



# Young Gardener

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Editorial Choice:

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Media type:

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Stefan Buczacki has spread himself so widely through the gardening media that even I know how to say his name. His approach to everything is logical, plausible, seemingly effortless and, like the man himself, infallibly neat and tidy. And so it is in this collaboration with his primary-teacher wife, and super-snapper Sieveking.

Using the logical approach, the pair divide the year into four seasons, each of which is chopped into Early, Mid and Late. Then each of this dozen of seasonettes is cut into four successionaly-sowed sections: 'What's going on in the garden?', 'What's happening to the plants?', 'What can I do in the garden?' and 'Make it!' (something you can do or make). Logical, plausible and utterly neat; should be an effortless doddle, as may be confirmed by the seasonal 'check it!' achievement target charts.

So much for the approach - just like the neat layouts that informed my own youthful excursions into veg. growing - now for the substance. It doesn't take long (para 2 of Early Spring, in fact) for a resounding clanger to drop. Very reasonably, the Buczackis encourage the installation of garden nest boxes. Trouble is they advise facing their entries South West. This is diametrically *wrong*, and very often fatal, as the chicks get too much sun. North East is the essential aspect. And Luback's sketch of a nest box hanging from a chain is just plain silly.

Thereafter it picks up a bit. Good basic instructions for seed-sowing are given, though I'm dismayed to see that although the existence of a compost heap is acknowledged in Early Spring, the instructions for establishing it have to wait until Mid Autumn (63 pages later). But on we go through the year, sowing appropriate seeds, planting appropriate plants, but, one hopes, not emulating the Luback sketches illustrating tool use. It's confusing that the Buczackis use the words 'sow' and 'plant' (for the setting of seeds) indiscriminately. Thus runner bean seeds are 'planted' and lettuces 'sown' in the sort of inconsistency that all instructors are taught to avoid.

Similarly they are happy to prescribe 'compost' without always specifying which of the two sorts defined in their glossary they mean. And despite their advertised 'green organic' approach they appear happy to advocate 'fertiliser' entirely with qualification. No amount of pretty child-photography can offset this sort of editorial sloppiness.

But, as the year progresses, and establishment gives way to maintenance, things get better. The Early Summer page on successional sowing is exemplary, as is the later encouragement of seed-saving. Autumn harvesting brings out

Sievekings best (and, at *last*, a discussion of compost-making) before the garden settles down for winter.

But, despite the number of nits that can be picked in it, this isn't by any means a lousy book. It's friendly, considerably informative, celebrates the continuousness of garden life, and, above all, it is, as the authors' foreword hopes, a book for sharing. Gardeners learn from each other all the time ? a process generative of more inspiration than any text (except, perhaps, a well-presented seed catalogue!).

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