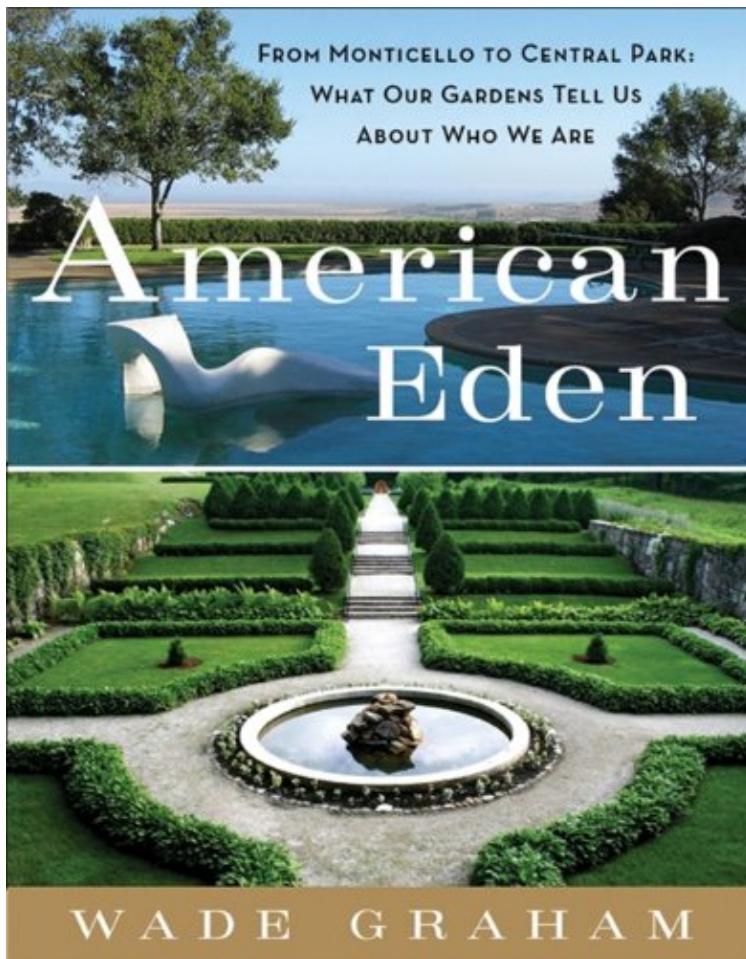


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American Eden: From Monticello to Central Park to Our Backyards: What Our Gardens Tell Us About Who We Are

Wade Graham

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Wade Graham : American Eden: From Monticello to Central Park to Our Backyards: What Our Gardens Tell Us About Who We Are before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Eden: From Monticello to Central Park to Our Backyards: What Our Gardens Tell Us About Who We Are:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Really well written historyBy Michael FalkWade Graham's "American Eden" is a terrific read and I highly recommend it. I enjoy books on gardening, architecture and material culture generally, but very often find that such books are either too insubstantial and insufficiently researched or very much too academic. Graham's book is plenty rigorous: if you are someone who has already done some study on the thought and writing of Thomas Jefferson, for example, I think you will find something new and provocative in Graham's writing. By the same token, this is not one of those books that should only be read in a graduate seminar.

The writing is really lively and engaging, and presupposes no particular background in the topic. Although the subject is gardening, it is simply a fresh and solid take on American history. This book would make a very fun gift. The focus and length of the writing definitely invites a more casual reader. And the book itself is really good looking, well laid out and in a bit wider format than most, which makes it very attractive. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. History and landscapeBy kdeeHistory and landscape are well entwined in this book. It begins with a very insightful look at Thomas Jefferson's life and influence from a garden perspective. Great reading. One cannot help but be intrigued at the twists and turns of the garden through history. Very good book. May be too much information for the very casual gardener. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Marvelous book. By kateAs an avid gardener I enjoyed every word of this book. So much information you can read it more than once and find new details each time.

“American Eden moves luminously through landscapes of history, literature, biography, and design theory. . . . fusing sharp-edged analysis and graceful American prose.” Kevin Starr, author of *Golden Gate: The Life and Times of America’s Greatest Bridge*“Informative and absolutely engrossing.” Ross King, author of *Brunelleschi’s Dome* Garden designer and historian Wade Graham offers a unique vision of the story of America in this riveting exploration of the nation’s gardens and the visionaries behind them, from Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello to Michelle Obama’s vegetable garden, Fredrick Law Olmsted’s expansive Central Park to Martha Stewart’s how-to landscaping guides. In the tradition of Mark Kurlansky, Simon Schama, and Michael Pollan, Graham delivers a sweeping social history that examines our nation’s history from an overlooked vantage point, illuminating anew the living drama of American self-creation.

From Publishers WeeklyFrom Jefferson’s founding garden, Monticello, to Martha Stewart’s Turkey Hill, American gardens have been revealing self-portraits that reflect their owners’ aspirations and anxieties, cultural legacies and passing fashions. In his far-ranging survey, designer and historian Graham unveils the aesthetic, political, psychological, and ethical dimensions of the American garden. This is a world in which hedges, lawns, parks, and cemeteries are revealing displays of national identity, class distinction, and political correctness. Our gardens are a pastiche of classical pastoral ideals, the 19th-century European grand tour, and the distinctly American tension between our democratic ideals and aristocratic pretensions. Graham is able to gently mock the fashions of history while astutely observing that we are still as vulnerable to gardening fads today. After more than 250 years, the American gardening tradition has bequeathed to us treasured public parks, suburban sprawl, Kentucky bluegrass lawns in the desert, and kitchen gardens at the White House. Graham’s history is a fascinating and illuminating tour of this American landscape. Includes extensive notes and bibliography. More than 70 color and bw illus. (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist*Starred * Garden designer and historian Graham takes a panoramic perspective in his bold interpretation of the form, function, and meaning of American gardens. Thomas Jefferson is the first, and most complex, of the many pioneering gardeners Graham incisively profiles, and Graham’s frank dissection of the profound paradoxes implicit in Jefferson’s landscape vision for Monticello in a time of slavery and genocide against Native Americans sets the groundwork for his central insight, the fact that wilderness was a catalyst for the American imagination even as we rapidly destroyed it. Other intriguing garden designers include the nineteenth-century advocates for middle-class gardens as “emblems of virtue”; A. J. Downing and Charles Platt, and their heir, the ever-ambitious Martha Stewart, as well as Beatrix Jones Farrand, Jens Jensen, and Lawrence Halprin. As Graham unwinds the DNA of American garden design from grandiose to utilitarian, he matches garden aesthetics with the social mores of each era to surprising effect. His discussion of the pastoral dream underlying suburban sprawl is of particular resonance, and his comparisons between Eastern and Western gardens are fascinating. This blazingly fresh, critical, and ecologically astute masterwork brilliantly traces the great cycles of American life through a spectrum of gardens that embody our devotion to the art of cultivation for beauty and status, sanctuary and sustenance. --Donna Seaman “We are what we plant,” L.A.-based writer Wade Graham posits in his history of gardens. When he isn’t explaining the economic and cultural influences, he crafts fascinating profiles... An engaging look at our own pieces of paradise.”