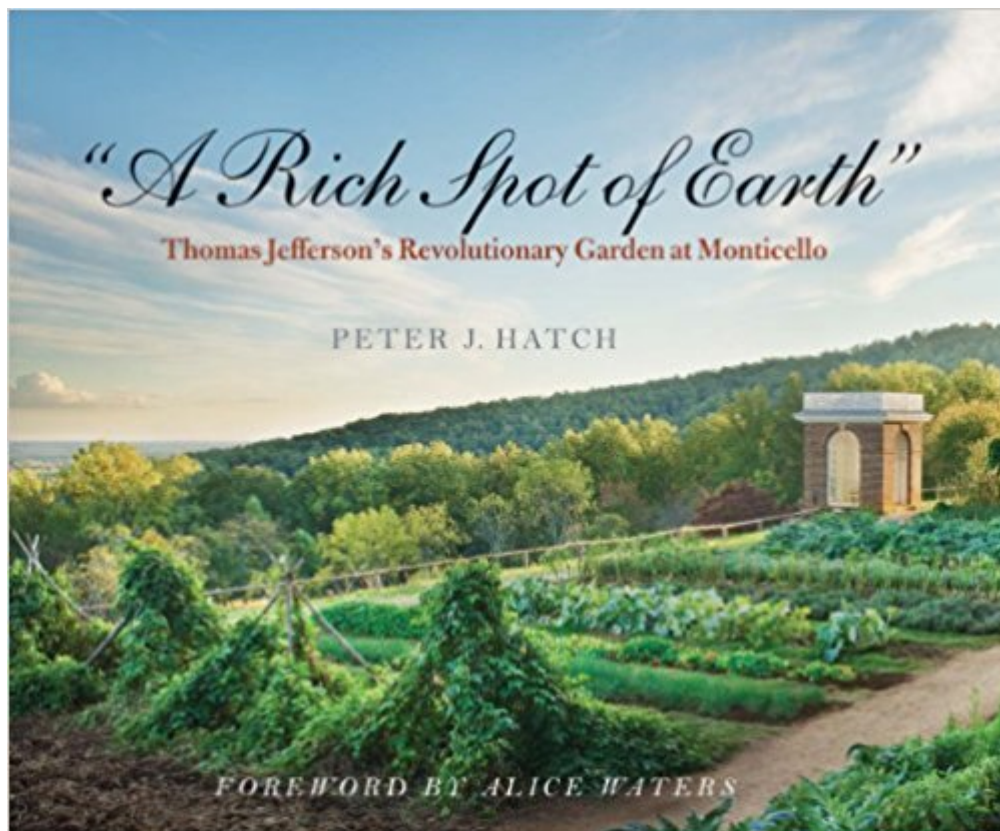




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# "A Rich Spot Of Earth": Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden At Monticello



## Synopsis

Were Thomas Jefferson to walk the grounds of Monticello today, he would no doubt feel fully at home in the 1,000-foot terraced vegetable garden where the very vegetables and herbs he favored are thriving. Extensively and painstakingly restored under Peter J. Hatch's brilliant direction, Jefferson's unique vegetable garden now boasts the same medley of plants he enthusiastically cultivated in the early nineteenth century. The garden is a living expression of Jefferson's genius and his distinctly American attitudes. Its impact on the culinary, garden, and landscape history of the United States continues to the present day. Graced with more than 200 full-color illustrations, "A Rich Spot of Earth" is the first book devoted to all aspects of the Monticello vegetable garden. Hatch guides us from the asparagus and artichokes first planted in 1770 through the horticultural experiments of Jefferson's retirement years (1809–1826). The author explores topics ranging from labor in the garden, garden pests of the time, and seed saving practices to contemporary African American gardens. He also discusses Jefferson's favorite vegetables and the hundreds of varieties he grew, the half-Virginian half-French cuisine he developed, and the gardening traditions he adapted from many other countries.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Digging deep into our long, illustrious tradition of presidential dirt. . . . A Rich Spot of Earth lovingly describes the 1000-foot terraced vegetable garden that was restored to its 1812 appearance under the author's able direction." —Dominique Browning, New York Times

