

2025 VANDUSEN BOOK CLUB READING LIST

February 10

Theme: Botanical Illustration and Art: What is the Difference?

The Art of Botanical Illustration (1989) by Lys De Bray

The Golden Age of Botanical Art (2012) by Martyn Rix

And any others on the same topic

From the ancient world to modern times, botanical art and illustration have provided not only detailed and precise scientific information about plants, but also, through aesthetic representation, adorned and beautified our living spaces. But what is the difference between botanical art and botanical illustration? Our selections invite you to answer this question by joining explorers, intrepid plant hunters and artists on their collecting expeditions and learning about the history of botanical illustration and art.

April 14

Theme: Close to Home: The Healing Power of Everyday Plants

Held By the Land: A Guide to Indigenous Plants for Wellness (2023) by Leigh Joseph

In this beautifully illustrated book, Joseph, an ethnobotanist and member of the Squamish nation, emphasizes and strengthens our connection to the natural world through stories and the traditions around the plants native to the Pacific Northwest, many of which can be found in our own backyards.

June 9

Theme: In Love with the Natural World

Diary of a Young Naturalist (2020) by Dara McAnulty

The Secret Life of the City: How Nature Thrives in the Urban Wild (2023) by Hanna Hagen

Bjorgass, translated by Matt Bagguley

The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year (2023) by Margaret Renkl

Three very different writers, an Irish neurodivergent teenager, a Norwegian freelance biologist and an American essayist, invite us to observe closely and pay attention to the plant and animal wildlife in our own familiar urban and rural backyards and, in doing so, discover the marvels, magic and miracles of where we live.

September 8

Theme: The Writer's Imagination and the Spirit of Place

Any book(s) by Marta McDowell including:

Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life: The Plants and Places That Inspired The Classic Children's Tales (2013)

The World of Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Frontier Landscapes That Inspired the Little House Books (2017)

Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life: The Plants and Places That Inspired the Iconic Poet (2019)

Unearthing the Secret Garden: The Plants and Places That Inspired Frances Hodgson Burnett (2019)

Gardening Can Be Murder: How Poisonous Poppies, Sinister Shovels and Grim Gardens Have Inspired Mystery Writers (2023)

McDowell, an American writer whose personal motto is "I dig, therefore I am", focuses on writers who were not only keen observers of the natural world but also avid gardeners themselves. Her books reveal how their passion for their own gardens and gardening not only inspires and informs their writing as they each capture the "spirit of place", but also establishes the creative connection between gardening and the writing process.

November 10

Theme: What are Your Plants Saying About You?

The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth (2024) by Zoe Schlanger

In a thought-provoking combination of scientific inquiry, philosophical reflection and personal narrative, prize-winning science journalist and staff writer for *The Atlantic*, Schlanger explores the emerging and often controversial areas of plant intelligence and consciousness. In showing how plants are more like us than we think, we may change the way we view plants and gain a deeper respect and reverence for them.