



The Layered Garden: Design Lessons for Year-Round Beauty from Brandywine Cottage

David L. Culp, Teri Dunn Chace, Adam Levine

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Brandywine Cottage is David Culp's beloved two-acre Pennsylvania garden where he mastered the design technique of layering and interplanting many different species in the same area so that as one plant passes its peak, another takes over. The result is a nonstop parade of color that begins with a tapestry of heirloom daffodils and hellebores in spring and ends with a jewel-like blend of Asian wildflowers at the onset of winter.

The Layered Garden shows you how to recreate Culp's majestic display. It starts with a basic lesson in layering; how to choose the correct plants by understanding how they grow and change throughout the seasons, how to design a layered garden, and how to maintain it. To illustrate how layering works, Culp takes you on a personal tour through each part of his celebrated garden: the woodland garden, the perennial border, the kitchen garden, the shrubbery, and the walled garden. The book culminates with a chapter dedicated to signature plants for all four seasons.

As practical as it is inspiring, *The Layered Garden* will provide you with expert information gleaned from decades of hard work and close observation. If you thought that a four-season garden was beyond your reach, this book will show you how to achieve that elusive, tantalizing goal.

The Layered Garden: Design Lessons for Year-Round Beauty from Brandywine Cottage Details

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From Reader Review The Layered Garden: Design Lessons for Year-Round Beauty from Brandywine Cottage for online ebook

Pat says

Gardeners muse

I bought this book a while ago but it was not until I was stuck on the couch suffering from a summer cold that I cracked it open. I couldn't put it down. The tone of voice was pitch perfect. Plenty of Latin nomenclature to stretch my knowledge but also fluffy commentary to make you feel like you're walking the path with the writer. Well done.

Bethany says

While it was not entirely what I was expecting, this book was a big inspirational read! More of an "ideas" book than a practical guide. Lots of wonderful pictures of individual cultivars but also of his beds during various seasons, helping to showcase the layered concept as well as informal garden design in general. Reading almost like a novel, there many romantic descriptions of the development and realization of his ideas as a gardener, but also specific recommendations of plant combinations that work design- and climate-wise. He gives a few how-to's, but the book is generally a source of color, variety, texture, timing, and placement inspiration for a beautiful year-round property based on his baby, the Brandywine Cottage.

Melody says

Um, I... I don't know how to say this, but Culp's garden is almost too unstructured for me. Those of you who have walked through my garden, stop laughing already.

The photos are stellar, and seeing how his borders change from month to month is a real high point of the book. I only wish he'd set a mark to photograph from, so that the perspective was exactly the same in each shot. Which is persnickety, but still what I would prefer.

His plant selection is brilliant and eclectic and I was feverishly taking notes the whole time I was reading. His writing style is a touch breathless, but his essential love and reverence for his subject matter shines through.

Highly recommended for those of us who try to keep a garden and find ourselves kept by same.

Sharron says

Informative (who knew there are over 100 cultivars of snowdrops!) and inspirational with envy provoking photographs.

Candy says

There are just some people who are created to bring delight to the world. David Culp is one of them. My husband's comment on me reading this book: "Oh, that's the book with the good stories in it. It makes me know that the book I'm reading is not that good when I'd rather hear about your book!"

I knew this author was a kindred spirit when he said he hated to leave his garden because he didn't want to miss anything. I get up and look out all the windows every morning, me and my cat Dolly. My husband says, what are you looking at? It's hard to explain that I am seeing what has changed since yesterday, that I am seeing what was, and what might be. I love my yard and my home! David understands that.

The "new concept" that I picked up from this book is to look at all levels, not just the ground. For example, David took the white blooms of trees and shrubs into account when deciding to plant white tulips.

The photography in this book is beyond wonderful. The photos relate to the text and are just beautiful in themselves. I wonder how this photographer was able to capture so many garden moments that span the length of a day and the breadth of a year. How would you ever pay a person enough to put in all that time? Every page of this book is uplifting and joyful. Highly recommended.

Mia says

Wow! The Layered Garden is a visual treat, but a serious threat to the placidity of your mind and the status quo of your garden. I can hardly stand to look out my window at my paltry attempts at a garden (scratch that, better demote mine to being called a "flower bed") after a morning of studying Culp's gardens. If the powerful beauty and scale of the north border at Brandywine Cottage (p. 46) don't make your eyes pop and your soul fill with envy, put down your trowel and go back in the house. You are already dead but just don't know it.