Book Review "Elegantly produced and artfully augmented by stunning, evocative photographs of the estate and the bounty it produces, Hatch's homage establishes Jefferson as the clear forefather of modern organic and sustainable garden movements." —Carol Haggas, Booklist (starred review) "Breathtaking. The photos are beautiful, the research is impeccable, and the story is captivating. From a historian's perspective, Hatch provides a new depth to the understanding of Jefferson's character. From a gardener's perspective, the book serves as an inspiration to grow and treasure heirlooms." —Heirloom Adventures Blog "Beautifully illustrated, authoritative. . . . It is wonderful to find out that the man who contributed so much to the republic in which we live also set his contemporaries and posterity such a salutary example in other ways as well." —Martin Rubin, Washington Times "A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello presents a rarely seen side of the man. Here is Jefferson with mud-splattered boots laying out garden beds and carefully setting seeds with dirty hands: a Founding Father not on a lofty pedestal, but joyfully competing with neighbors in an annual contest to see who could bring the first spring peas to table." —David Maurer, Richmond Times-Dispatch "The book is absolutely beautiful and tells a fascinating story. It provides pure pleasure for those interested in tasty food lavishly presented. And it opens up a new and interesting way of thinking about Jefferson, the Founding Father who remains most relevant and malleable for Americans." —Erik Loomis, Lawyers, Guns, and Money Blog "Peter Hatch's vibrant and enthusiastic passion for preserving Thomas Jefferson's farming legacy at Monticello reminds us all of the time-tested continuity and historical root of this kind of agriculture." —Alice Waters "In this fascinating book, Peter Hatch wonderfully weaves together his deep understanding of Monticello's soil with his scholarly knowledge of Jefferson's legacy as a gardener." —Andrea Wulf, author of Founding Gardeners "Peter Hatch is the ultimate authority on America's ultimate vegetable garden. Learn all about the genius of the place. — Hatch's fascinating account will enrich your garden and your life." —Amy P. Goldman, Chair of the Board, Seed Savers Exchange "Peter Hatch brings the horticultural legacy of Thomas Jefferson to life. — A Rich Spot of Earth affords us a clear and compelling view into the revolutionary thinking of Jefferson, illuminating for the reader his approach to food, diversity, democracy, and freedom — making the genius of Jefferson, perhaps, as relevant today as at any other time in American history." —P. Allen Smith, author of The Garden Home Series

France, Spain and the Mediterranean, West Africa, and Creole

culture. With boundless enthusiasm, Jefferson sought seeds and distributed them. He received them from the Lewis and Clark expedition, from neighbors and friends across America, and from an international community of

plantsmen. Jefferson experimented with over 330 varieties and

some 99 species of vegetables. With some of his neighbors,

Jefferson enjoyed a tradition of competing to raise spring peas; whoever harvested the first spring pea hosted a community dinner that included a feast on the winning pea

crop. Unique among Virginia gardeners of his day, Jefferson introduced a roster of unfamiliar species now taken for granted, including tomatoes, okra, eggplant, lima beans, peanuts, and peppers. Anticipating healthy living

advice that would be extolled two centuries later, Jefferson wrote, "I have lived temperately, eating little animal food, and that . . . as a condiment for the vegetables which constitute my

principal diet." Jefferson documented nearly six decades of horticultural triumphs and failures in his Garden Book, a diary he maintained from 1766 to 1824.

