

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06851-2 - The Abridgement of the Gardener's Dictionary: Containing the Best and Newest Methods of Cultivating and Improving the Kitchen, Fruit, Flower Garden, and Nursery

Philip Miller

Frontmatter

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Until the nineteenth century, the investigation of natural phenomena, plants and animals was considered either the preserve of elite scholars or a pastime for the leisured upper classes. As increasing academic rigour and systematisation was brought to the study of 'natural history', its subdisciplines were adopted into university curricula, and learned societies (such as the Royal Horticultural Society, founded in 1804) were established to support research in these areas. A related development was strong enthusiasm for exotic garden plants, which resulted in plant collecting expeditions to every corner of the globe, sometimes with tragic consequences. This series includes accounts of some of those expeditions, detailed reference works on the flora of different regions, and practical advice for amateur and professional gardeners.

The Abridgement of the Gardener's Dictionary

Trained by his father, a market gardener, Philip Miller (1691–1771) rose to become Britain's most eminent horticulturalist in the eighteenth century. Following a period as a nurseryman in Southwark, he was appointed the head gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden by the Society of Apothecaries in 1722, upon the recommendation of Sir Hans Sloane. Under Miller's supervision, the diversity of plants at Chelsea outstripped that of all other European botanic gardens. His talent was equally reflected in his writings. Miller's most famous work, *The Gardener's Dictionary*, ran to eight editions during his lifetime, as did his celebrated abridgement, reissued here in its 1771 sixth edition. Ranging widely in coverage from agriculture to winemaking, as well as incorporating traditional gardening topics, the work reflects the progress of contemporary plant science and the breadth of knowledge acquired by one of its foremost practitioners.

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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PHILIP MILLER



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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Philip Miller

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Philip Miller

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

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*What NATURE sparing gives, or half denies,
See healthfull INDUSTRY at large supplies.*

J. Miller Sculp.

*See in BRITANNIA'S Lap profusely pours,
While heaven-born SCIENCE swells th'increasing Stores.*

Ecce ferunt Pueri Calathis Tibi Lilia plenis. VIRG.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

T H E
A B R I D G E M E N T
O F T H E
G A R D E N E R S D I C T I O N A R Y :
C O N T A I N I N G
 The best and newest Methods of **C U L T I V A T I N G** and **I M P R O V I N G**
T H E
K I T C H E N , F R U I T , F L O W E R G A R D E N , and **N U R S E R Y ;**
 As also for Performing the
P r a c t i c a l P a r t s o f H U S B A N D R Y :
 Together with
The M A N A G E M E N T o f V I N E Y A R D S ,
A N D T H E
M E T H O D S o f M A K I N G W I N E i n E N G L A N D .
 In which likewise are included,
D I R E C T I O N S for **P R O P A G A T I N G** and **I M P R O V I N G ,**
 From **R E A L P R A C T I C E** and **E X P E R I E N C E ,**
P A S T U R E L A N D S and all Sorts of **T I M B E R T R E E S .**

B Y **P H I L I P M I L L E R , F. R. S.**
 Gardener to the Worshipful Company of **A P O T H E C A R I E S**, at their Botanic Garden at **C H E L S E A**,
 and Member of the Botanic Academy at **F L O R E N C E**.

. . . . *Digna manet divini gloria ruris.* Virg. Georg. I. v. 168.

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M.DCC.LXXI.

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[More information](#)

To the Most Noble

H U G H,
 Duke and Earl of **N O R T H U M B E R L A N D,**
E A R L P E R C Y,
 Baron **W A R K W O R T H** of Warkworth Castle,
 Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the Counties of **M I D D L E S E X**
 and **N O R T H U M B E R L A N D,**
 Of the City and Liberty of **W E S T M I N S T E R,**
 And of the Town and County of **N E W C A S T L E** upon **T Y N E,**
V I C E A D M I R A L of all **A M E R I C A,**
 And of the County of **N O R T H U M B E R L A N D,**
 One of his **M A J E S T Y**'s Most Honourable Privy Council,
 Knight of the Most Noble Order of the **G A R T E R,**
 And Fellow of the **R O Y A L S O C I E T Y.**

