BOOK REVIEWS

EDWARD C. SMITH. 2006. **Incredible Vegetables from Self Watering Containers.** (ISBN 978-1-58017-556-2, pbk.). Storey Publishing, 210 Mass MoCA Way, North Adams, MA 02147, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.storey.com, sales@storey.com, 1-800-865-3429). $19.95, 254 pp., color photos, maps, index, 8½" × 10⅞".

The book, *Incredible Vegetables from Self Watering Containers*, is divided into three main sections that describe a new way to grow vegetables (with containers), the materials needed to get started and how to manage a container garden, and a detailed list of the typical varieties of edible plants that will grow in containers (this section comprises the largest portion of the book).

Many people believe that containers or pots are solely used for flowers. The first section informs the reader that this is not the case. Growing plants in pots has been around for generations. However, growing vegetables in pots is a relatively new process. The author mentions that there are a few key problems that one might encounter when planting a garden in pots: an increase in watering, less productive plants compared to those found in the ground, or an inability to garden organically. The basic solution to these problems is to choose the correct container and proper soil mixture for your plant. For example, a gardener today has the ability to create a self watering container, also known as a continuous-flow watering system. These require less time spent watering, keep the plant from wilting or drying in between watering sessions, and allow nutrients to be kept in closer proximity to the plant's root system. The water in a continuous-flow watering system is drawn up through the soil by the plant's root system and remains with the plant longer. This process reduces the amount of nutrients that would normally be lost through leaching. The soil mixture is also very important in growing a productive plant. The author gives examples of the correct combination of peat moss, vermiculite or perlite, limestone, and compost that should be used in containers. Smith's information will help the reader see how simple it is for one to create a container garden.

In the second section, the author explains how a gardener could combine available resources and tools to create a profitable vegetable container garden. Some important advice is "to start small" and do your research on the proper location and pot size for a particular plant. This will make sure your gardening is successful. The author gives the reader great examples on how to mix and match several plants in one pot, and lists the proper techniques for caring for each variety of plant. These techniques include when to water, proper location (determined by the plant's tolerance of shade or sun), management of pests, proper time to harvest or collect vegetables, and the proper instructions on stowing containers through the winter. All of these helpful tips will help the reader become a better gardener.

The final section introduces the reader to a variety of edible vegetables, flowers, and herbs that grow well in pots. This section is well labeled and it is easy for the reader to locate the exact plant they are looking for. The types of plants range from your basic garden varieties such as tomatoes and cucumbers to edible flowers such as sunflowers and violas. Detailed care instructions are given for each particular plant. These instructions include proper pot use, favorable weather conditions for each plant, particular bugs or pests that might appear or infest the plant, and the right time to harvest your vegetables. This section will prove to be very helpful for a novice gardener.

This book would be an important tool for any gardener, ranging from an amateur to a professional. The author's use of detailed instructions and descriptions can help motivate any reader to create their own container garden. The book was written in such a way that those new to science and gardening would understand the importance of finding the perfect container and creating the proper soil mixture. The reader will take away a deeper knowledge on how important soil type is to the longevity of their plants, and how one needs to find a good location for each specific plant. I would recommend this book to any gardener that is limited on the proper space for a garden or tempted to try their own container garden.—*Keri McNew, MS Biology, Project Manager, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*

ALLAN M. ARMITAGE. 2006. **Armitage's Native Plants for North American Gardens.** (ISBN 0-88192-760-0, hbk.). Timber Press Inc, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.timberpress.com, mail@timberpress.com, 503-227-2878, 1-800-327-5680, 503-227-3070 fax). $49.95, 451 pp., 443 color photographs, 7½" × 10½".

Native plants often require less water and maintenance than non-native plants. Although not intended for members of the "right wing of the Native Party" according the author, this handsome book is an excellent information source for North American gardeners who want to introduce native plants into their gardens and landscaping. Plants are included based on their availability to mainstream gardeners. Over 630 species and cultivars are included, arranged alphabetically by plant genera. At the back of the book are useful lists of native plants that fill particular garden needs, including drought-tolerant plants, water-loving plants, plants that attract butterflies or hummingbirds, deer- and rabbit-resistant plants, and plants for different growing conditions from full sun to heavy shade. The author provides entertaining commentary about his personal experiences with these plants along with detailed information including Latin names, plant families, common names, habitat, cultivars, hardiness zones, maintenance, and recommended propagation. Fascinating information on the etymology of the plants' Latin and common names are also included. In addition, this book is packed with over 400 color photographs. The useful sources and resources section includes lists of nurseries that carry native plants, local and regional native plant societies, internet sites, and useful books for the native plant gardener. I found this book to be packed full of useful information, while remaining enjoyable and easy-to-read.—*Marissa N. Oppel, Collections and Research Assistant, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*