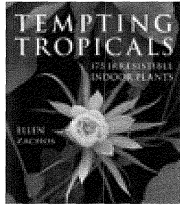


BOOK REVIEW



TEMPTING TROPICALS: 175 IRRESISTIBLE INDOOR PLANTS

ELLEN ZACHOS

2005. 328 p. \$29.95. Hardcover. 206 color photos. 4 tables. Timber Press. www.timberpress.com. ISBN 9780881927320.

If you want to build and maintain an indoor garden of tropical plants, this is a good starter book. It also will serve as a useful reference as you continue your gardening projects.

In discussing “What is a Houseplant?” Zachos teaches and encourages you to know the plant in order to know what kind of care will serve it best. “Watering a plant sounds simple, but in fact it is an art,” she says. She presents in simple terms the complicated relationship between a plant’s survival strategy, its nutrient requirements, and other environmental factors that must be understood to have a good watering plan.

She devotes an entire chapter to light. Here she not only talks about plant needs, but goes into detail about the different kinds of light bulbs. She gives the pros and cons for using each kind.

Good grooming, germination, plant pests and diseases are all discussed in easy-to-follow-terms.

The plant profile section is organized alphabetically by genus. Almost all species have lovely pictures, to give you an idea of the plant. However, a word of caution here: these discussions do not vet the plants for their “invasiveness” potential. *Please* do not put any of these

houseplants outside, such as on your porch or balconies, without first checking for their potential impact in your area (some good sources for this are www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/ or www.invasiveplants.net). For example, in Florida you would not put your Asparagus fern (*Asparagus setaceus*) or your Shrimp plant (*Justicia brandegeana*), both discussed in this book, where breezes can and do disperse them. The destruction caused by such “introduced” plants is not to be taken lightly; it is often much worse than any alien invasion even Hollywood could manufacture!

Zachos ends her book with a great section on resources, a glossary, and even a handy conversions chart for temperature and lengths.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ellen Zachos teaches and is the coordinator of the gardening program in Continuing Education at the New York Botanical Garden. She also lectures for horticultural organizations around the world. Zachos, a Harvard graduate, also studied at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg, Germany.

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