

Designing with Plants

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Trained as an architect, Oudolf values plants as much for their form and texture as for their color. He is the founder of New Wave planting, a spectacular naturalistic style of landscape design. Oudolf stresses the importance of choosing plants that "live well and die well," so that from birth in the spring through the crescendo of summer to the stark beauty of autumn and winter the garden presents continuing drama and interest.

When your new gardening bible comes with chapters entitled "Birth," "Life," and "Death," you know you're in trouble. But be brave, turn to those chapters, and in some very practical little essays on planting, you'll uncover the very down-to-earth principle from which Piet Oudolf's radical reinvention of gardening is based: plants die.

In the traditional mixed border, shrubs, climbers, perennials, bulbs, and annuals defy mortality; when one plant passes its best, there's always another in the wings, waiting to grab the eye. But such borders have very little impact: there is too little at any one time to hold one's attention. Oudolf wonders why we fight the unavoidable. Why not create borders that bring out the beauty of plants throughout their natural cycles?

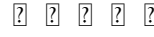
Oudolf also thinks our obsession with color is another deadening influence on current gardening practice. Plants have form: leaves, flower heads, and stems have beauty and variety, too, and last far longer than any bloom. Why not create gardens that use the whole plant, not just its genitals? This, as you've probably already guessed, is a recipe for perennials, and without any of that anxious autumn rush to cut down those perfectly lovely bare stems and seed heads.

With these versatile plants, Oudolf would have us all create gardens that change month by month, week by week, even day by day. It's a radical, beautiful vision that's absurdly easy to achieve. In *Designing with Plants*, Noel Kingsbury has done a terrific job of bringing Oudolf's work within reach of the rest of us. --Simon Ings, Amazon.co.uk

A wealth of color photos demonstrates unique & spectacular garden design ideas.

Other Books

New Naturalism. In *New Naturalism*, horticulturist and modern plantsman Kelly D. Norris shares his inspiring, ecologically sound vision for home gardens created with stylish yet naturalistic plantings that mimic the wild spaces we covet, such as meadows, prairies, woodlands, and streamsides—far from the contrived, formal, high-maintenance plantings of the past. Through a basic introduction to plant biology and ecology, you'll learn how to design and grow a lush, thriving home garden by harnessing the power of plant layers and palettes defined by nature, not humans. The next generation of home landscapes don't consist of plants in a row, pruned to perfection and reliant on pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides to survive. Instead, today's stunning landscapes convey nature's inherent beauty. These gardens are imbued with romance and emotion, yet they have so much more to offer than their gorgeous aesthetics. Naturalistic garden designs, such as those featured in this groundbreaking new book, contribute to positive environmental change by increasing biodiversity, providing a refuge for wildlife, and reconnecting humans to nature. In the pages of *New Naturalism* you'll find: Planting recipes for building meadows, prairies, and other grassland-inspired open plantings even in compact, urban settings Nature-inspired ways to upgrade existing foundation plantings, shrub beds, and flower borders to a wilder aesthetic while still managing the space Inspiration for taking sidewalk and driveway plantings and turning them into visually soft, welcoming spaces for humans and wildlife alike

Ideas for turning shady landscapes into canopied retreats that celebrate nature Creative ways to make an ecologically vibrant garden in even the smallest of spaces New Naturalism approaches the planting beds around our homes as ecological systems. If properly designed and planted, these areas can support positive environmental change, increase plant and animal diversity, and create a more resilient space that's less reliant on artificial inputs. And they do it all while looking beautiful and improving property values.  . Naturalistic garden designs, such as those featured in this groundbreaking new book, contribute to positive environmental change by increasing biodiversity, providing a refuge for wildlife, and reconnecting humans to nature."