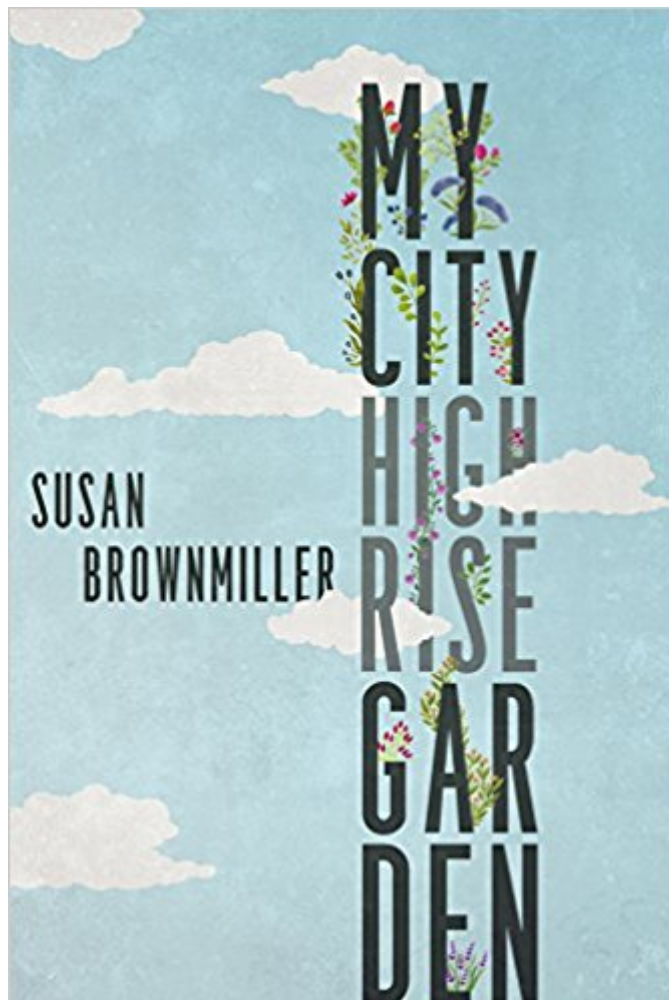


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# My City Highrise Garden



## Synopsis

Gardening on rooftops, balconies, and terraces is a popular trend. After thirty-five years of experience, Susan Brownmiller writes with honesty and humor about her oasis twenty floors above a Manhattan street. She reports the catastrophes: losing daytime access during building-wide renovations; assaults from a mockingbird during his mating season. And the joys: a peach tree fruited for fifteen years; the windswept birches lasted for twenty-five. Butterflies and bees pay annual visits. She pampers a buddleia, a honeysuckle, roses, hydrangeas, and more. Her adventures celebrate the tenacity of nature, inviting readers to marvel at her garden's resilience, and her own. Enhanced by over thirty color photographs, this passionate account of green life in a gritty, urban environment will appeal to readers and gardeners wherever they dwell.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this charming collection of essays, feminist journalist, activist, and author Brownmiller writes with passion, humor, and complete candidness about 35 years of gardening on the 20th-floor terrace of her Greenwich Village apartment. Along with weather, climate, and critter issues, Brownmiller also describes unique gardening problems that a more traditional yard gardener couldn't fathom, such as building renovations and neighbors unappreciative of leaf drift—although plenty of them are eager to share plants and pots for Brownmiller's urban oasis, too. From stories of the loss of her beloved birch trees in the wake of a hurricane to tales of victory at her

garden's thrilling achievements, the author reveals all, including the odd assortment of detritus she discovered thrown down from the shared rooftop garden above ... With a style reminiscent of Eric Grissell's *Thyme on My Hands* and *A Journal in Thyme*, Brownmiller's meandering musings will delight readers. Memoir lovers and gardeners alike will enjoy these adventures in urban gardening." (Library Journal)"Susan Brownmiller's delightful book is a gift not only for lucky city-dwellers able to cultivate green outdoor spaces of their own but for those who can only garden mentally. Nothing I've read has done a better job of capturing the inherent drama in gardening—the constant struggle against weather, drought, insects, disease, as well as the special challenges in cities posed by altitudes, landlords, developers and neighbors. Brownmiller's observant and witty writing has taken me back all over again to the special thrill and satisfaction of making things grow." (Joyce Johnson author of *Minor Characters*)"Charles Darwin made us aware of the ingenious adaptations plants evolved to survive in unlikely environments. Susan Brownmiller delights us with the ingenious adaptations plant growers like herself evolve to garden on the 20th floor. Defying drying winds and pests of several species, including homo sapiens, Brownmiller keeps the clematis climbing. My City Highrise Garden is a terrace gardener's how-to and every gardener's why-to. It's ardent, informative and also funny." (Barbara Garson author, playwright and community gardener)

SUSAN BROWNMILLER is a feminist journalist, activist, and best-selling author. Her most acclaimed title is *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. Her other books include, *Femininity*, *Waverly Place*, *Seeing Vietnam*, and *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*.

