

This handsomely designed volume is the book as an art object in its own right with linen binding, good paper, and classic typography. Raymond Blanc—one of the United Kingdom’s most respected French chefs—contributes a foreword establishing the nexus between gardeners and cooks. This appealed and I also appreciated the quick reference chronology dating the introduction of each fruit and vegetable to Britain. This is an armchair gardening gift at once sumptuous and learned.

Richard Heathcote
Director, Carrick Hill

John Charles Ryan, *Green Sense: the aesthetics of plants, place and language*, TrueHeart academic, Oxford, 2012 (ISBN 9780957301702): hardback, 408pp, RRP £55 (available from www.trueheartpress.co.uk)

This is a significant new text for Australian garden history as well as for those interested in the wider concerns of environmental history and cultural landscapes. Focussing on the south west of Western Australia—yet drawing Australia-wide and indeed globally for context—*Green Sense* will be read with interest by all who share a lively appreciation of intersections between nature and culture.

The book’s origin as a doctoral thesis makes for occasional heavy going, but the episodic nature of the textual structure (13 parts plus a prologue and coda) mean that rewards are frequent and well worth the achievement of discovery.

Perhaps this is intentional, as the author’s background in the United States ensures that *his* discoveries are *our* discoveries.

Collected under the major headings of Restoring sense to plant research, Botanical histories, Botanical cultures, Botanical languages, and Botanical futures, John Ryan charts a highly original path through botany and landscape. Indeed Ryan’s penchant for ‘gestural walking’ means that his paths are at once real and experienced first hand. In such close encounters, stories derived from poetry and science are both valued equally, fusing what in other hands are often seen as disparate narratives.

The author’s research traverses far and wide, from the accounts of early European explorers, botanists, and artists, as well as more recent scholarly literature, attested by thought-provoking analysis (and comprehensive bibliography). Ryan’s story is divided equally between nature and culture, and it is fitting therefore that the garden is valued as a site for investigation as much as the biodiversity hotspot (of which his chosen region is amongst the richest internationally). The use of indigenous plants in garden settings, the poetic and artistic imagery of cultivated plants, and the continuum of stories from field to fenced are amongst some of the pleasures of this worthy new volume. Scholarship such as this is unusual in the Australian context, and publishers TrueHeart are to be congratulated for this new addition to its Bridging Disciplines Series.

Richard Aitken

