

# Books

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**A Gardener's Encyclopedia of Wildflowers: An Organic Guide to Choosing and Growing Over 150 Beautiful Wildflowers**—G. Colston Burrell. Known to be generally low maintenance, pestfree, and interesting to look at throughout the year, wildflower gardens are becoming a popular alternative to manicured gardens and lawns. In this guide, an illustrated encyclopedia of specific varieties and details about their natural habitats, hardiness zones, propagation, and growing techniques is sandwiched between chapters outlining garden design, general planting information, and sources from which the reader can obtain wildflowers. Rodale Pr Inc., 1997, 192 p., color photos/illus., hardcover, \$29.95.

**The Healthy Home Handbook: All You Need to Know to Rid Your Home of Health and Safety Hazards**—John Warde. Besides explaining how to pinpoint hazards in the home and fix them, this guide helps the reader assess just how dangerous various hazards really are. The first section of the book—on indoor pollutants—tackles asbestos, lead, radon, combustion products, biological contaminants, and noise. Section two—on safety hazards—shows how to childproof a home, make it accessible for the disabled or elderly inhabitant, and evaluate fire and accident hazards and prepare accordingly. Times Bks, 1997, 388 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$17.00.

**The Nature of Horses: Exploring Equine Evolution, Intelligence, and Behavior**—Stephen Budiansky. Although domesticated and closely associated with people for more than 6,000 years, horses have only recently been put under scientists' microscopes. Now, researchers from a diverse group of fields—engineering, biology, optics, and zoology—are investigating equine mysteries. Budiansky scans many disciplines, gleaning information that will help to answer nagging questions about horses—do they have a homing sense? How smart are they? Why do they exhibit obsessive-compulsive tendencies such as biting boards in their stalls? How can they take hurdles in full stride? How do they communicate with one another? Free Pr, 1997, 290 p., color plates/b&w illus., hardcover, \$30.00.

**Oil Spills**—Joanna Burger. Though oil is critical for heating homes and fueling automobiles, spilled oil is severely detrimental to soil and waterways. Burger takes a look at some notorious and some lesser-known oil spills, outlining the problems and damage associated with them as well as their social, legal, and economic implications. On a more positive note, she revisits the sites of spills to see how the land and wildlife have recovered and offers hope as well as alternatives to oil and its transport. Rutgers U Pr, 1997, 261 p., hardcover, \$29.95.

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**The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation**—Matt Ridley. Are we truly selfish or genuinely kind? Ridley deftly applies the concepts of evolutionary psychology to the problem and argues that we are both—we are subconsciously self-motivated, but those instincts can create nice, not nasty, people in the real world as we maneuver for position. Cooperation, Ridley contends, may have evolved as part of our nature, and it may be that we are able to innately calculate advantage when exchanging goods. Ridley explores the political implications of his thesis and tackles economics from a Darwinian perspective. Viking, 1997, 295 p., hardcover, \$24.95.

**The Sizesaurus**—Stephen Strauss. This reference is sure to please anyone who has spent any time wondering how small a micron is or how big the Big Bang was. Practical explanations for every imaginable measurement are followed by the Sizesaurus, which provides common equivalents. Originally published in hardcover in 1995. Avon, 1997, 242 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$13.00.

**Turtles, Termites, and Traffic Jams: Explorations in Massively Parallel Microworlds**—Mitchell Resnick. Although many people prefer to think of life as having a stable, centralized control, numerous examples from nature, including the behavior of ant colonies and birds flying in formation, reveal a leaderless, self-organized pattern. A denizen of MIT's famed Media Laboratory, Resnick examines how and why people resist the idea of decentralization. He also describes StarLogo, a new computer language that simulates self-organizing behavior. Originally published in hardcover in 1994. MIT Pr, 1997, 163 p., b&w photos/illus., paperback, \$12.50.

William R. Clark's *At War Within* takes us on a fascinating tour of the immune system, examining the history of its discovery, the ways in which it protects us, and how it may bring its full force to bear at the wrong time or in the wrong place. Scientists have only gradually come to realize that this elegant defense system has not only the potential to help, as in the case of smallpox, but also the potential to do profound harm in medical conditions ranging from allergies to AIDS, organ transplants to cancer. Clark discusses the myriad medical problems involving the immune system and systematically explains each one. He explores the mind's ability to influence the performance of the immune system and the speculation that women, because they have developed more powerful immune systems in connection with childbearing, are more prone than men to contract certain diseases, such as lupus.

At first glance, it may appear that our immune system faces daunting odds; it must learn to successfully fend off not thousands, but millions of different types of microbes. Fortunately, according to Clark, it would be almost impossible to imagine a more elegant strategy for our protection than the one chosen by our immune system, and *At War Within* provides a thorough and engaging explanation of this most complex and delicately balanced mechanism.

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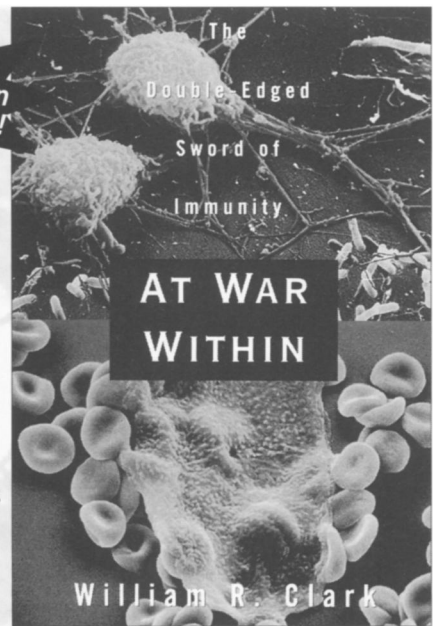
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