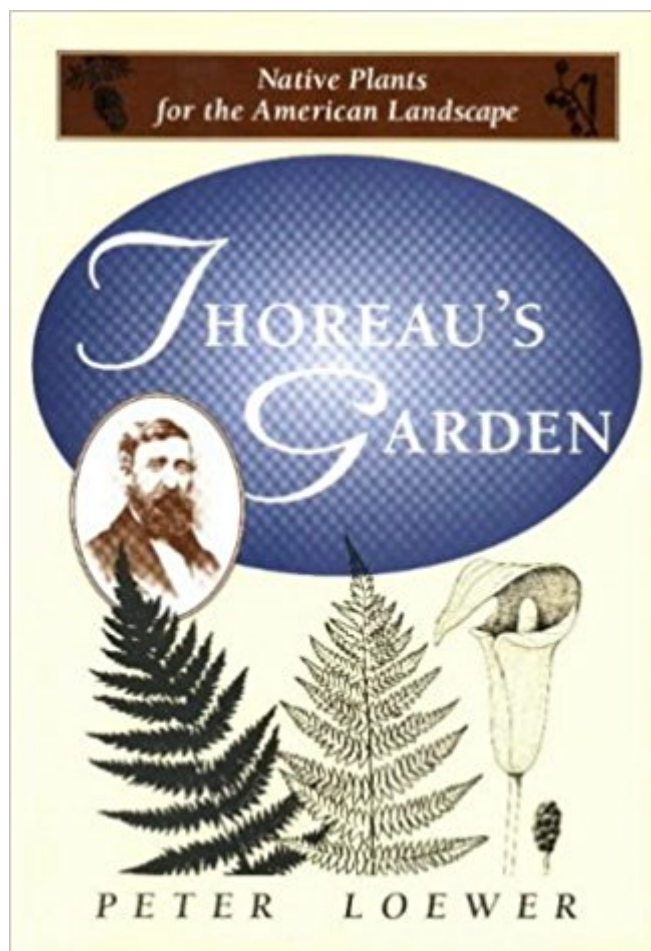


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# Thoreau's Garden



## Synopsis

Henry David Thoreau went alone to Walden Pond in 1845 and observed the ferns and turtleheads, the sundrops and spatterdocks, and the other beautiful native plants that formed a natural garden around his cabin. He walked the woods and fields and penned his observations in his journals. Noted plantsman Peter Loewer combines excerpts from Thoreau's journals with his own botanical illustrations and comments. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Stackpole Books (August 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0811717283

ISBN-13: 978-0811717281

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 6 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,013,893 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in [Books > Crafts,](#)

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## Customer Reviews

"Thoreau's Garden" is an imaginary place where the plants Thoreau knew in 19th-century New England still thrive and where we can "learn their history, their uses, and their charms." Well-known garden writer Loewer (*The Evening Garden*, LJ 1/93) profiles nearly 50 shrubs, trees, grasses, flowering plants, fungi, and ferns, using generous excerpts from Thoreau's journals. Each essay mentions the use of the plant in cultivation, but in most instances this information is very limited compared with coverage in other books on natural gardening. This work's strength lies instead in its conveying Thoreau's delight in the natural world and some interesting and unusual facts about the plants in his vicinity. One learns, for example, that Jack-in-the-pulpit can grow to three feet high or that barberries were once widely made into jams and jellies. Recommended for natural history collections in most libraries, especially in the eastern half of the United States. Elizabeth Clewis Crim, Prince William P.L., Va. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The latest book by this notable writer on horticultural topics deftly weaves excerpted reveries from Thoreau's journals together with copious notes on native plants gathered by Loewer himself. The result is an agreeable foray into the fertile landscape Thoreau knew so well. Although today's gardeners can only dream of such remarkable wild spaces, as Loewer suggests, it might be that "the best garden is a garden of the mind." Thus, the lively text feeds the craving for imaginary gardens, first by musing on the scientific naming of plants, then by proceeding to highlight selected trees and shrubs, prairie grasses, and outstanding wildflowers--of wetlands and woodlands. Loewer conjures up enough plant minutiae (fascinating facts, myths, historical particulars, practical uses, etc.) to satisfy the most demanding avid gardener. A new book by Loewer is cause for celebration.

Alice Joyce

I love reading things by this author!

This author is awesome; his writing is informative and lyrical--a real treat to read. Each of his books offers something new.

Pick any subject, it seems, and odds are good that someone has compiled a volume of Thoreau quotes about it. But "Thoreau's Garden" is not a mere collection of his observations about plants (actually: 47 plants, 2 trees, and one insect). Author Peter Loewer has combined Henry's pithy journal entries with supporting details about each specimen. Included are descriptions of the leaves, flowers, fruit, and soil preferences. A follow-up essay for each one provides the history and biology of the plant, how it is pollinated, its possible medicinal uses, and gardening tips. Each entry is accompanied by a beautiful and detailed line drawing, which must have been done by the author, since no additional illustration credit appears. Here we can learn more about ferns and berries, goldenrods and grasses. Readers can even get a glimpse of the "disgusting ... yet very suggestive" fungus (*Phallus impudicus*) that Thoreau railed about in October 1856, pondering "Pray, what was Nature thinking of when she made this? She almost puts herself on a level with those who draw in privies." (pp. 156-158) Loewer used as his reference the index in the Dover two-volume reprint of Thoreau's journals, which is indeed a helpful starting point but is far from complete. If he had consulted Ray Angelo's meticulous "Botanical Index to the Journal of Henry David Thoreau," his task would have been much more daunting. Picking only 50 samples from a single-spaced list spanning 144 pages would be a challenge. And because Loewer at one time was affiliated with the Botanical Gardens of Asheville (NC), he can be forgiven for adding some Southern species and

cultivars that Thoreau would never have seen. Similar in design and coverage to Laura C. Martin's "Wildflower Folklore" but with a Thoreauvian twist, this book is a nice selection for nature library shelves.

I had been reading, and admiring, this book for two years when I found out that Mr. Loewer worked on the same Environmental Show as myself: we are all vols, so it is no wonder we have never met. This book is truly a showcase of Mr. Loewer's talents: THOREAU'S WRITINGS ARE ALWAYS THERE, BUT THE PLAY 2ND FIDDLE TO THE WONDER OF AMERICA'S NATURAL BEAUTY. Great effort: a must for any lover of native plants.

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