



## The Garden Awakening: Designs to Nurture Our Land and Ourselves

**Mary Reynolds**

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Mary Reynolds's *The Garden Awakening* works to show that trying to claim too much of a hold on the land, even with good intentions, can cause trauma; instead, gardeners should be focused on healing. Herself an Irish garden designer who turned away from manicured spaces to create more mystical, wilder, healthier spaces in tune with nature and the spirit, Reynolds uses this book to show how creating a garden is much like raising a child.

The author combines sound gardening advice with a heavy dose of mysticism and spirituality, suggesting the use of sacred symbols and shapes in the garden and asking would-be designers to set an intention in their space and set aside areas for things like wishing, praying, and releasing, as suit the gardener's needs.

The book is lovely, weighty, and well designed, with whimsical drawings by Ruth Evans, as well as garden plans and depictions of how the gardens look with landscaping and after the planting is complete. While Reynolds clearly believes in the power of symbols and the energy they bring to a space, the book is also a good reference for people who want to create spaces in harmony with nature, even without layers of symbolism.

The author's focus is on developing what she calls forest gardens, built layer on layer over years with trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, ground cover, underground plants, and vines. The intent is to bring fertility to the land and to produce food in a natural space. Many pages of tables offer suggested plants for each layer and describe the plant's characteristics and where they grow best.

Reynolds delivers solid information with a touch of fairy spirit that will come across as charming even to those who don't lean toward the mystical. The book urges gardeners to find their roots in their land, to remember that the land belongs to nature, and to do all they can to awaken their space and bring health and fertility to the land and to themselves.

SARAH WHITE

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