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Sissinghurst: Vita Sackville-West And The Creation Of A Garden



Synopsis

From 1946 to 1957, Vita Sackville-West, the British poet, bestselling author of *All Passion Spent* and maker of Sissinghurst, wrote a weekly column in the *Observer* depicting her life at Sissinghurst, showing her to be one of the most visionary horticulturalists of the twentieth-century. With wonderful additions by Sarah Raven, a famous British gardener in her own right who is married to Vita's grandson Adam Nicolson, *Sissinghurst* draws on this extraordinary archive, revealing Vita's most loved flowers, as well as offering practical advice for gardeners. Often funny and completely accessibly written with color and originality, it also describes details of the trials and tribulations of crafting a place of beauty and elegance. *Sissinghurst* has gone on to become one of the most visited and inspirational gardens in the world and this marvellous book, illustrated with drawings and original photographs throughout, shows us how it was created and how gardeners everywhere can use some of the ideas from both Sarah Raven and Vita Sackville-West. *Sissinghurst* is a magnificent portrait of a garden and a family.

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Customer Reviews

Welcome to Sissinghurst, one of the world's most celebrated gardens. Take a stroll through sunlit walkways... ...and discover secret hideaways in this tranquil garden.

“To pair contemporary garden writing with Sackville-West's classic sparklers takes confidence, experience, and audacity. Happily, Raven (*The Cutting Garden*), another gardener in

the Sackville-West family (she's married to Vita's grandson), meets every challenge in this laudable book...The book is crammed with photos and quotes...The two voices remain distinct without clashing, and Raven's organization of the book and selections from Sackville-West's work buttress her own canny observations. Publishers Weekly "While Sissinghurst epitomizes the grandeur and luxuriance of estate gardening, it more importantly stands as a testament to the tenacity of literary Vita Sackville-West and her politician husband, Harold Nicolson. . . . Raven combines excerpts from Sackville-West's archives and weekly Observer columns with her own personal experiences of life at Sissinghurst to give a nearly plant-by-plant account of how this international treasure was created and maintained. Booklist "Raven ably describes the beauty of Sissinghurst...Devoted gardeners will relish the lists of plants favored by Sackville-West, and those who dabble in gardening will learn that gardens aren't made in a day, a year or even a decade. Enjoyable for gardeners and lovers of quaint British landscapes. Kirkus

VITA SACKVILLE-WEST was born in 1892 in Kent. A distinguished critic, biographer, award-winning poet and gardener, she also published twelve novels, including *All Passion Spent* and *The Edwardians*. Her relationship with Virginia Woolf is celebrated in Woolf's novel *Orlando*, and the story of her life with Harold Nicolson, one of the strangest and happiest love stories, was portrayed in *Portrait of a Marriage* by their son Nigel Nicolson. She died at Sissinghurst, aged seventy, in 1962. SARAH RAVEN, writer, cook, broadcaster and teacher, runs cooking, flower arranging, growing and gardening courses at the school she set up in 1999 at her farm in East Sussex. She has written three cookbooks, as well as *Wild Flowers* and four gardening books, including *The Cutting Garden*. Sarah Raven is married to the writer Adam Nicolson and they have lived with their family at Sissinghurst.

For the reader who knows the garden's creators, their lives and their literary output, this book offers behind-the-scenes revelations perhaps not known. Sarah Raven would know these stories and she shares them generously in this book. There are much better books in the marketplace for the reader unfamiliar with Sissinghurst, whether its garden or its history. This isn't the place to start! Read Vita's books, Tony Lord and/or Jane Brown. Then, enjoy Sarah Raven's lovely book.

This book gives great insight into the thinking behind the creation of the garden and the person who created it - excellent reading

I found the history of Sissinghurst to be most interesting since no other books I read about the subject have been so complete. There is a great deal of information on plants that I found a bit too much. It depends on the readers' interest. All in all it is a good read.

This book is a mental vacation for anyone who loves English gardens & Sissinghurst in particular. It has delighted & inspired me.

Yes, this book brings out the plant names and combinations Vita and Harold Nicholson put together (plant marriages), color and the detail of property and buildings through the ages. Most informative from garden aspect. One of the greatest gardens of all time.

If, like me, you are a fan of beautiful gardens, the history of English manor houses and anything connected with the Bloomsbury circle, you will like this book. I actually preferred it to the well received biography of Vita and her husband written by their son Nigel Nicolson. In fact, many of the references to the same diaries and letters of the couple are to be found in both books. The many interesting illustrations include early drawings and prints of the estate as well as photographs of the gardens as they were being planted by Vita and color plates of the mature gardens. There are chapters on the features and care of the flowering plants and shrubs at Sissinghurst and even a section on container planting. If "fairy tale" gardens are your thing, give this book a try.

A great history of a garden's development. The quirky habits of the Sackville-West family only enhance the history.

Took this with us on our extended tour of Sissinghurst and it helped us find our way. It's a great introduction to the complex simplicity of the garden and the relationship that created it.

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