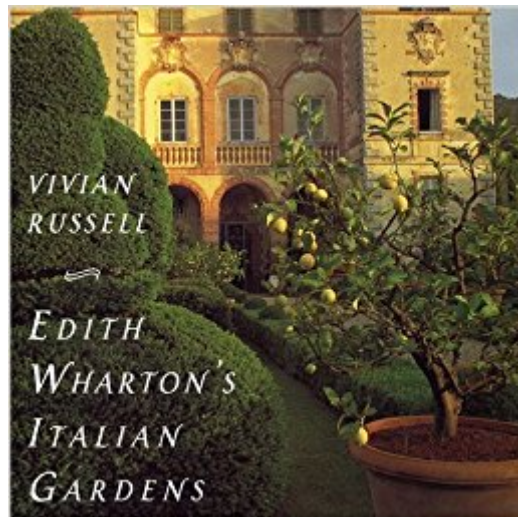


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# Edith Wharton's Italian Gardens



## Synopsis

In 1903 Edith Wharton was commissioned by Century Magazine to write a series of articles on Italian villas and gardens. She gathered her household together and set off with her husband, her housekeeper and her small dogs on a four-month tour of Italy. Her articles were published in 1904 as *Italian Villas and their Gardens*. One of the first books to treat the subject of Italian garden architecture seriously, it influenced a generation of garden writers and landscape architects. Nearly 100 years later, photographer and writer Vivian Russell set out on her own odyssey, following Edith Wharton's footsteps around Italy to photograph the best surviving gardens from her book and to tell the story of how each one was made. Her lively text describes the patrons and architects who created the gardens and explores their hidden symbolic meaning. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Though most know her as the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of novels such as *The Age of Innocence* and *The House of Mirth*, Edith Wharton was also something of a doyenne of domestic taste, and fortunately neither a nearsighted nor a parochial one. She published the first serious treatment of Italian garden architecture, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, in 1904. A lifelong Italophile as well as a lifelong gardener herself, Wharton had an instinctive attraction to both the clipped precision and the sensuous disarray that characterize an Italian villa garden. Nineteen of the gardens Wharton and her illustrator Maxfield Parrish brought to public attention are virtually unchanged by the

passage of the single century since her descriptions were written. Garden photographer and writer Vivian Russell has recaptured both the essence of the gardens themselves and Wharton's experience of them in a series of luscious photographs and historical summaries of each garden. The Villa Cetinale, pictured on the cover from the vantage point of its lemon garden, was singled out by Wharton for its charm and its long green park, marked by a 15th-century gateway at one end and a romitorio, or hermitage, at the other. The book's considerable charm lies in the historical perspective it affords of Wharton and her Victorian colleagues as well as the many centuries borne so gracefully by the beautiful land they loved. It's a marvelous homage to Wharton and a must-read for all lovers of things Italian.

Famous American author Edith Wharton adored Italy--adored Italian gardens, in particular. In 1904 she published a series of commentaries on that subject, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*. Contemporary garden authority and photographer Russell recently followed the trail blazed by Wharton around the Italian peninsula, relooking at the gardens the previous writer had favored in her collection of articles, which has come to be regarded as a groundbreaking reckoning of Italian landscape art and architecture. The result is this lovely oversize book, which will appeal to gardeners and fiction devotees as well as travel enthusiasts. Beautifully composed and reproduced photos match the enthusiastic text (which tells the history of each villa) in fostering a real sense of seeing things as Wharton saw them and in compelling the viewer to appreciate the uniquely Italian aesthetics underlying the creation of the gardens. This book is a very nice treat. Brad Hooper

Absolutely gorgeous photos of villa gardens in Lombardy, Veneto, Florence, Siena, and around Rome. Text discusses the historical development of the gardens. Included are views of the gardens at Isola Bella, Villa d'Este in Lombardy, Padua Botanic Garden, Boboli Gardens, Villa d'Este outside Rome, and Villa Lante. I have read through the book several times--it is so enjoyable. All the photos are in color. Some of the texts include drawings or plans of the garden layouts.

Edith Wharton as a child went to Italy on family vacation and looked at gardens in Italy. She later wrote books about gardens and other subjects. This is an update on her garden books and the losses of historical locations. The book is beautifully photographed and information that is well written. I have enjoyed reading this book. J I

I had read the biography of Edith Wharton and was v. interested to see she had written books on

gardening as well as travel around Europe. I purchased a copy of her 1913 book but like Vivian Russell, wondered how much of the beautiful gardens remain today. Vivian's book filled with wonderful photos answers this question and is a very beautiful visit to today's Italy. Loved it.

Beautifully written and informative book with great photographs. I highly recommend this book!

Beautiful! I have visited some of the gardens in the book and can testify for their beauty and charm. I will enjoy looking through this book for years to come.

This is not the ultimate writing on Italian gardens, nor the most sumptuous as a coffee-table book. But you can do a lot worse than this when you search for garden books on Italy. And then there is the added dimension that Mrs Wharton drove up to these places a hundred years ago and had a look around. Gentle people allegedly just showed up "never mind us, we're just here for a stroll in your lovely garden", not recommended today...Photographs are very good/good. The selection of gardens covers the major part of the most celebrated, with a few minor ones added. No sites south of Rome alas, put the blame on Edith.

With plenty of pics, this book is good for a casual flick through or a more careful read. The photographs of the gardens are stunning and inspire a desire to visit in person.

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