M A Y I T P L E A S E Y O U R G R A C E,

Y O U R Grace's kind Acceptance of the three former Editions of this Work, has emboldened me to lay this at Your Grace's Feet, as a public Acknowledgement of the many useful Observations and Instructions communicated to the Author for its great Improvement. If I have been so happy as to employ them in such manner as to merit Your Grace's Approbation, I shall have less Reason to doubt that of the Public,

D E D I C A T I O N,

as the most skilful Persons in this Branch of Science, pay the highest Regard to Your Grace's Judgement.

The several Improvements which Your Grace is so happily making upon Your various Estates, sufficiently demonstrate Your Grace's superior Judgement, but more particularly in a Country almost destitute of Timber; where, if Your Grace continues planting so ardently as for some Years past, the whole Face of the Countries will be so much altered, and Your Grace's Estates thereby so much improved, as scarcely to be known.

That Your Grace may long live to enjoy these Improvements, by setting Examples to others, is the sincere Wish of

Your GRACES

Most obedient humble Servant,

CHELSEA,
DEC. 15, 1770.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E.

THE GARDENERS DICTIONARY having already gone through several editions, it may reasonably be supposed, the public are well acquainted with the nature of it, which renders it less necessary to enlarge on that subject. The author therefore thinks himself obliged to return his thanks for the kind reception his work has met with.

But as there may be some, who may think that the republishing it is doing them an injury, especially those who have purchased a former edition, it may not be amiss to make some apology for this.

When the first edition was published, the art of gardening was then much less known than at present; and the number of plants has been greatly increased in England, therefore it became more necessary to enlarge on the subject, by adding the new plants and improvements to the former, without which it would have been deemed imperfect: for as the author's situation in life rendered him capable of being well informed of the progress made in the art, by his great correspondence both at home and abroad, he thought it would not be displeasing to communicate those improvements to the public: in doing which, he has been careful not to publish any thing imparted to him, until he was fully satisfied of the facts by experiments.

Others have suggested, that printing the improvements separately would give ample satisfaction to the public; but the author had made trial of this method some years past, by publishing several sheets of new articles, by way of Supplement, for which there was scarce any demand; so that the few which were sold, would not defray the expence of paper and printing.

As the number of plants now cultivated in England, are more than double those which were here when the first edition of this book was published, the mentioning of those, together with their culture, could not well be avoided in a work of this nature, therefore the author hopes his care in inserting them will not be censured.

By the title of the book, it may appear to many as a treatise of Gardening only; but whoever will be at the trouble of examining the contents, will find most of the necessary parts of agriculture inserted; therefore might, with great propriety, have been intitled a Dictionary of the whole art of husbandry. And as many of the great farming gardeners near London, have turned their thoughts on this subject, they have adopted a very useful branch of this art, which is the sparing of their seeds; for where they formerly sowed one bushel of grain upon a certain spot of land, they have now contracted it to half a peck, and have far greater crops than before: and where this is applied to the consumption of the several sorts of Corn, it will be found a great national benefit, especially in times of scarcity.

Throughout the whole performance, the author has principally aimed at rendering the instructions here given as clear and intelligible as possible; not only to the practitioners, but also to those

P R E F A C E.

who are less acquainted with the art, therefore hopes for indulgence from the public, for any small imperfections which may be found in the work, especially as considering the extensiveness of it.

