

## 2026 VanDusen Book Club Reading List

Our selections for 2026 will take readers around the globe and provide a wealth of exciting travel adventures, not only in remote and wild places, but also in gentler and more familiar landscapes, both urban and rural. Join us for some literary armchair travel that will not only provide entertainment but also provoke challenging moral questions to ask about our increasingly fragile natural environment.

### FEBRUARY 9

Theme: Oh, The Stories they Can Tell!

*Flower Day: A Story of 24 Hours and 24 Floral Lives* (2025) by Sandra Knapp  
*A Short History of Flowers: The Stories That Make Our Gardens* (2024) by Advolly Richmond

Richmond, a British garden and plant historian, and Knapp, an American botanist, reveal the fascinating stories embedded in the origins of our familiar garden flowers. Both writers share adventurous accounts of exploration, convoluted journeys, deceit, intrigue, theft and obsession. Sit back and enjoy the riveting tales of flower power to be discovered in our outdoor spaces.

### APRIL 13

Theme: Let the River(s) Run

*Is a River Alive?* (2025) by Robert McFarlane

Do rivers have consciousness, souls, intelligence and memory? Should rivers be granted the status of “legal personhood”, giving them the rights to flourish, free from pollution, and to flow? How can we reframe how we look at the natural world? Through his journeys along three rivers, one in Ecuador under threat from mining, another in India, already dying from industrial pollution, and the third in eastern Canada threatened by pressure to build hydroelectric dams, acclaimed nature writer Robert Macfarlane tries to find answers to these questions. A passionate, thought provoking, and, in the end, hopeful book.

### JUNE 8

Theme: Modern Plant Explorers and the Thrill of the Hunt

*Chasing Plants: Journeys with a Botanist through Rainforests, Swamps and Mountains* (2022)  
by Chris Thorogood

*Modern Plant Hunters: Adventures in the Pursuit of Extraordinary Plants* (2019) by S. B. Primrose

*Wilson's China: A Century On* (2010) by Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham

*Plants from the Edge of the World: New Explorations from the Far East* (2005) by Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham

These entertaining travelogues recount exciting adventures, and, in Thorogood's case, what might be called the practice of extreme botany, in the pursuit of plants. All four writers delight in sharing the joy of the chase, often through remote and hostile landscapes, the excitement of the find, and showing plants in unexpected ways to their readers. The books are also lavishly illustrated with photographs, maps and original illustrations.

## **SEPTEMBER 14**

Theme: Accidental Adventures in Rescuing, Rearing and Renewal

*Raising Hare: The Heartwarming True Story of an Unlikely Friendship* (2024) by Chloe Dalton  
*George: A Magpie Memoir* (2023) by Frieda Hughes  
*Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship* (2021) by Catherine Raven

Three very different writers, a British foreign policy specialist, a British poet/painter and a reclusive American biologist, share their personal stories of saving and being saved by the wild creatures who unexpectedly (and serendipitously) enter their lives where their presence changes them in profound ways.

## **NOVEMBER 9**

Theme: Botanical Journeys Around the Globe

*Around the World in 80 Plants* (2021) by Jonathan Drori  
*Around the World in 80 Trees* (2018) by Jonathan Drori

In these beautifully illustrated books in which plant science is entwined with history and culture, Drori, a plant scientist and contemporary Phileas Fogg, takes the reader on botanical tours through time and across cultures, offering strange and true tales that reveal the surprising historical relationships that exist between plants and people.