

# IN THE GARDEN

WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz

## Gardening Gift Guide

I'm actually not a big holiday consumer, gift-giving kind of guy. Instead of buying blenders, scarves, ties, flat screens and other appliances, I'm more likely to go into a locally-owned bookstore and pick out a gift or two for someone and probably for myself. I have nothing against technology but no, I don't yet have a Kindle, Nook or other eReading device. I'm not saying I won't someday get one, but I'm just not there yet. Plus, I like the way bookstores smell. It's as if the air in there smells smarter or something.

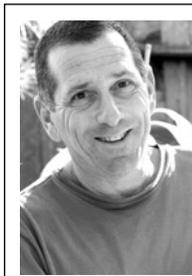
I admit that eReaders are great for reading novels, taking to the beach or on an airplane, and are compact and lightweight to stow in your luggage, but honestly can you really read a garden book on one? Where would you stash your extra seeds, labels and the pressed leaves that you're trying to identify? This holiday season I still think that gardening books are a good choice for giving. "How-to" gardening books, design gardening books, and gardening reference books are always the way to go.

And don't forget gardening books for kids. What better way to get your children or someone else's off to a green start than by turning them on to gardening books?

There are some excellent choices out there and one in particular is by local author-horticulturist **Joan Calder**, in collaboration with artist **Cathy Quiel**. Their whimsical book, *Airplanes In The Garden: Monarch Butterflies Take Flight* tells the story of a little girl named Bonnie who finds two caterpillars in her garden. She names them Sergio and Stanley and along with her imagi-



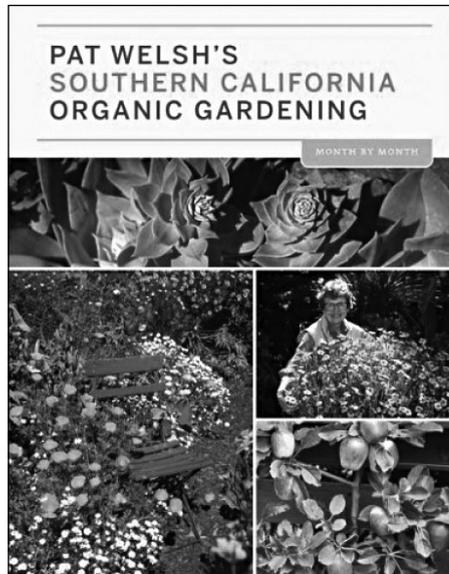
*Airplanes In The Garden: Monarch Butterflies Take Flight*, a children's story by local author Joan Calder with illustrations by Cathy Quiel, makes a great gift for a little one



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever "Peaches." He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to greenjeansmr@verizon.net.

nation, accompanies them on their life changing odyssey from tiny worms, on through the pupa stage and finally emerging as brilliant, orange and black monarch butterflies.

The story by Ms Calder is a nature lesson that subtly teaches kids to respect, appreciate and even celebrate all living creatures under the guise of a fun, colorful and easy-to-read book, while at the same time encouraging kids to use their imaginations.



Pat Welsh's *Southern California Organic Gardening* book is a month-by-month gardening bible

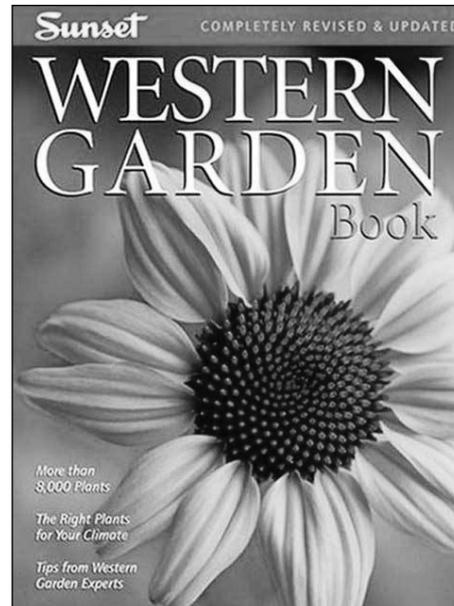
Cathy Quiel's illustrations are wonderful and are probably botanically and zoologically (insectologically?) correct, and there are stripey things with big eyes and strange-shaped antennae and proboscises on many enchanting, Grinch-like bugs that are sitting on and tucked in and under other bugs.

**Mary Sheldon**, owner of Tecolote Book Shop, carries this fanciful new kid's book as well as other great holiday gift book ideas.

Also for children, **Lana Haskett** over at Chaucer's Books recommends the warmly illustrated, *And The Good Brown Earth* by **Kathy Henderson**, **Tina Davis'** *Sow And Grow: A Gardening Book for Children*, and *A Seed Is Sleepy* by **Dianna Hutts Aston** and **Sylvia Long**.

For plant-loving adults, I've asked a few of my gardener pals to help me out and tell me what books their gardens can't live without.

Garden goddess **Diane Siegel** didn't take two seconds to think before telling me, "Pat Welsh's 'bible' hands down. I love it, carry it with me, follow all her advice slavishly with consistent success." The Pat Welsh "bible" she is referring to is *Pat Welsh's Southern California Organic Gardening* book. It's my "bible" also, as it recommends what and when to plant, prune, feed, and divide month-by-month, and includes absolutely everything else you need to know about your Southern California garden. There are also many special sidebars and boxes with valuable "how-to" tidbits. The *Organic* edition is new and improved but the older version is almost as good. Her website



Randy's old standby, the *Sunset Western Garden Book*

(www.patwelsh.com) has a lot going on so if you click on it, prepare to spend the evening with it.

I find the Pat Welsh book to be the perfect compliment to the old standby, *Sunset Western Garden Book*. Everyone who gardens has at least one of these somewhere on a bookshelf, in the kitchen, or in the garden shed. The folks at *Sunset* update it every few years and it always makes a welcome gift. I perennially need a new one as mine tends to compost with all the mulch, fertilizer and leaves that collect in it.

**Eric Love**, who shelves the gardening books at Chaucer's, also recommends the Pat Welsh book as the most helpful garden book for our area. "A splurge item," Eric adds, "would be **Robert C. Perry's** *Landscape Plants for California Gardens*."

For the ambitious gardener on your holiday gift list, local garden designer, **Pat Brodie**, recommends her two new favorites: *Reimagining The California Lawn* by **Carol Bornstein**, **David Fross** and **Bart O'Brien** and *Plants And Landscapes For Summer-Dry Climates of the San Francisco Bay Region* by the East Bay Municipal Utility District. For inspiration, Pat enjoys *Designing The New Kitchen Garden: An American Potager* by **Jennifer R. Bartley**.

I'm happy to report that today when I went to the bookstore for a gift certificate, there were five other customers in line ahead of me – other like-minded folks who also enjoy the way bookstores smell and are still buying books, the kind that are made out of paper and glue.

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