

Book Review

Perfect Plant Perfect Place

Roy Lancaster

Dorling Kindersley 448pp £16.99

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Even the most devoted enthusiast can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the vast choice of plants listed by nurserymen on the internet and in their catalogues, let alone in the Plant Finder. The question is what to choose.

Here Roy Lancaster offers guidance to the gardener, whether experienced or a novice, in selecting the plant to go in a particular place or for a particular purpose. There are sections on Perennials, Climbers, Shrubs, Conifers, Trees and Indoor Plants. The section on Perennials is split into five subsections: Soil and Aspect, Specific Uses, Floral Effect, Foliage Effect, Specialist Plants. Within each section the book is arranged in one- or two-page spreads devoted to a specific location or a specific type, with illustrations in colour and descriptions of the selected plants. Examples are Shrubs for Dry Sunny Sites, Shrubs for Heavy Clay Soils, Weeping Trees, Perennials with Deep-cut or Jagged Leaves and Perennials for Ground Cover in Shade. At the beginning there is a plant-finder chart which enables the reader with a specific site, condition or decorative effect in mind to find the appropriate entries which the author recommends to achieve the desired effect. The colour-coded bands match the section markers in the book, making the book easy to use.

Though strictly beyond the remit of the HPS, the section on Indoor Plants is very helpful, particularly for those who know little about plants. Each plant is prescribed the appropriate light level, watering and feeding regime and humidity. A generalised diagram of a house sets out the possibilities and limitations of growing plants in the house.

Gardening magazines, gardening columnists and garden centres are all guilty of recommending or displaying a repetitive range of plants which does a disservice to the huge variety of plants now available. In this beautifully illustrated book, however, Roy draws attention to the qualities of many plants which have hitherto languished in obscurity. It is truly compendious and describes thousands of plants with cross-references to many others. It will prove useful to all gardeners looking for the right plant. Deep down many of us feel that – if only we could find it – there is the most apt plant for a particular situation or purpose. Just as a thesaurus helps us to find *le mot juste* so Roy Lancaster's book helps us to find *la plante juste*.

Tony Ewin