It is amazing to see, in most of the books which have been published concerning husbandry, that scarce any of the compilers have taken the least notice of the common practice of sowing eight times the quantity of Corn upon land which is necessary, to the great expence and detriment of the farmers, who are so wedded to their old customs, as not to be convinced of the error: for so obstinate are they in this matter, that unless the whole ground be covered with the blades of Corn by the spring, they judge it not worth standing, and in consequence thereof frequently plough up their Wheat and winter Corn, to sow the land with Barley, or other Lent Corn; whereas, if the former had been left standing, it would have produced a better crop than any land can do where the blades are very thick, as the author has frequently observed. I have mentioned this to several farmers, but the answer has constantly been, that on rich ground a thin crop of roots will often produce a large crop of Corn, but on poor land it will not pay cost which is a very great absurdity; for how is it possible, that bad land can supply proper nourishment to a greater number of roots than better ground? and where this practice is observed, seldom more than three or four bushels are reaped from one sown; whereas, where the same quantity is sown upon the same, or a like soil, and has room to grow, the produce will be at least six or seven bushels. Yet I have seen growing upon land not very good, and uncultivated, for more than twenty years, which land was sown with Wheat in drills, where three gallons of seed were allowed to an acre, a produce of nine quarters per acre; now this is no more than an eighth part of the seed usually sown by farmers, who seldom reap more than one-third of this produce; by which it appears plainly, that in the common method of husbandry, there is at least eight times the quantity of seed sown upon the land that is necessary. How great a saving this would be in a whole country, I leave every one to judge, especially in scarce years, when Corn is dear; and what an expence is occasioned by the contrary practice to the farmers, who notwithstanding seem unwilling to alter their ancient customs. These matters are treated of under the articles AVENA, HORDEUM, SECALE, and TRITICUM.

Nor are the common farmers better managers of their pasture lands; for on them they seldom are at the trouble of rooting up bad weeds, which frequently over-run them; these are often permitted to scatter their seeds, by which the land is stocked with a supply of weeds for seven years or more, though the utmost care be taken afterward to destroy them; but though there are some farmers who may be supposed more careful in this respect, yet these leave in their head lands, and on their banks, hedge-rows, and the sides of ditches, a sufficient number of weeds to stock their fields when the seeds are permitted to scatter: beside, these pastures have rarely a sufficient quantity of manure allowed them, especially where there is much arable land; nor is the dressing laid on at a proper season; the general rule with most of the farmers being, to carry and spread the dung upon their pastures, soon after the crop of hay is taken off the ground; and as this is done in summer, the heat of the sun draws all the moisture from it, whereby the greater part of its goodness is evaporated and lost. But as these points are more fully treated of in the body of this work, the author desires the reader to refer to them.

On the article of TIMBER perhaps many may suppose, the author has been too diffuse in his instructions; but if those who are of that opinion will only consider, how material an article this is to the welfare of this country, he flatters himself they will change their sentiments, especially when they reflect upon the great waste that has been made of it for many years past, as also that the persons now employed by the government to cultivate and improve it, deriving their own profits from the waste of timber, seem to think, that as their predecessors have long practised it, they have a right to do the same; this is now carried to so great an extravagance, that unless a speedy stop be put to it, the government will be greatly distressed for their marine. For although this practice began in the Royal Forests, &c. yet several of the nobility and gentry, who had very great quantities of timber growing upon their estates, have destroyed a considerable part of theirs also; therefore, from a due regard for the public, the author has treated of the best methods for

P R E F A C E.

propagating and preserving timber, which he hopes may not be displeasing to the generality of his readers.

The several plants here proposed for trial in the British dominions in America, are such as there is reason to believe will succeed in those parts where the experiments are desired to be made, and confined to such only, as may be of utility to the public, and real advantage to the inhabitants of those countries: furthermore, these experiments are proposed to be tried upon plants which will not succeed well in England, so as to render their culture practicable, and therefore will not interfere with the growth or trade of this country, and the consumption of which is very great here, many of them being of very considerable use in our manufactures, which cannot be carried on without them; as namely, the Safflower, Indigo, and several other sorts used in dyeing, none of which will thrive in this country to advantage, with many medicinal drugs, which, if introduced into the islands of America, will certainly thrive there as well as in their native soils. Coffee and Chocolate grow equally well there; but the former being gathered before it is ripe, ill dried, and brought over to England in ships freighted with rum and sugars, the effluvia of these commodities are imbibed by the Coffee, whereby it is rendered less valuable: as to the latter, it was formerly cultivated by the Spaniards in the island of Jamaica, when they were in possession of it, so as to furnish the inhabitants with a quantity sufficient for their own consumption; whereas the English inhabitants now resident there, purchase it of the Spaniards: these articles therefore require the public attention, for if the above commodities may be easily produced in the British colonies in America, they will not only supply us with such as are genuine, but also turn the balance of trade, greatly to the advantage both of Great-Britain and her colonies.

