

# 5 Reasons I Enjoy Lia's Living Almanac



I have recently become a huge fan of Substack newsletters. People write mostly longform content about the thing they are most passionate about. It's a great place to find smart writing about a range of different topics. This includes gardening. In terms of gardening and nature, the newsletter I'm loving most so far is Lia's Living Almanac.

## What Is Substack?

Substack is a platform where writers can create newsletters on any topic. They can offer them free or by subscription or in some combination of both. I write a newsletter there called [Create Me Free](#), which is about the intersection of art and mental health.

Substack caters to longform content writers so you'll find a

lot of newsletters about writing as well as writing itself like people who publish serialized fiction in newsletter format. However, you can find newsletters about all different kinds of topics.

The Notes section of the site functions somewhat like Twitter or other social media but without many of those platform's drawbacks. I don't love social media but I do love Substack.

## **Lia's Living Almanac**

I am looking into finding new gardening and nature newsletters to read on Substack. For now, though, my favorite is [Lia's Living Almanac](#). It's written by gardening expert and author Lia Leendertz.

## **Lia Leendertz and the Annual Almanac**

Leendertz is writer who writes most frequently about gardening. She writes about growing your own food and cooking with it. Therefore, if you like fruit and vegetable gardening, you might like what she shares. She's written for Gardens Illustrated, The Garden, Simple Things and more. She also has a monthly podcast called As The Season Turns.

Each year, she publishes a book called The Almanac. Built upon the old idea of rural almanacs, it is a natural guide to the seasons of the year. It includes moon phases, seasonal recipes, seasonal bee behavior, and much more. Gardens allow us to tune into nature and this is a great reminder of how to do it. 2022 marked the fifth year of her almanac.

Lia's Substack newsletter offers weekly installations of the seasonal changes that she sees. It's a real time almanac of sorts.

## **5 Reasons I Enjoy Lia's Living Almanac**

I only have so much bandwidth to read longform newsletters, of course. Here are five reasons that Lia's Living Almanac makes the cut:

### **1. It Literally Reminds Me To Stop and Smell The Roses**

Each week, Lia shares what she's noticed in the garden. She notices the first new rosebud of the season and shares that with her readers. She also notices other things in nature – the wildlife coming into the garden, the phase of the moon up above.

Time can slip by us so easily and we wonder where the seasons went. Pausing to notice what has changed in just one week offers a beautiful way to return to the present moment and ground ourselves in the season that we are currently inhabiting.

It reminds us to enjoy what is right here right now. What's here is a season's best thing. And it won't last very long at all. Remembering this through nature reminds me to have gratitude for all of the other things happening right now as well.

### **2. It Offers a Gardening Education**

I would say that this newsletter is more about nature than specifically about gardening. However, there are things throughout that help me learn more about gardening.

In Week 20, she shared about her dog's moulting fur and how birds are using it in nests. That's something dog-owning gardeners might look into further. In week 15, she shared that there's only about one week when dandelions look really good as border flowers. From week 5, I learned a little about how to use backlighting to make garden photography look more

interesting.

Mostly, I learn about what different plants look like. I don't have a strong working knowledge of different flowers and trees and bushes. So, when she shares them, I learn from her.

### **3. I Love a Great List**

I love lists of things. I don't know what this is all about but it's true. In each newsletter, she highlights three seasonal changes that she covers in more detail. However, before that, she provides a running list of everything from the week. I love these lists. For example, just a small selection from the list in her Week 21 newsletter:

*"all the rowan trees in flower; first (absolutely delicious) strawberries of the season; almost head high cow parsley and buttercup avenues; starting off some rhubarb gin; making home-made mayo because it's asparagus season; wisteria unfolding; a waning gibbous moon low in the morning sky"*

### **4. I Find Myself Filled With So Much More Joy**

*From the "about" page of Lia's Substack, she says about the importance of this weekly noticing:*

***"I find it life affirming and joyous. It makes me feel tiny, it makes me feel grand."***

This comes through in the weekly newsletters. They brighten my week when I read them or even when I skim the photos. They give me joy. And the reminder to notice the little things in my life brings a lot more joy to my days as well.

### **5. The Community Around It Is Warm and Inviting**

The thing that I really love about Substack is that it creates community. We find our tribes and we truly connect there. It's happening for me in a way that hasn't happened on other social

media platforms. It's not algorithm-driven but interest-driven. Honestly, it reminds me a lot of having pen pals, of zine culture. It reminds of the early days of blogging when it was all about authenticity and sharing and connecting with others. It wasn't so toxic.

Of course, some Substack newsletters seem to have a stronger community around them than others. Lia's is great. On Substack, you can create a "chat" for your subscribers. Lia does a weekly "show and tell" where everyone shares the thing that they noticed during the week that was the most seasonal for them. This means that there are lots of gardening and nature images. It's amazing!

I get the chance to see what is growing in people's gardens all around the world. It's different everywhere, of course. For example, cherry blossoms come out in February here in San Francisco. But they don't start emerging on the East Coast until several months later. I get to notice these differences. Additionally, I get to enjoy different plants throughout the year in this way. Lia's posts sometimes include updates from Australian readers where the season is completely opposite to most of the US.

## Read More:

- [5 Things I Learned About Gardening in 2022](#)
  - [Book Review: A Garden to Dye For](#)
  - [10 Best Gardening Podcasts Worth Listening To](#)
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# 13 Gardening Books on My To

# Be Read Shelf



I love my local library. In fact, I get pleasure not just from going to the library and reading the books I get there but also from the process of looking through their catalog regularly and adding books to my “for later shelf.” There’s something satisfying about even just learning about which books are out there that I might get to read someday. So, I thought that I’d head over to my virtual bookshelf and let you know about 13 gardening books currently waiting there for me.

