



# The Passionate Gardener

*Rudolf Borchardt*

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## **The Passionate Gardener** Rudolf Borchardt

Among books about flowers and gardening, *The Passionate Gardener* is a rare and exemplary hybrid. Part essay, part handbook, part treatise, part quest, it is presented with the practiced eye of a naturalist, the disciplined understanding of a philosopher, and the inspiration of a poet. Rudolf Borchardt was, in fact, all of these, and a novelist, dramatist, and renowned translator as well. In the first six chapters he rediscovers the centrality of the garden as image, symbol, concept and metaphor in the development of human consciousness. And through a careful consideration of the flower, he describes the historical, literary, botanical, psychological, sociological and environmental perspectives of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reinvention of landscape gardening. Borchardt's intention is nothing less than to articulate the complex continuities and discontinuities through which Nature and the human being relate to one another. He perceives the flower, the human being, and the garden in which they meet to be works in progress, each an expression of the inherent possibilities of the others. *The Passionate Gardener* is also the story of the intrepid explorers who searched the world for new, unknown flowers; of the botanists who studied them; of the horticulturists who then refined their forms and colors; and finally of the collaboration and fusion of Roman, Persian, Oriental, Italian, French, Austrian, English, African, and American garden traditions in the service of a common, humanistic ideal. In addition, Borchardt shares his first-hand practical experience of scores of "new, lost, rare, misunderstood and singular" plants, and offers valuable guidance about soils and planting: his book is a marvelously erudite work of literature, while equally, and quite self-consciously, down to earth.

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