

WAG

Tracee Ellis Ross

The grace of a tulip,
the strength of a tree

THE PEONY

Pleasantville event
honors a classic

THE POPPY

A crusade to
remember veterans

ORCHIDS, ROSES, TULIPS...

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New books in bloom

DOGWOOD AND MAGNOLIA

Jackie Battenfield's
luminous paintings

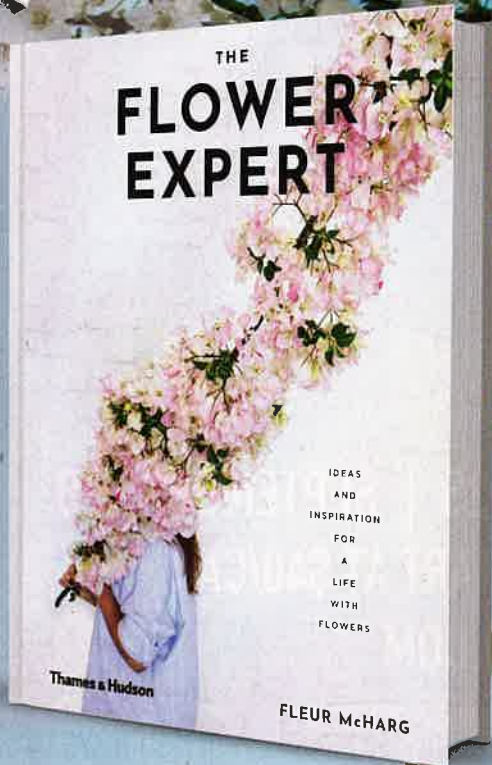
FLOWERS ON FILM

The legacy of Beatrix Farrand



WESTCHESTER & FAIRFIELD LIFE
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fascinating botanicals





petal pushers

BY MARY SHUSTACK

If someone doesn't have a green thumb — who, me? — but loves flowers and gardens, books offer a lovely entrée into the botanical world.

So it was with excitement that I spent some time with two new books devoted to flora, one recently published and a sneak peek at a forthcoming title.

First up is "The Flower Expert: Ideas and Inspiration for a Life with Flowers" by Fleur McHarg, (224 pages, \$39.95), which was published in March by Thames & Hudson.

McHarg is an Australia-based celebrity florist, one who shares her thoughts not only on creating floral designs for most every occasion but also her long-considered ideas on flowers themselves. As she tells us in the introduction, "I've been obsessed with flowers for as long as I can remember. I love the colors, the endless variety of forms and their unique energy."

Apparently, that energy spoke to her quite loudly at least once, as she also writes of being arrested at age 19 for swiping magnolias — with the help of a ladder — from a historic house and garden. Now, with some 25 years in the business, her daring is more often channeled into her designs.

As the daughter of a noted milliner and great-niece of a fashion editor for British Vogue, McHarg writes that she was destined for an artistic life and began as a painter before transitioning to the medium of flowers.

The book, McHarg writes, "is a collection of my most-loved flower friends and some of my favorite arrangements, interspersed with stories from my life and work."

McHarg has what she calls an "unusual way" of understanding and perceiving color, something that affects everything she does — including working with flowers. We get a glimpse into her creativity as she takes us on a floral journey from roses to dahlias, peonies to water lilies, sweet peas to poppies and nearly two dozen more. She offers thoughts on each's attributes and associations while also discussing how they fit into gardens and floral arrangements.

We hear about creating arrangements, from a broad perspective down to the actual nuts-and-bolts of a project,

practical tips with detailed accompanying photographs.

As McHarg says, "My philosophy for creating flower arrangements is always the same, whether I'm decorating my own home or working for a client: let the flower be the star."

Breathtaking examples fill the pages and pages that follow, showcasing some of her signature creations, all the while taking the reader further into McHarg's captivating world.

As intimate and intense as McHarg's book is, "Bloom: The Luminous Gardens of Frederico Azevedo" is sweeping and bold.

Set for a June 22 release by Pointed Leaf Press (\$75), the book, written by the award-winning landscape designer along with Camille Coy, will offer 200 pages devoted to his garden work, which has been called a study in the art of seduction.

Again, color is key in the world of the Hamptons-based designer, who launched his career in the United States with the 1993 founding of Unlimited Earth Care Inc.

He received early attention for the lushness of his work, which was quite the contrast to the minimalist look so popular at the time.

"I was coming from Brazil and England, thinking in full color," the Brazilian-born Azevedo has said, an approach that has continued. Today, Unlimited Earth Care is headquartered in Bridgehampton in a space that's not only a destination for cutting-edge landscape design but also curated goods.

