

A Real Find—Wisconsin Garden Guide

Half of our misery and weakness derives from the fact that we have broken with the soil and that we have allowed the roots that bound us to the earth to rot. We have become detached from the earth, we have abandoned her. And a man who abandons nature has begun to abandon himself.

—Pierre Van Paaseen

Jerry Minnich assures us early on that despite having written 50 or more articles about gardening, he is still no garden expert.

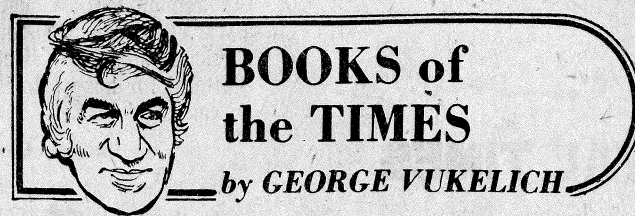
"I depend on the neighbors," he says, "to identify wild flowers for me. I have never grown a rutabaga and my lawn has never been mistaken for a golf putting green." He's too modest. This book, he insists, is the collective work and wisdom of others — hundreds of others including professionals and amateurs — horticulturists, entomologists, botanists, soil scientists, county agents, gardeners, green and black thumbs alike who have shared their experiences.

And that's quite overwhelming.

There's the DNR's Ruth Hine's fine hand in the **Wildflowers**, and Martha Fager's in the **Herbs** and a whole wagonload of Wisconsin scientists sitting there in their strawhats and squinting and smiling at us 'cause they know we're all a bunch of purple thumbs who never learned one practical thing in L&S.

All this expertise has been neatly bagged up in eight chapters whose very labels speak of Sciences and Ag Schools and County Agents. Just reading the chapter titles is a Short Course:

- It All Begins in the Soil
- Composting and Mulching
- What To Do About the Weather
- Vegetable Growing — Bounty for the Table



**BOOKS of
the TIMES**

by **GEORGE VUKELICH**

A Wisconsin Garden Guide

by **Jerry Minnich**
Wisconsin House
347 pp. \$6.95

- Fruits, Berries and Nuts — Perennial Providers
- Flowers for Wisconsin— Nine Months of Glory
- Lawns, Trees and Ornamental Plantings
- Insects and Diseases — Control Without Poison

But having opened the bags and shaken them pretty good, you have to be left with the realization that this book is, after all, much more than just the "collective work and wisdom of others" — it's the work and wisdom — and poetry, if you will, of Jerry Minnich. It's not everybody who talks and writes like this:

● "Perhaps the difference between an agribusinessman and an organic farmer is that one thinks of himself as owning the land, while the other thinks of himself as a visitor there. And the organic farmer is right. We are all visitors on the land, for the land was here long before we came, and it will be here long after we are gone. The land has been a mighty gracious host, too, since it has sustained each of us for all our lives. We, as guests, must remember our manners if we want the land to treat our grandchildren in the same hospital manner."

● "When I was a boy, the horseradish man used to come through the alleys with horse and cart every Saturday morning. He would grind the roots from the back of the wagon — fifteen cents for a half pint jar. And if you were daring enough to take a good sniff from the jar while carrying it home, your sinuses took an instant and jolting cleaning that no modern day cold remedy can hope to match."

● "Tree planting advice is given freely on pages 194-197 in the chapter on fruit and nut trees. The same advice applies to the planting of shade trees for the needs of both are the same at this stage of the game. I will repeat only one piece of advice because I think it is so important: "It is better to plant a one-dollar tree in a five-dollar hole, than to plant a five-dollar tree in a one-dollar hole." Do it right.

Jerry Minnich has put together a beautifully poetic yet practical book for all Wisconsin gardeners. This is the best bargain to come out of Madison since the Farmers Market came in . . . And it's going to be just as popular.

Jerry Minnich has been gardening and writing about gardening for more than 20 years, the last 10 in Wisconsin. He has published more than 50 articles on home gardening, most in Organic Gardening and Farming magazine, where he was formerly associate editor, but also in a number of other publications including House Beautiful. He has also contributed to several larger gardening books, including The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening and The Complete Book of Compost.

Minnich was born and raised in Allentown, Pa., and graduated from the University of Iowa. He is married, has two children, and has lived and worked in Madison since 1965.