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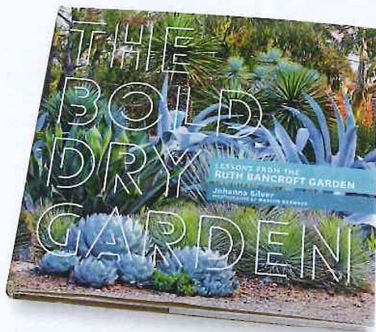
The Bold Dry Garden

Johanna Silver 236pp, 2016, Timber Press, ISBN 9781604696707,
RRP £25 **RHS price £20**

This is not so much a gardening book as a book about a garden. It tells the story of Ruth Bancroft, whose pioneering approach to gardening in the dry Californian climate has paved the way for future gardeners.

The book has four main sections. First we are told about Ruth: a farmer's wife who, during the 1950s and 60s, collected succulent plants from wherever she could, to grow under cover. The history of the garden is charted - how, by 1971, most of the farm was sold to developers, leaving Ruth, at the age of 63, free to think seriously about gardening, using plants that required no supplementary irrigation. So she began experimenting with her beloved succulents.

The next section tells us what the garden has become today - one of the most striking examples of succulent plant landscaping anywhere in the world. The remainder, and



largest part of the book, is devoted to 'signature plants of the dry garden' and how they have been used in the garden.

The book is lavishly illustrated with full-colour photographs - including charming shots from the early years and eye-catching

vistas or close-up details of plants taken more recently - all demonstrating Ruth's ability to blend art, horticulture and botany.

As far as UK gardeners are concerned, this is not a 'how to' guide because the climate is so different. However, anyone interested in putting together a garden of succulent plants cannot fail to be inspired to try and replicate some of those vistas using hardier subjects. Otherwise, simply turn the pages and immerse yourself in the story of one of the world's great gardens. ●

Paul Spracklin is a garden designer with a particular interest in succulent gardening