



VanDusen Book Club - 2008-2025
Book/Topic List by Meeting Date – Reverse chronological order

2025

February

Theme: Botanical Illustration and Art: What is the Difference?

The Art of Botanical Illustration (1989) by Lys De Bray

The Golden Age of Botanical Art (2012) by Martyn Rix

And any others on the same topic

April

Theme: Close to Home: The Healing Power of Everyday Plants

Held By the Land: A Guide to Indigenous Plants for Wellness (2023) by Leigh Joseph

June

Theme: In Love with the Natural World

Diary of a Young Naturalist (2020) by Dara McAnulty

The Secret Life of the City: How Nature Thrives in the Urban Wild (2023) by Hanna Hagen

Bjorgass, translated by Matt Bagguley

The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year (2023) by Margaret Renkl

September

Theme: The Writer's Imagination and the Spirit of Place

Any book(s) by Marta McDowell including

Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life: The Plants and Places That Inspired The Classic Children's Tales (2013)

The World of Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Frontier Landscapes That Inspired the Little House Books (2017)

Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life: The Plants and Places That Inspired the Iconic Poet (2019)

Unearthing the Secret Garden: The Plants and Places That Inspired Frances Hodgson Burnett (2019)

Gardening Can Be Murder: How Poisonous Poppies, Sinister Shovels and Grim Gardens Have Inspired Mystery Writers (2023)

November

Theme: What are Your Plants Saying About You?

The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth (2024) by Zoe Schlanger

2024

February 12

Topic: A Bug's Life and Why It Matters

Oliver Milman. *The Insect Crisis: The Fall of the Tiny Empires That Ran the World*

Dave Goulson. *Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse*

April 8

Topic: For Peat's Sake, Don't Drain That Swamp!

Edward Struzik. *Swamplands: Tundra Beavers, Quaking Bogs and the Improbable World of Peat*

Annie Proulx. *Fen, Bog and Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and Its Role in the Climate Crisis*

June 10

Topic: Planting Roses and Politics

Rebecca Solnit. *Orwell's Roses*

September 9

Topic: Ahead of Their Time

Melissa Sevigny. *Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Colorado River*

November 11

Topic: How Not to Save the Planet

Eleanor Catton. *Birnam Wood*

2023

February 23

Topic: Animal Connections

Jackie Higgins. *Sentient: How Animals Illuminate the Wonder of Our Human Senses*

Charles Foster. *Being a Beast: Adventures Across the Species Divide*

Richard Louv. *Our Wild Calling: How Connecting with Animals Can Transform Our Lives and Save Theirs*

Ed Yong. *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*

April 27

Topic: Strange Journeys

Nick Hunt. *Outlandish: Walking Europe's Unlikely Landscapes*

Cal Flynn. *Islands of Abandonment: Nature Rebounding in the Post-Human Landscape*

Ben Rawlence. *Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth*

June 22

Topic: Marc Hamer – His two books:

How to Catch a Mole: Wisdom from a Life Lived in Nature

Seed to Dust: Life, Nature and a Country Garden

September 28

Topic: The Fungus Among Us

Merlin Sheldrake. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our World, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Future*

Keith Seifert. *The Hidden Kingdom of Fungi: Exploring the Microscopic World in Our Forests, Homes and Bodies*

November 23

Topic: Deep time to Our Time

Chris Thorogood. *When Plants Took Over the Planet: The Amazing Story of Plant Evolution*

Paul Kendrick. *A History of Plants in Fifty Fossils*

Thomas Halliday. *Otherlands: A Journey Through Earth's Extinct Worlds*

2022

February 24

Book: Helen MacDonald. *Vesper flights*

April 28

Topic: Cherry Blossoms and Cherry Trees

Naoke Abe. *The sakura obsession: the incredible story of the plant hunter who saved Japan's cherry blossoms*

Douglas Justice. *Ornamental cherries in Vancouver*

June 23

Topic: Women and trees

Suzanne Simard. *Finding the mother tree: discovering the wisdom of the forest*

Meg Lowman. *The arbonaut: a life discovering the eighth continent in the trees above us*

September 22

Book: Sue Stuart-Smith. *The well-gardened mind: the restorative power of nature*

November 25

Topic: Weather

2021

January 28

Topic: *Nature Poetry* – consider how poets, poems and verses for children have added to one's feelings about nature. Bring examples to share and read aloud, if preferred.

