



Book Reviews Margaret Hodgson

Greenhouse Gardening by James Underwood Crockett
160 pages, approx. 83 plates colour photos, 19 pages with black and white photos or diagrams, illustrating methods to be used in setting up a greenhouse. Appendices include *Greenhouse pests and diseases*, *Characteristics of 102 greenhouse plants*, *Credits and acknowledgments*, *Bibliography*, *Index*. Published in North America in 1977 by Time-Life Books Inc., Alexandria, Virginia. Library of Congress Card Number 77-79073.

James Underwood Crockett (1915-1979) was an eminent horticulturist, writer on gardening subjects and, on television, a teacher of plant care. Many of you will recall the popular programme, "Crockett's Victory Garden" which was carried for many years on PBS. He was a graduate of the University of Massachusetts' Stockbridge School of Agriculture. He also received an Honourary Doctor of Science from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has been cited by the American Association of Nurserymen of the American Horticultural Society. He authored books on greenhouse, indoor and window-sill gardening, a monthly column for *Horticulture* magazine and a monthly bulletin, "Flowery Talks", for florists. His weekly television programme, *Crockett's Victory Garden*, was broadcast throughout Canada and the United States.

Greenhouse Gardening is a practical guide to any gardener who is interested in year-round gardening under glass. The prospect is becoming more expensive, but a greenhouse does appeal to many of us on the coast to at least winter over many of our plants and to give our plants a head start in the very early spring.

The book is divided into five chapters, with the Appendix following. In **Chapter One**, the author gives a brief description of the history of greenhouses, dating from the time of the Roman Emperor Tiberius 14 – 37 A.D. who had a passion for cucumbers, in or out of season, and the only way to satisfy this passion was to build a structure enclosed in beds of dung and covered over with sheets of mica, this being in the pre-glass era. The Romans continued to improve on their methods, building in ducts and pipes to carry heated water and air for temperature control and allowed for the growing of grapes, peaches, roses, cucumbers and decorative plants. But as Rome declined, so did horticulture, and these ancient skills were not revived until the Italian Renaissance until near the end of the 1200s. By the end of the 17th Century, orange trees were being grown in orangeries to protect them from frost. But the real boom in greenhouse growing came in 19th Century England, after the prohibitive tax was removed from glass. Soon every wealthy family was constructing a greenhouse and adding a gardener to the staff.

Crockett uses this chapter to also give very practical advice of calculating to cost of heating a greenhouse for every area of Canada and the United States with charts from the U.S. National Climatic Centre and the Environment Service of Canada. From there, his discussion moves to *glass* or *plastic*. He brings into discussion the drawbacks of flexible plastics – limited life span, fiberglass is *translucent* rather *transparent*. Some surfaces are uneven and catch dirt easily. It is noteworthy that the author raises many problems that gardener may not have considered.

Crockett also describes the practicalities of 1) a greenhouse constructed from a kit 2) Assembling a prefab lean-to 3) Choosing a location 4) Systems for heating 5) the

emergency alarm 6) Benches and walkways within the greenhouse

Chapter Two describes the choice of plants, methods and temperature for use in a greenhouse. In **Chapter Three**, titled **Getting Flowers the Size You Want When You Want** gives practical advice of forcing bulbs, effects of light and dark, tents to block light, pinching for larger blooms and many other suggestions. The **Fourth Chapter**, **The Fine Art of Creating New Plants** includes ideas of combining pools, extending living areas and conservatory areas that essentially become part of the house as part of your greenhouse plan. In **Chapter Five**, the author has offered a comprehensive coverage of plants for the greenhouse.