## 13 Gardening Books on My To Be Read Shelf

There are actually more than two dozen gardening books on my SFPL “For Later” shelf. However, here are the top thirteen on my list:



## **1. The Climate Change Garden by Sally Morgan**

Subtitled “Down to Earth Advice for Growing a Resilient Garden,” this book seems like a must-read for gardeners in our times. Soils are eroding, rainfall is unpredictable, and plants are blooming earlier or being damaged by pests.

This book provides techniques, practices, and equipment that can be used to adapt gardens to climate extremes and protect them against exotic pests and invasive weeds. It covers topics such as adapting plant selections, using season extenders, reducing a garden’s carbon footprint, and planting more of the right trees for a future climate.

The aim is to create a low-maintenance, climate-savvy garden that can withstand the effects of a changing climate.

## **2. To Stand and Stare by Andrew Timothy O’Brien**

The subtitle of this one pretty much sums up what interests me about it: “How to Garden While Doing Next to Nothing.” Honestly, I’m a bit lazy about active things. I’m the kind of person who goes to the yoga studio primarily for the restorative yoga class. So, this book feels right up my alley.

## **3. The Joy of Gardening: the Everyday Zen of Mowing the Lawn by Ellen Mary**

With a background in integral psychology, I am a proponent of the [benefits of mindfulness](#). I have a busy mind and I don’t always practice what I preach. However, I regularly read books that remind me to get back in touch with the slower side of life. I like books that teach me again how to “be here now.” This one looks like a must read for me.

## **4. Growing Joy by Maria Failla**

This one’s subtitle is “The Plant Lover’s Guide to Cultivating Happiness (and Plants).” How I love the idea of growing joy!

This one was written by the host of the Bloom and Grow Radio podcast. It also seems to look at the mindfulness benefits of gardening.

## **5. Creating a Garden Retreat: An Artist's Guide to Planting An Outdoor Sanctuary by Virginia Johnson**

Virginia Johnson shares her personal garden journey, from a small city lot to a beautiful and welcoming oasis. Her garden is wild and carefree, with hornbeams, peonies, hollyhocks, roses, and hydrangeas. Johnson explains her process with ease and clarity, bringing her ideas to life through words and illustrations. The book is organized into clear chapters about trees, flowers, seasons, and more. It sounds so inspiring!

## **6. The Philosophy of Gardening by Karen Caruana**

This one doesn't actually have a very extensive description on the library website. In fact, all it says is, "A collection of essays about different gardening philosophies and practices, mostly from a German point of view." However, that's enough to pique my interest. I am so curious to see what is inside those pages!

## **7. The Regenerative Garden by Stephanie Rose**

This one's subtitle helps explain what it is all about: "80 Practical Projects for Creating a Self-sustaining Garden Ecosystem."

A healthy, organic, regenerative garden is a self-sustaining ecosystem where everything works together. The goal of permaculture is to turn your garden into a functioning ecosystem that is less reliant on external resources and can



sustain itself through many seasons.

The book's projects cover six living elements of the garden: soil, water, plants, climate, ethics, and community. They reduce workload, conserve water and other resources, and create a habitat for wildlife. Projects include intensive planting, living mulches, self-watering planters, rain gardens, and compost systems.

## **8. Native Plant Gardening for Birds, Bees & Butterflies. Northern California by George Oxford Miller**

I live in Northern California so this one makes a lot of practical sense for me. Plus, I love butterflies. I like birds. And I know that bees are important. A friend of mine has a garden here that is a [Certified Wildlife Habitat](#). I imagine that this book has tips along the lines of what she incorporated in her amazing space.

## **9. Grow More Food by Colin McCrate**

My sister is the biggest gardener in my life. She prefers only to grow edibles. So, this book, subtitled "Vegetable Gardener's Guide to Getting the Biggest Harvest Possible From a Space of Any Size," seems right up her alley.

## **10. No-dig Gardening: Raised Beds, Layered Gardens, and Other No-till Techniques by Bella Line**

The book says that it teaches you everything you need to know in order to start and care for a kitchen garden. No-dig gardening is better for the environment, easier on your back, and can produce an abundance of vegetables, herbs, and flowers. So, it's worth reading about, right?

## **11. The Elegant & Edible Garden by Linda Vater**

As you might notice, I'm often enticed by the title and/or subtitle of a book. The subtitle of this one is: "Design a Dream Kitchen Garden to Fit Your Personality, Desires, and Lifestyle." That just captures my imagination!

## **12. Striking Succulent Gardens: Plants and Plans for Designing Your Low-maintenance Landscape by Gabriel Frank**

I love succulents. I'm originally from the Arizona desert, so naturally I find myself drawn to cacti and succulents of all kinds. Also, they're easier to grow than many other plants. Since I'm not really great with plants, that's best for me. I think that even if I don't learn a lot from this, I'd love just looking at the images inside!

## **13. Garden for the Senses by Kendra Wilson**

Subtitled "How Your Garden Can Soothe Your Mind and Awaken Your Soul," this one intrigues me because of the mental health benefits of gardening and plants.

*Do you read gardening books? Any that you recommend me to add to my virtual To Be Read shelf?*

### **Read More:**

- [A Garden to Dye For Book Review](#)
- [7 Free Gardening eBooks You Can Download Now](#)
- [Gardens, Books, and Legacies](#)