March 25

Topic: *Bees in science, in our psyche and in literature*

Mark Winston and Renée Saklikar. *Listening to the Bees*

Mark Winston. *Bee time: lessons from the hive*

May 27

Book: Robert McFarlane. *Underland: A deep time journey*

July 22

Topic: Anything by or about Vita Sackville-West

September 23

Topic: Rewilding

Isabella Tree. *Wilding: the return of nature to an English farm*

George Monibot. *Feral: rewilding the land, the sea, and human life*

Ben Goldfarb. *Eager: the surprising life of beavers and why they matter*

November 25

Topic: Personal journeys in nature

Bill Bryson. *In a sunburned country*

Alys Fowler. *Hidden nature: a voyage of discovery*

John A. Cherrington. *Walking to Camelot: a pilgrimage through the heart of rural England*

Raynor Winn. *The salt path: a memoir*

2020

Schedule disruptions due to pandemic

January 28

Topic: Moss

Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Gathering moss: a natural and cultural history of mosses*

Annie Martin. *The magical world of moss gardening*

George Schenk. *Moss gardening: including lichens, liverworts, and other miniatures*

February 25

Book: Richard Powers. *The overstory: a novel*

Meetings on Zoom began April 30

April 30

Book: Frans de Waal. *Mama's Last Hug: Animal Emotions and What They Tell Us About Ourselves*

May 28

Topic: Anything by or about Alexander von Humboldt

Andrea Wulf. *The invention of nature: Alexander von Humboldt's new world*

H. Walter Lack. *Alexander von Humboldt and the botanical exploration of the Americas*

June 25

Book: Craig Childs. *Atlas of a lost world: travels in ice age America*

October 8

Book: Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson. *Buzz, Sting, Bite: Why We Need Insects*

2019

January 22

Topic: Gerald Durrell Revisited – anything by or about him

February 26

Topic: Invasive Plants

March 26

Topic: Royal Gardens

April 23

Topic: Trees

Fiona Stafford. *The long, long life of trees*

David George Haskell. *The songs of trees: stories from nature's great connectors*

Peter A. Thomas. *Trees: their natural history*

May 28

Book:

Penelope Lively. *Life in the garden*

June 25

Topic: Clayoquot Sound (Tofino area)

Christine Lowther and Anita Sinner. *Writing the West Coast*

David Pitt Brooke. *Chasing Clayoquot: a wilderness almanac*

Joanna Streetly. *Wild fierce life: dangerous moments on the outer coast*

September 24

Book: Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*

October 22

Book: James Rebanks. *A shepherd's life*

November 26

Topic: Forest Bathing

Florence Williams. *The nature fix: why nature makes us happier, healthier, and more creative*

Clemens G. Arvay. *The biophilia effect: a scientific and spiritual exploration of the healing bond between humans and nature*

M. Amos Clifford. *Your guide to forest bathing: experience the healing power of nature*

Nathaniel Brodie (ed.). *Forest under story*

2018

January 23

Topic: Mixed bag of memoirs

Leslie Buck. *Cutting Back: My apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto*

Joan Dye Gussow. *Growing, older: a chronicle of death, life, and vegetables*

James Barilla. *My backyard jungle: the adventures of an urban wildlife lover who turned his yard into habitat and learned to live with it*

Eric Toensmeier. *Paradise Lot: Two plant geeks, one-tenth of an acre and the making of an edible garden oasis in the city*

February 27

Book: Kathleen Jamie. *Sightlines: A Conversation with the Natural World*

March 27

Book: Sophie D. Coe. *The True History of Chocolate*

April 24

Topic: Anything by or about Marianne North

May 22

Topic: Winnie-the-Pooh

Kathryn Aalto. *The Natural World of Winnie-the-Pooh: A Walk through the Forest that Inspired the Hundred Acre Wood*

June 26

Topic: Flowers

Peter Bernhardt. *Rose's Kiss: A Natural History of Flowers*

Stephen Buchmann. *The Reason for Flowers: Their History, Culture, Biology and How They Change Our Lives*

September 25

Book: Hope Jahren. *Lab Girl*

October 23

Topic: Anything by or about Jane Goodall

November 27

Topic: Anthologies about gardens and gardening

Linda Hogan and Brenda Peterson (ed.). *The Sweet Breathing of Plants*

Thomas C. Cooper. *The Roots of my Obsession: thirty great gardeners reveal why they garden*

David Wheeler (ed.) *By Pen and by Spade: An Anthology in Garden Writing from Hortus*

David Wheeler (ed.) *Hortus revisited: a twenty-first birthday anthology*

2017

January 24

Topic: Books by Michael Pollan

February 28

Topic: Books by or about plant explorer Ernest Henry Wilson

March 28

Book: Pacific Northwest biota

William Dietrich. *Natural grace: the charm, wonder, and lessons of Pacific Northwest animals and plants*

April 25

Book: Wildlife

Sooyoung Park. *Great Soul of Siberia: Passion, obsession and one man's quest for the world's most elusive tiger*

May 23

Book: Thor Hansen. *The triumph of seeds: how grains, nuts, kernels, pulses and pips conquered the plant kingdom*

June 27

Topic: Geology of B.C.

