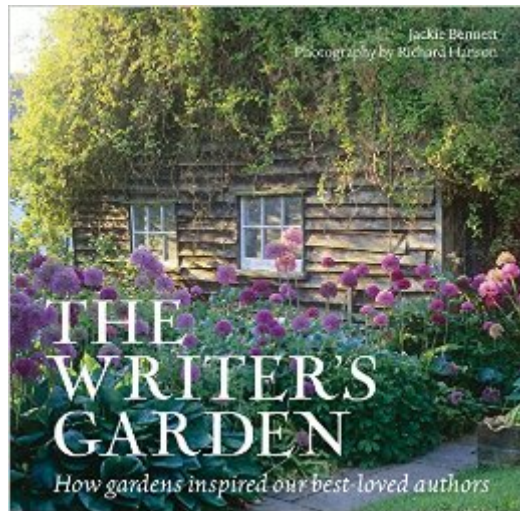


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# The Writer's Garden: How Gardens Inspired Our Best-loved Authors



## Synopsis

Great things happen in gardens. No one can doubt the importance of the garden in Roald Dahl's life as it was here where he worked, and here that he created James and the Giant Peach. And where would Jane Austen have been if she had never seen a 'walk', an ornamental lake, or a wilderness? Gardens hold a special place in many author's lives. For Beatrix Potter, Hill Top house was made possible by the new found freedom and wealth that a literary career can bring; for Sir Walter Scott, laying out his garden at Abbotsford was a way of distracting himself from mounting debts. In this book of 18 gardens and 20 writers, the author examines how the poet, writer, novelist derived a creative spirit from their private garden, how they tended and enjoyed their gardens, and how they managed their outdoor space. Jane Austen at Godmersham and Chawton Rupert Brooke at Grantchester John Ruskin at Brantwood Agatha Christie at Greenway Beatrix Potter at Hill Top Roald Dahl at Gipsy House Charles Dickens at Gad's Hill Place Virginia Woolf at Monk's House Winston Churchill at Chartwell Laurence Sterne at Shandy Hall George Bernard Shaw at Shaw's Corner Ted Hughes at Lumb Bank Henry James followed by E.F. Benson at Lamb House John Clare at Helpston Thomas Hardy at Hardy's Cottage and Max Gate Robert Burns at Ellisland William Wordsworth at Cockermouth and Grasmere Walter Scott at Abbotsford Rudyard Kipling at Bateman's

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## Customer Reviews

Do you know what this book has done to me? It's made me want to go straight to England and

travel all around to see the gardens owned and often tended by famous British writers including Agatha Christie, Beatrix Potter, and Walter Scott, to name a few. It's also given me a renewed interest in English literature in general and taught me about a few writers I didn't know about. Or know much about. For each writer, Bennett tells us the story of how the writer came to own or live at the house and garden, what it would have been like for them living there, what they wrote while in residence, and who tends the gardens today. Hanson has provided beautiful photographs of the gardens to accompany the stories. I think of each chapter as a gardener's bedtime story. One chapter a night, or maybe two, and I've forgotten the cares of the day and the chores of the gardens as I look at the pictures of the gardens and read the story of each writer in his or her garden. I dream of one day going to England and seeing some of these gardens in person.

Writers and their gardens. What could be better? This book lovingly pictures and describes the gardens of 20 great authors in Great Britain, and shares with us which books and poems were written in these gardens and cottages and stately homes, or inspired by memories of childhood spent in the gardens. Henry James and then E.F. Benson lived at Lamb House, Walter Scott at Abbotsford, Beatrix Potter at Hilltop, and many more. Rupert Brooke perhaps spoke for many of these authors when he wrote "I do not pretend to understand Nature but I get on very well with her" and sit all day in a rose garden to work. The author includes many touching and significant incidents from the lives of the authors, and I learned that they had difficult times, often financial hardship and personal heartbreak in addition to joy and occasional acclaim from their writing. The photos are of stunning high quality and with the author's words make this book a must read for gardeners and for readers.

Jane Austen, Rupert Brooke, John Ruskin, Agatha Christie, Beatrix Potter, Roald Dahl, Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf, Winston Churchill, Laurence Sterne, George Bernard Shaw, Ted Hughes, Henry James, John Clare, Thomas Hardy, Robert Burns, William Wordsworth, Walter Scott, and Rudyard Kipling each have their own chapter in this book. What do they all have in common? They all loved and got inspiration from their gardens. The Writer's Garden is a coffee table style book stuffed full with pictures of the author's gardens. I know some coffee style books are best for browsing rather than reading but believe me, if you are a literature lover or fans of any of the authors in this book, you will want to read it! Jackie Bennett talks about each author's garden but also about the authors themselves. For instance, she talks about Jane Austen's childhood, siblings, and the one man who "left a deep impression on Jane- it was to be her only true affair of the heart."

She covers the authors from childhood to death. The photographs by Richard Hanson, left a lasting impression on me. I felt like I was walking in each garden with the authors I read about. The photos and writing go together seamlessly. I love this book so much that I already ordered a copy for my mother-in-law. She loved classic authors and I know she has read several of these. It will be the perfect gift for her. My one and only grip with it is that I find coffee style books hard to hold and get comfortable with to read. I would love a companion book that has just the written part. Something I can curl up with. Highly Recommended! It would make the perfect gift for literature lovers!

Upon first seeing this book, it reminded me of a "Coffee Table" book that you would just put out for show and nobody would really read it. On the other hand, because I LOVE reading and gardening, this book is one of the most beloved treasures in my library. The authors represented, the gardens shared and the photographs are just superb. I have dozens of books in my library on the subject of writers and their gardening habits and the fact that I was treated to the lives of authors such as Jane Austen, Winston Churchill, Beatrix Potter and lots more was just an extraordinary treat for me. During "The Bleak Midwinter," this book assures us that Spring will indeed come again. A bit pricey, but well worth it for readers who also love to garden.

I bought this book primarily for the photographs, so I wasn't disappointed by the writing, which is unremarkable. But as an avid gardener (indoor plants & outdoor gardens) and Henry James scholar (ie I'm a "recovered academic"), I knew this type of book would be useful as a pleasant and relaxing read after I reviewed the table of contents on-line. As a practicing attorney, I find it useful to read gardening books with lots of photos as well as plant catalogs after a stressful workday. This is a book that you can pick up and read a chapter or two at a time (the chapters are short) and end up feeling relaxed. I especially enjoyed the sections on HJ & Lamb House (which I've visited), Sissinghurst, and the home in which Virginia and Leonard Woolf did much of their work. Definitely worth buying unless you're looking for something more complex.

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