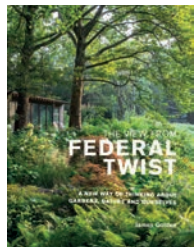




BOOK OF THE MONTH

Photo: James Golden

THE VIEW FROM FEDERAL TWIST: A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT OURSELVES



BY James Golden, words and photographs
PUBLISHED BY Filbert Press
PRICE £40
ISBN 9781999734572

IT WAS IN the winter of 2005 that James Golden and his husband Phillip Saperia bought a 1960s house in a wooded area above the Delaware River in New Jersey. The long, low house with its wall of windows looked onto unkempt tangled woodland that was full of invasive plants growing in heavy waterlogged clay soil. James knew that to make a garden here would need a new approach and that only something naturalistic would suit the site. His book is the story of the radical and celebrated garden that is Federal Twist.

The early chapters are philosophical; they consider ideas of wilderness, of books and garden writing, on evoking emotion through planting and discovering the spirit of the place. James then moves on to the making, beginning with felling trees to create a clearing in the woods that offers prospect-refuge. Paths trace the natural flow of rainwater and contours of the land. He harnesses effects of light, embraces decay, and chooses vigorous perennials to make an 'imagined prairie', anchored by the fixed points of reflective pools and

places in which to sit.

What makes this radical is that, rather than beginning with a prepared and empty site, James has planted directly into the existing matrix of grass and plants – including mareetail. Experimenting with competitive species, he has developed new plant communities. He writes in detail about these choices and their annual management, making it a fascinating and rich guide to understanding Federal Twist.

Maps and drone images combine with James's visionary photographs from within the garden. Looking down on the undersea patterns of waving grasses contrasts with the *chiaroscuro* effects from being amongst the planting. It is an immersive experience that produces feeling and mood, an ecological garden that works on the imagination. Reading this thought-provoking book, I found myself looking at my own garden – which uses much the same plants – in a fresh way.

Reviewed by gardens columnist, RHS-listed speaker, and photographer, Susie White



MEDIA OF THE MONTH

RAKESPROGRESS

As well as being a witty pun on a William Hogarth painting, *rakesprogress* is a beautifully crafted magazine that looks at nature, gardens, plants and flowers through an artistic lens.

Interviewees span many disciplines. In recent issues, the actor Richard E. Grant has spoken about how his English garden is a respite from a Hollywood career. Artist Lucy May Schofield has explained how she draws inspiration from the Northumberland moors, while novelist Will Self has written about psychogeography and his love of walking.

Described as 'a contemporary look at the world outside our window', the magazine was founded five years ago by Victoria Gaiger and her partner, *Radio Times* editor Tom Loxley. They were wondering what to do with their own outdoor space, but what they created is a lie-back-and-relax read, something to be pored over, but also beautiful enough to be placed on the coffee table.

The Rakes Online website showcases images, journalism and events that are united by the theme of gardening in its broadest sense, a place where landscape and culture collide.

Victoria explains: '*rakesprogress* is not a gardening magazine, although it features gardens of all sorts. What we do is look at gardens, plants and flowers through the eyes of photographers, designers, artists, writers and journalists, very few of whom normally shoot or write about gardens. We like to think that means they give us a fresh perspective and a unique voice, and our readers seem to appreciate that.'

rakesprogressmagazine.com

Reviewed by pre-registered member Ciar Byrne