Bill Matthews and Mim Monger. *Roadside geology of southern British Columbia*

John J. Clague and Bob Turner. *Vancouver, city on the edge: living with a dynamic geological landscape*

Barbara Huck. *In search of ancient British Columbia*

September 26

Book: Richard Mabey. *The cabaret of plants: forty thousand years of plant life and the human imagination*

October 24

Topic: Perspectives on Trees

Peter Wohlleben. *The hidden life of trees*

Nancy R. Hugo. *Seeing trees*

November 28

Topic: Pottering in the Garden: anything by or about Beatrix Potter

2016

January 26

Book: Elizabeth Kolbert. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*

February 23

Book: Susanna Moodie. *Roughing it in The Bush: or, Forest Life in Canada*

Members were encouraged to visit the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibit entitled “*Embracing Canada: Landscapes from Krieghoff to the Group of Seven*” (Oct/2015 – Jan/2016)

March 22

Topic: Anything by or about George Forrest

April 26

Topic: Gardening by numbers: the marketing of garden literature

Jennifer Potter. *Seven flowers and how they changed our world*

Bill Laws. *Fifty plants that changed the course of history*

Sarah Ford. *50 ways to kill a slug* by Sarah Ford

Diana Wells. *100 flowers and how they got their names*

Ernest Small. *Top 100 exotic food plants*

Steve Whysall. *100 best plants for the coastal garden: the botanical basics of great gardening*

May 24

Topic: The writings of gardener Margaret Roach

June 28

Topic: Anything by or about Gertrude Jekyll

September 27

Topic: BC Ethnobotany. Emphasis on the works of Nancy Turner

October 25

Book: Adam Nicolson. *Sissinghurst: A Garden Over Time*

November 22

Book: Irene M. Pepperberg. *Alex & me: how a scientist and a parrot discovered a hidden world of animal intelligence and formed a deep bond in the process*

2015

January 27

Topic: Mythological and psychological look at the importance of trees

Jean Shinoda Bolen. *Like a tree: how trees, women and tree people can save the world*

Sara Maitland. *Gossip from the forest: the tangled roots of our forests and fairytales*

February 24

Topic: Anything about the Scottish botanist David Douglas

March 24

Topic: Bees in our VanDusen bonnets – anything about bees

Mark Winston. *Bee time: lessons from the hive*

David Goulson. *A sting in the tail*

David Goulson. *A buzz in the meadow*

April 28

Book: Vanessa Diffenbaugh. *The language of flowers: a novel*

May 26

Topic: The history of Canadian gardening

Carol Martin. *A history of Canadian gardening*

Edwinna von Baeyer. *Rhetoric and roses*

Shirley Harris. *Forgotten gardens, abandoned landscapes and remarkable restorations: pioneer gardens, Canadian Pacific Railway station gardens, gardens in bloom*

June 23

Book: M. Wylie Blanchet. *The curve of time*

September 22

Topic: The moral lives of animals

Mark Bekoff. *Wild justice: the moral lives of animals*

Dale Peterson. *The moral life of animals*

October 27

Topic: Books both funny and practical by Alan Titchmarsh

November 24

Book: David George Haskell. *The forest unseen: a year's watch in nature*

2014

January 28

Topic: Examining our changing connections with nature

Richard Louv. *The nature principle: reconnecting with life in a virtual age*

Richard Louv. *Last child in the woods: saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*

Eva M. Selhub. *Your brain on nature: the science of nature's influence on your health, happiness and vitality*

February 25

Book: Tan Twan Eng. *The garden of evening mists: a novel*

March 25

Topic: Exploring *Hortus*, the journal

April 22

Topic: Anything by or about Charles Darwin

May 27

Book: Daniel Chamovitz. *What a plant knows: a field guide to the senses*

June 24

Topic: Garden murder mysteries

September 23

Topic: Women travelers who contributed significantly to the arts, science, and related fields, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, e.g., Marianne North and Mary Kingsley.

October 28

Topic: Inspired by nature: textiles, dyes and creativity

Amy Butler Greenfield. *A Perfect Red: Empire, espionage and the color of desire*

Discussion with VanDusen Garden's Development Director, Dawn Russell, who is an accomplished textile artist and designer.