It is also a great neglect of the inhabitants of the sugar islands in America, to commit the care of their plantations to overseers, who at best go on in their usual course, planting eight or ten sugar canes in each hill, so that if five or six of them grow, they will be so close as to spoil each other; for whenever these plants are stunted in their growth, they are soon attacked by vermin, which spread and multiply so greatly, as frequently to destroy the whole crop, or at least very much to damage it; and this they lay upon inclement seasons, calling it a blight, whereas it proceeds from their own covetous custom. A gentleman of learning, who had a considerable estate in Jamaica, which was bequeathed to him upon his arrival there, was determined to make trial of the horse-hoeing husbandry among his canes. Accordingly he set out one acre of land in the middle of a large piece, which he caused to be planted with canes at five feet distance, putting but one to each hill; these grew to a very large size, and when ripe were cut, as also an acre from the best part of the piece in which the others were planted in the usual manner: each of them then were boiled separately to examine their produce, which was nearly equal in the weight of sugar; but where the plants grew single, the juice was boiled with a ninth part of the fuel which the other required, and he sold the sugar for six shillings per hundred weight more than he could get for the former. This shews what advantages may be expected, if the possessors of lands were careful to make trials.

In the whole of this performance, the author has principally aimed at rendering the instructions given, as clear and intelligible as possible to the practitioners, as well as to those who are less acquainted with the art; in every particular he has observed all possible regard to truth, not having advanced any thing as such, but what he has been fully convinced of by his own experience: he hopes therefore for indulgence from the public, for any imperfections or omissions which may appear in the book, since in a work of so great extent, it cannot be expected to be absolutely perfect, though it is humbly hoped there will not be found in it many faults.

The Gardeners Kalendar, inserted in most of the former editions, is in this omitted, many editions of that piece having been printed in octavo; it is presumed therefore that few persons who have any inclination for the innocent diversion of gardening, are without it; and as the adding any thing to this work would have swelled it greatly, which the author wishes he could have still further shortened; and moreover it having been observed to him, by many of his friends, that
few

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E.

few persons would chuse to turn over so large a volume, to find in it the articles they may have in a portable one, the omission of the Kalendar was thought more advisable.

Many plants are likewise omitted in this edition, several of them natives of England, but rarely cultivated in our gardens; as also many varieties accidentally arising from seeds, as are most of those with double flowers, which, if enumerated, would have swelled the book to an immoderate size; however, most of these varieties are casually mentioned, to inform the reader of their respective difference, which the author hopes will be deemed sufficient. But as the variety of fruits, as well as of esculent plants, have been most of them, at least the fine sorts, greatly improved by culture, they are fully treated of under their proper genera.

On this article a long series of observations has been made by the author, who for more than fifty years has applied himself closely to this subject; for as many former botanists have enumerated a great number of varieties as so many species, the study of botany was thereby rendered greatly perplexed; some of the modern writers on this subject, by going into the contrary extreme, have abridged the species almost as much. Indeed it must be allowed, that ascertaining the real specific difference of plants, would be of great service to the science of botany; but this cannot be done otherwise, than from many years experience in their culture, especially by observing the varieties which arise from the same seeds, as also the difference produced by different soils and situations, which is frequently so great as to perplex very good judges in this matter. There are likewise many other varieties which have arisen from seeds, saved from plants which have grown near others of a different species, by which means they have partaken of both; but these hybridine plants rarely producing any seeds afterward, the alteration goes no farther

T H E