
While agriculture has occupied a prominent place in Australian environmental historiography for decades, garden history has only recently been positioned as a potential contributor to the field. In this pithy and original book, Rebecca Jones ranges over both organic gardening and farming, and in doing so significantly enlarges our understanding of a mode of environmental engagement that has become increasingly popular in Australia in recent years.

This book is derived from Jones’ PhD thesis and as such reflects years of assiduous research, though it has been considerably streamlined for publication and the energetic style is highly readable. Jones sets out to examine ‘what it means to grow food organically in Australia during the last 70 years’ (p.viii). This objective immediately raises the question of what it means to whom? Jones’ focus is unashamedly on the growers’ own perceptions, and her main sources are the writings of practitioners of organics, including magazines, newsletters and books, as well as interviews.

The book is structured thematically around what Jones describes as ‘the key ideas which define organic growing’, namely ‘soil, chemical free growing, ecological wellbeing and back to the land’ (p.xiv). Each thematic chapter is accompanied by a ‘case study’ of an organic gardener or farmer who in some way exemplifies the organic principles. This balance between overview and detailed study works effectively to illustrate the relationship between the theory and lived experience of organic growing.

A principal strength of this work lies in its solid identification and description of the ideas and practices of Australian organic growers since the 1940s. It also provides an excellent starting point for understanding the reasons for organic growers’ commitment to their practice. The chapter on ‘Back to the Land’ provides a particularly persuasive explication of the enthusiasm for organics among that subset of growers, and their relationship with the organic gardening and farming societies. However, where historians of the English organic movement such as Philip Conford and Matthew Reed have analysed connections between the English organic gardening movement and fascism, the politics of the earlier organic gardeners discussed by Jones are subject to relatively little scrutiny. Future historians will also find room to say more on the role of gender, class and race in shaping the way in which organic gardening and farming has been adopted and practiced in Australia.

In sum, *Green Harvest* provides valuable insights into the material environmental interactions of organic gardeners and farmers in Australia, as well as what they have believed, and how they have organised themselves. As such, it is a very welcome addition to the scholarship on the history of human-environment relationships in Australia.

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