November 25

Topic: Gardeners and their letters

Anne Scott-James. *Gardening letters to my daughter*

Elizabeth Bradbury. *The Garden Letters*

Mary Russell Mitford. *My Garden: Selected from the letters and recollections*

Beth Chatto. *Dear friend & gardener: letters on life and gardening*

Leslie Land. *The 3,000-mile garden: an exchange of letters on gardening, food, and the good life*

2013

January 22

Topic: Perspectives on Trees

Roger Deakin. *Wildwood: a journey through trees*

Theresa Kishkan. *Mnemonic: a book of trees*

Richard Preston. *The wild trees: a story of passion and*

February 26

Book: Catherine H. Howell. *Flora Mirabilis: how plants have shaped world knowledge, health, wealth, and beauty*

March 26

Topic: Books by Charles Elliott

April 23

Topic: The Gardens of Heligan.

Petherick, Tom. *Heligan: a portrait of the lost gardens*

Smit, Tom. *Lost gardens of Heligan*

May 28

Topic: Books about *Meconopsis*, with particular focus on the blue poppy. Suggested books include: *Blue heaven: Encounters with the blue poppy* and *Beyond beauty: Hunting the wild blue poppy* by Bill Terry

June 25

Topic: Art in landscape, landscape in art, environmental art

September 24

Topic: The writings of Gilbert White, a pioneering 18th century [English naturalist](#) and [ornithologist](#).

October 22

Book: Charlotte Gill. *Eating dirt: deep forests, big timber and life with the tree-planting tribe*

November 26

Book: Helen Babbs. *My garden, my city, and me: rooftop adventures in the wilds of London*

2012

January 24

Topic: Christopher Lloyd

February 28

Book: Molly Peacock. *The Paper Garden: Mrs. Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72*

March 27

Topic: Classic women gardeners -- e.g., Gertrude Jekyll, Jane Loudon, Louise Beebe Wilder

April 24

Book: Tom Standage. *An Edible History of Humanity*

May 22

Topic: Gardens of Italy (could include the Vatican)

June 26

Book: Kate Morton. *The Forgotten Garden*

September 25

Topic: Rachel Carson - her writing, her influence, and current status of pesticide use

October 23

Book:

Mark Plotkin. *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobiologist in the Amazon Rain Forest*

November 27

Topic: Animals – Monarchs or other butterflies

2011

February 22

Topic: Books by or about John Muir

March 22

Book: John H. Vaillant. *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed*

April 26

Topic: The World of Children's Books on Gardens and Gardening – Fiction and Nonfiction

May 24

Book: Oliver Sacks. *Oaxaca Journal*

June 28

Topic: Gardens in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art

September 27

Topic: Dangerous Plants

David Stuart. *Dangerous Garden: The Quest for Plants to Change Our Lives.*

Amy Stewart. *Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother & Other Botanical Atrocities*

October 25

Topic: Plants and Gardens of Australia and New Zealand

November 22

Book: Margaret Horsfield. *Cougar Annie's Garden*

2010

Note: The schedule was slightly altered from January-March due to the Olympics.

January 26

Book: Adam Leith Gollner. *The Fruit Hunters: A Story of Nature, Adventure, Commerce and Obsession*

March 2

Topic: Books by or about Penelope Hobhouse

March 30

Book: Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki. *Wisdom of the Elders*

April 27

Book: Candace Savage. *Crows: Encounters with the Wise Guys of the Avian World*

May 25

Topic: Landscape Architecture – General Overview

June 22

Book: Susan Orlean. *The Orchid Thief*

September 28

Book: Andrea Wulf. *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession*

October 26

Topic: Garden Styles by Geographic Region

November 23

Book: George M.F. Drower. *Garden of Invention: The Stories of Garden Inventors and their Inventions*

2009

January 27

Topic: Anything by or about Beverley Nichols

February 24

Book: Gayton, Don. *Interwoven wild: an ecologist loose in the garden*

March 24

Topic: Native American Culture and its Relationship to the Plant World

April 28

Book: Elizabeth Von Arnim. *The Enchanted April*

May 26

Topic: Plant Explorers

June 23

Book: David Suzuki and Wayne Brady. *Tree: a life story*

September 22

Book: Francis Kingdon-Ward. *In the land of the blue poppies: the collected plant-hunting writings of Frank Kingdon-Ward*

October 27

Topic: Best of the Northwest: Books on various topics

November 24

Book: Karel Capek. *The gardener's year*

2008

March 24

Book: Michael Pollan. *Botany of Desire*

April 22

Topic: Vita Sackville-West

May 27

Book: Helen Humphreys. *The Lost Garden*

June 24

Book: Douglas Chambers. *Stony Ground: The Making of a Canadian Garden*

September 23

Book: Clive Justice. *Mr. Menzies' Garden Legacy*

October 28

Topic: Roses

November 25

Book: Sarah Addison Allen. *Garden Spells*