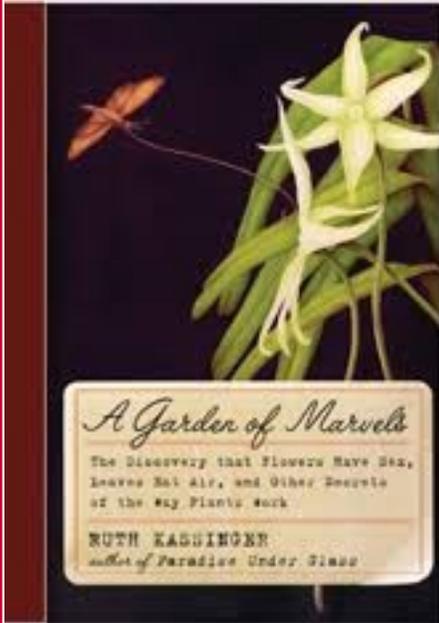


A Book Review

Lois Rose, *MGV 1998*



A Garden of Marvels: How we Discovered That Flowers Have Sex, Leaves Eat Air, and Other Secrets of Plants

By Ruth Kassinger (William Morrow, 2014, NY, NY)
XHMF-0011-8776-6723-0135

Part memoir and part well-told history, this accessible and entertaining book imparts complex ideas and information in a juicy setting. Well known for previous works (*Paradise Under Glass*), the author writes for the beginner and advanced gardener. Some of this material was a refresher course for me as a master gardener: botany and cell physiology for instance. Some was a deeper delving into what I thought I knew. And there was a huge amount of material that I had not encountered (or did not remember at all) after many years of coursework. Did you remember that Joseph

Priestley in 1771 discovered that mint cured “bad” air? Going back to 343 BC, Kassinger describes how Theophrastes addressed issues such as plant disease, plants as medicine and pruning. He was responsible, among others, for perpetuating the story of the borometz, a plant that had pods containing lambs’ wool — cotton plants had not been seen at that time. She describes a do-it-yourself kit called “Botanicals” with a leaf-shaped circuit board and moisture probes which, when plugged into the wall and plunged into the soil, sends a message to a cell phone or computer, alerting the user about watering needs.

There is a lot more of this kind of titillating and fascinating material in the book. The ongoing saga of her “fruit cocktail tree” helps to tie the themes together. This story is particularly poignant -- given what has just happened to the citrus crops and trees in Florida.

This book was a gift from my husband – and, for me, a page-turner.