



**GARDENS OF THE
GARDEN STATE**
by Nancy Berner and
Susan Lowry

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A beautifully illustrated book profiling a diverse range of gardens in New Jersey, a state with varied geography and climate.

Reviewer Graham Rice is a garden writer and author.

New Jersey is known as 'The Garden State' not for its overabundance of private and public gardens but for its impressive commercial production of blueberries, cranberries, peaches and vegetables. If, however, its ornamental horticulture was the reason for the name it would be well deserved, as this beautifully illustrated book about the gardens of the most densely populated state in the USA reveals.

A short overview and history of gardening and gardens in New Jersey precedes profiles on 31 gardens, accompanied by 200 photographs to show them off enticingly. The book reveals the wide range of gardens and shows how the varied climate (USDA 5b-7b), topography and soil conditions influences design and planting.

The impact of the gardens' designers is emphasised, especially that of those hired to develop estates for business

people leaving New York City for more spacious New Jersey.

Sweeping scale and specimen trees are significant features of many gardens – most are large by British standards. Edibles feature only occasionally.

I would have appreciated a more thorough analysis of each garden and its plants, to go with the fascinating summaries of the gardens' origins, along with more close-up shots of plantings to complement the preponderance of views and vistas. And an index.

Unfortunately, there is no indication of when, or even if, these gardens are open to the public and no guidance on how to find out. Inspired by this book, visitors to nearby New York City looking to visit these gardens will have some work to do. The Garden Conservancy (gardenconservancy.org) and Garden State Gardens (gardenstategardens.org) websites provide opening information for some.

Book offer

RRP £40. Reader offer price £37 including p&p.