After the last snows of winter have migrated to the other hemisphere, I once again become obsessed with getting my hands back in the dirt, (manicure, be damned!); ready to welcome back whatever is plantable in my small outdoor gardens. I read Susan's book in one night. The following day, I visited our local garden center, happily selecting stock based upon my newfound knowledge from Susan's experiences with many of my favorite plants and shrubs. Each old tuber or new "volunteer" relates their own perspective in exclusive chapters, made all the more enjoyable with anecdotes about how, over the years, Ms Brownmiller has dealt with both the under-performers and over-achievers in regards to city life above street level: people, pets, pests and wildlife, unpredictable weather, and her brilliant container gardens. Turn off the god-forsaken news of the day, and instead, immerse yourself in this book. Love the color photographs that accompanies each plant, along with scientific and commonly known varieties. Perfect timing for the release of Susan's

new book, along with the longer days and warmer temps becoming more of what we need in our winter-weary souls.

An old print ad said, "You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's real Jewish rye." I say, You don't have to be a gardener to love "My City Highrise Garden". I do enjoy looking at flowers and learning new subjects, but I have never gardened. I bought this book because I have long admired Susan Brownmiller's writing. This memoir turned out to be far more than an ordinary how-to book. Filled with fascinating personal anecdotes, it has everything one could wish for--the high drama of her struggles against tremendous obstacles, both natural and man-made (obstacles that would have overwhelmed a less determined gardener), passion, delicious humor, sprinkles of poetry, painstaking historical research about every flower mentioned, every plant and insect, and even a chapter devoted to the Hudson River, her water source. Her tender love of her garden is sweet, not an adjective I would have used to describe her previous books, excellent as they were. Most of all, I relished her ever graceful prose. One doesn't come across first-rate writing every day.

I am familiar with Susan Brownmiller's writing over the years.....mostly the ones on femininity which I read when they first came out. She is a writer of other topics as well and I give her such credit for them, and especially for this latest book. Her description of life up high and the views that affords her are descriptive of the neighborhood. But it is her description of the joys, the stresses, the flowering and blooming that are so moving. Yes, as she says early on "my garden engages me intellectually and emotionally. It's a never-ending challenge because something is bound to go wrong. Ah, but when things go right...."Bravo Susan!

I thought perhaps this book by the famous feminist author, Susan Brownmiller was going to provide a gardening metaphor for women of a certain age with radical feminist insights, but NO, this is a serious gardening book! While I have flirted with the idea of being an accomplished and wise gardener over the past couple of decades with a wetlands plot on Long Island and another high desert place in the mountains of Mexico, I have suffered many disappointments and have to credit the successes to sheer luck. Consequently, I learned much from Brownmiller's concentrated chapters on roses, peonies, hydrangeas, clematis and more. Only her garden is 20 stories up on the West side of Manhattan which means battling wind as her major enemy and placating cantankerous neighbors. I was relieved to discover that even an experienced and successful gardener like Brownmiller, 35 years on that terrace (!), struggled with imposter weeds.

And I adore her gusto with whacking back out of control growth and her admission that she depends on Miracle Grow. And there are surprises here especially about bees. Chapters offer details of, finding miniature varieties (against the winds), planting placement, fertilizing, pruning, endless weeding and deadheading. My favorite parts are the historical excursions. Brownmiller explains that Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*) was discovered by Robert Fortune on the Chinese island of Chusan after the Opium Wars. It became an immediate hit in England and I remember my English grandmother still calling it by its first British name, Lady's Heart, when I lived with her in Vancouver. As a Canadian I was thrilled to discover the story of the Canadian climbing rose "William Baffin" the product of a several decade hybridizing program that extended the range into cold climates throughout the US & Europe. Another Canadian hardy rose, the "Cuthbert Grant," was named after a Métis Nation leader. The Métis are a nation within Canada descended from the original mixing of mostly Cree Indians and French fur traders. Their leader, Louis Riel, was one of Canada's true heroes assassinated by the Federal leaders for trying to organize native peoples and homesteaders in my native province of Saskatchewan. I could go on with my personal passions. This book stimulates that kind of reflection. There is much to satisfy the gardener and historian. I was a bit disappointed by the photographs. While meaningful because they are by the author, a few professional shots would inject some eroticism in the enterprise.

A book not only for gardening friends! It will give anyone - female or male - a big appetite for gardening, no matter where you live, how small your gardening territory is and what climate you are in - I live in Tel Aviv on the 10th floor and I will indeed give my little balcony garden now much more attention. And NYC lovers will enjoy the little stories in between! The author, "an old lady" as she calls herself, sounds more like a young, amusing, up to date and fit woman! I have read all her previous books, and this one is such a nice surprise. Wonderful book!

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