This rich record made possible the most accurate early American garden restoration ever

undertaken. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Having lived in Charlottesville, VA for many years I am familiar with Monticello. Just beautiful and I highly recommend making a point of visiting whether passing through the area or you already live here. The reason I bought this book was because I am a gardener and Thomas Jefferson was a well known gardener and ahead of his time in that arena. I wanted to understand how he planted, what he planted and where he got his seeds and information. This book combines history and gardening. Just imagine what it took to construct a 1,000 ft. garden bed and then adding 60 wagon loads of manure. Not only do you learn the successes but the failures in the garden. Who were the key contributors. Where and what Jefferson learned in both France and England. He was not a big meat eater. In fact, he is quoted as saying he only used meat as a condiment. He loved vegetables and had great success with lady apples (tomatoes). He also had a yearly contest with his neighbors to see who could produce the first peas of the year. The winner had to host a dinner using his peas. Learn what it took to build and maintain Monticello. The labor and construction will boggle your mind. I found this book to be fascinating and well worth the price. Do yourself a favor and order "A Rich Spot of Earth", what a delight.

This beautiful book, lavishly illustrated and engagingly written, is, I fear, going to fall into the wrong hands. Why? It looks like a so-called coffee table book (lush photos, oversized format). It would be a shame if it ended up on, well, coffee tables, to eventually be covered with old magazines or used as a handy coaster or, in better circles, to perform a merely decorative "house beautiful" function. It deserves to fall into better hands, specifically those of your favorite vegetable-growing friend or relative. Plenty has been written about Monticello, its architecture and beautiful grounds. This book is about Thomas Jefferson's vegetable gardens. Might you be interested in what varieties of lettuce Jefferson grew? What sort of insects attacked his crops? How he saved seeds and swapped them with his neighbors? Then this book is for you. You may never live in a house like Monticello, but you can put its vegetable varieties on your table. The book is divided in two. The first half focuses on Jefferson's interest in gardening and the development and restoration of the Monticello gardens. It presents a well-researched look at the state of American horticulture in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The author, Peter Hatch, Director of Grounds and Gardens at Monticello, also pays homage to the African-American slaves whose labor built Jefferson's gardens and whose own garden plots often supplied the big house. The second half is a detailed look at many of the vegetables grown in the gardens, including cultural information. It is here where Jefferson's passion for experiment becomes clear. He was always trying new seeds, such as varieties of corn brought back by the Lewis and Clark expedition. His frustrating experiences with melon growing will be familiar to anyone who has tried. This section is organized by botanical families. Finally, there is a good index, an extensive bibliography, and a guide to sources of heirloom seeds. It's a lovely book; you can't go wrong. M. Feldman

Having had the privilege of hearing Mr. Hatch lecture, I had to have his book. He gave a great talk with with a slide presentation and discussion of what is shown in the book. Anyone interested in our history will love it.

Recommended for its forward thinking and ideas far ahead of the times, this is a delightful book full of useful and fascinating information from this incredible Renaissance man of our very own US of A--Thomas Jefferson--what an enquiring mind and how very wonderful it must have been to have been privileged enough to know him! Many of the suggestions made and horticultural experiments tried are still honored and practiced now--Jefferson was somewhat of a genius! The pictures and story told in this book demonstrating the complete modern revamp of the garden to demonstrate the beauty as it was in the past is worth many afternoons of pleasant reading.

A well written and researched book by Peter Hatch, Monticello's Director of Grounds for over thirty years. He recently relinquished this position so he could "retire" and enjoy his own garden. He was able to recreate the vegetable garden as to the way it was in Jefferson's time, especially during Jefferson's later years in life. As a gardener and as someone who loves early American history, the book is a slam dunk. There is much information to be garnered and parleyed into today's gardening techniques. If anything the reader can appreciate the effort that the early farmers of our nation had to endure in order to provide for themselves. Also, the photography is beautiful and uplifting and there are tidbits of history too. I have not yet visited Monticello but this book certainly has made it on my list of places to see.

Great book for those interested in Thomas Jefferson and his magnificent gardens at Monticello. Well researched and well written, it is also a great text for those interested in Virginia agrarian history.

Excellent

Interesting

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