

**Gardens and plants in literature**

Whether they celebrate gardens, describe gardens, tell us how to garden, set their stories in gardens – there are so many books on this fortnight’s theme!

It was so difficult to choose just a few for mention here, but finally I decided to pick some of my favourites. I hope you like them too!

***The Paper Garden*, by Molly Peacock**

This book is a biography of Mary Granville Pendarves Delany, who lived an extraordinary life. At the age of 72, she began what she considered to be her life’s work – making botanically correct and beautiful “flower mosaiks” or collages.

By the time she put down her crafting scissors ten or so years later, she had created 985 of these collages.

She is considered to be the inventor of the craft of collaging, or decoupage.

I return to this book over and over, dipping in and out to savour her life story and marvel at her “paper garden”.

There are even some Worcestershire references to be found, as Mary visited the county several times.

*Gardens Illustrated* magazine described this book as: “Fascinating…A literary treat and a visual delight, but it is also a great book with much to say about life…a wonderful read”.

Mary Delany’s “paper garden” is held at The British Museum:

[www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/people-behind-collection/mary-delany](http://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/people-behind-collection/mary-delany)

***The Tulip*, by Anna Pavord**

A stylish and beautifully illustrated book, telling the fascinating history of the humble tulip – from how it arrived in 17th Century Europe, and grew to become the most coveted bulb in the world.

This is the story of the flower that made men go mad, winning and losing vast fortunes. 

The *Daily Telegraph* said of this book: “Written by a scholar, reads like a thriller.”

I loved this book.

***100 Plants That Almost Changed the World*, by Chris Beardshaw**

I heard Chris Beardshaw speak at my local gardening club and bought this book afterwards.

Chris is an engaging, funny and knowledgeable public speaker – and gardener, of course! His book is the same – there are lots of fascinating facts, history, and humour.

It is very enjoyable. The book can be read quickly in a few sittings, or if you’re short on energy or time, it can be enjoyed as individual chapters exploring each of the 100 plants in turn.

**For Our Younger Readers, I chose:**

***The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett**

A classic of English children’s literature. This enchanting book tells a story of love, redemption, hope, and friendship. Burnett herself was a passionate and talented gardener, and is believed to have modelled the “Secret Garden” on the garden at her home.

***Paddington in the Garden*, by Michael Bond**

My favourite bear – who of course lives at number 32 *Windsor Gardens*! – Paddington is given a little patch of garden to make his own. He takes to the task with true Paddington gusto and individuality.

***Mog in the Garden*, by Judith Kerr**

Lovable, cuddly Mog is a cat who enjoys spending time in her garden. One of my daughter’s favourite books – I think I’ve read it hundreds of times, but that’s okay, because it’s one of my favourites, too!

**A Poem**

***The Little Garden*, by Amy Lowell**

A little garden on a bleak hillside

Where deep the heavy, dazzling mountain snow

Lies far into the spring. The sun’s pale glow

Is scarcely able to melt patches wide

About the single rose bush. All denied

Of nature’s tender ministries. But no, -

For wonder-working faith has made it blow

With flowers many hued and starry-eyed.

Here sleeps the sun long, idle summer hours;

Here butterflies and bees fare far to rove

Amid the crumpled leaves of poppy flowers;

Here four o’clocks, to the passionate night above

Fling whiffs of perfume, like pale incense showers.

A little garden, loved with a great love!

Contributed By Helen Miller, Therapy Support Worker in Living Well