"Bloom," his first book, invites readers to experience gardens with a fresh eye by directing us to the signatures of Azevedo's work, including

As Fleur McHarg writes in "The Flower Expert: Ideas and Inspirations for a Life with Flowers" (Thames & Hudson), "Spring is the time to style bright pastels. In this arrangement, I wanted to create a modern Aussie feel by offsetting the bright pastel flowers against a blue backdrop. Because it's a 'hot' arrangement, I chose a summer-sky blue to make the flowers really pop. If I'd used a cool china-blue or dark-blue backdrop, it would have dulled the impact of the flowers rather than enhancing it." Photograph © Kirsty Macafee. Courtesy Thames & Hudson.

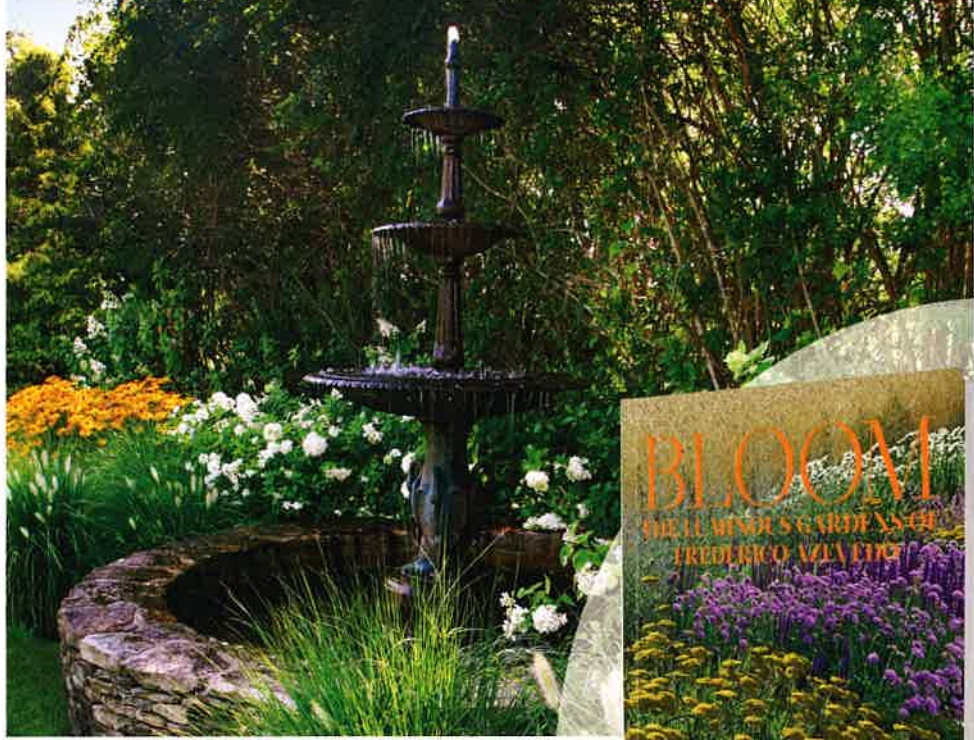
curving floral borders, the integration of native plants and, often, dramatic perspectives. Sometimes appearing outwardly simple, a closer look at a garden reveals a sophisticated approach designed to create a most romantic effect, one no doubt influenced by a life spent among New York, Miami and Los Angeles.

"Creating a landscape requires weaving intentionality into the unpredictability of nature in a way that creates something new, something that is alive in a different way," Azevedo writes in the book's introduction.

"And as we savor "Bloom," we see those new things come to life, from an early spring meadow where crocuses, narcissuses, daffodils, tulips and muscari offer the promise of a new season to the way flower beds play off – and truly enhance – a quietly elegant swimming pool.

But it's one scene created by Azevedo that captures my imagination, one in which stone steps and an adjacent curving retaining wall divide a garden into two levels. It's in this outdoor room of sorts, one filled with evocative shadows and a serenity encouraged by white and green hues, where I decided I'd most like to settle in for an afternoon. **WVC**

For more, visit thamesandhudsonusa.com or pointedleafpress.com.



This scene, as described in "Bloom: The Luminous Gardens of Frederico Azevedo" (Pointed Leaf Press) by the designer himself: "This antique bronze fountain that we bought in Vermont was such a great find that I designed a small stone pool as its base. The three tiers bring movement and sound to the surrounding gardens, and the stone addition acts as a reflecting pool for the flowers." Photographs, above and book cover, by Frederico Azevedo. Courtesy Pointed Leaf Press.



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Head of Suffrage Parade,
Washington D.C., 1913,
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