Wonderful photos, a friendly tone, and about a thousand ideas for using layers, successions and serious considerations of scale to produce gardens that are dynamic, textural and lush to the Nth degree. Culp's garden is in SE Pennsylvania and it's always useful and inspiring to see what can be done in the heat and cold of one's own zone, so the book will be extra valuable to gardeners in zone 6-ish.

Stephanie says

So much inspiration for a gardener!

Leslie says

Beautiful photography! My favorite pictures are the ones that show the same view in more than one season; this gives a nice evolution. I liked the way the author highlighted some of the plants rather than trying to capture everything. Those of us who garden understand that some items shine at certain times and retreat into the background to allow others to be the star. That ever changing scene was well captured here and makes me want to go renovate some of my flower beds. Those of us who have been trying to have four season

interest will get inspiration and confirmation from this book. What a lovely, interesting reading experience.

Pam says

Gorgeous garden! Gorgeous photographs. The text was a little chatty for my taste in a gardening book where I am looking for information. Despite the sub-title that says "design lessons", this reads more like a memoir than a gardening book. It was easy to read but I learned very little to help me in the garden. Information where given is very generalized with no specifics to indicate if these plants could survive in other locales. While there is no doubt that Culp knows about landscape design and gardening, his gardening style is seriously overwhelming. Where does this man find the time to create and maintain that garden? And where does he get all the money to buy all the unique plants that he does? I really felt like Culp was bragging about everything. While there is some good stuff in this book, I found the whole overwhelming and would recommend many books over this one.

Terri says

This book has powerfully influenced the way I will garden from now on. It is a classic in my mind. If you are a medium to advanced gardener...read it! There are some drool worthy photos from their fabulous garden with detailed chapters on the planting choices they made. I borrowed my copy from the library but will buy it as a reference. On my top ten gardening books list now.

Dorothy says

A long-time writer and lecturer about gardening, David Culp, along with his partner, Michael Alderfer, has spent some twenty years creating their two-acre garden at Brandywine College in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. In this book, Culp shares the lessons he has learned from that experience.

The Brandywine garden is a layered garden, which simply means that it is a garden with plantings that are planned in order to provide a succession of eye-catching combinations (layers) of interest and beauty from earliest spring right into winter. It is a true four-season garden.

The way that Culp and his partner achieved a four-season garden in Pennsylvania is not necessarily the way that I would achieve it in Southeast Texas. The plants will be different with very little overlap because our climates and our soils are different, but the principles embraced by Culp and recommended by him have application regardless of the area in which one gardens.

The design technique of layering involves the interplanting of many different species in the same area so that as one plant passes its peak, another takes over, with the result that one can have a nonstop parade of color throughout the year. It is a technique of succession planting so that an area is never lacking in color and interest.

The basis of this method is, of course, knowing how to choose the correct plants for your area by understanding how they grow and change throughout the seasons. Then, one must have some idea of how to design a layered garden and know how and be willing to maintain it.

To illustrate these basics, Culp takes the reader on a personal tour through the several parts of his celebrated garden. We get to see the woodland garden, the perennial border, the kitchen garden, the shrubbery, and the walled garden and witness how they change throughout the year.

The final chapter of the book explores the signature plants used in the garden for all four seasons. Many of these signature plants will not be appropriate for other hotter or drier areas of the country. Peonies and hellebores, for example, will not find a home in my garden. Still, there are some plants that we have in common, like roses, members of the lily family, asters, etc., and the practical advice and ideas behind the plantings are applicable anywhere. Applying them should make it possible to have a four-season garden in any climate.

Finally, I was glad to see a listing at the end of the book of some of Culp's own favorite garden books. They are works by many of his gardening heroes and heroines who are mentioned throughout the book. They represent a veritable encyclopedic range of knowledge about the art and science of gardening, and the list includes several books that I would very much like to add to my own bookshelves.

MaryAnn says

Since I don't read much nonfiction, I'm picky about those I do read. This is one of the best gardening books I've seen--and yes, I did read it, too! The author writes in a conversational style and his opinions about how his own garden should be are refreshing, since he often veers from conventional wisdom. Although I seldom buy books, this might be one I'd like to own.

Onceinablue moon says

Always enjoy a garden book with pics and good advice.

David Ward says

The Layered Garden: Design Lessons for Year-Round Beauty from Brandywine Cottage by David L. Culp (Timber Press 2012)(635.09748) is without a doubt one of the most beautiful garden books I've ever read, and I've read a bunch of them. In the spirit of the best English cottage gardens, the featured gardens are well-designed and the plants are well-grown. In addition, the photography is exquisite. Don't pass this book by if you fancy yourself to be a perennial gardener. My rating: 7.5, finished 7/20/13.

Carl Adams says

Great book for the Delaware Valley Gardener
