

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

*Sex In Your Garden*

By Angela Overy

This is a tale of seduction, temptation, bribery and deceit; a regular Soap Opera of cross cultural fornication and reproduction. It's a book about flowers, the birds and the bees. You know, like Nasturtiums, Poppies, Humming birds and Butterflies. Ms. Overy (not ovary) has written an attractive and entertaining narrative comparing the strivings of plants to attract sexual partners with the activities of human courtship.

*Sex In Your Garden* takes the reader outside to observe the lascivious activities of plants. The sex life of plants is remarkably varied and competitive. Rooted to the earth, plants use shape, color and fragrance to attract a pollinator, sometimes offering bribes of tasty treats and protective shelter to entice potential lovers. More promiscuous flowers will mate with anything; others are shy and conceal their sexual organs excluding all but certain pollinators.

Ms. Overy explains the basic biology without claiming scientific exactness. The reader learns that the beautiful flower is the reproductive organ of the plant. The phallic stamen and the receptive stigma rely upon the participation of a third party, a sexual partner or pollinator, to facilitate the transfer of pollen to the ovules. Male genetic material joins with female genetic material, a seed matures and with it the potential for new life.

*Sex In Your Garden* does not limit itself to garden-variety three ways. There are a few - possibly shocking - revelations. Did you know that most plants are hermaphrodites with transgender tendencies (gasp)? The flower with its enticing shape, color and fragrance will contain both male and female sex organs. "He" will start out as a young male his virile stamen depositing pollen on the body of a visiting butterfly (just as an example). Later the flower will transform into a mature female, her stigma primed, welcoming to incoming pollinators.

Similar to a bee attracted by the color and shape of the Delphinium; I was drawn first to the cover of this book. Yes, the title caught my eye. The photos inside the book are beautiful. The text is entertaining, titillating and sweet. Although my grandmother would have been annoyed, I think this book will amuse my mother. One thing is certain, explaining the birds and the bees will never be the same again.

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