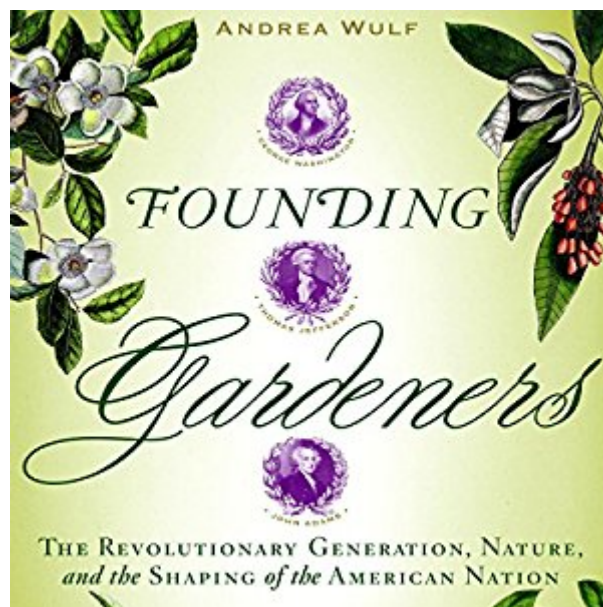




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# Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, And The Shaping Of The American Nation



## Synopsis

From the author of the acclaimed *The Brother Gardeners*, a fascinating look at the founding fathers from the unique and intimate perspective of their lives as gardeners, plantsmen, and farmers. For the founding fathers, gardening, agriculture, and botany were elemental passions, as deeply ingrained in their characters as their belief in liberty for the nation they were creating. Andrea Wulf reveals for the first time this aspect of the revolutionary generation. She describes how, even as British ships gathered off Staten Island, George Washington wrote his estate manager about the garden at Mount Vernon; how a tour of English gardens renewed Thomas Jefferson's and John Adams's faith in their fledgling nation; how a trip to the great botanist John Bartram's garden helped the delegates of the Constitutional Congress break their deadlock; and why James Madison is the forgotten father of American environmentalism. These and other stories reveal a guiding but previously overlooked ideology of the American Revolution. *Founding Gardeners* adds depth and nuance to our understanding of the American experiment and provides us with a portrait of the founding fathers as they've never before been seen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Washington in his shirtsleeves digging tree plantings, Jefferson, Madison and so much more, this well researched, reality history brings alive those passionately devoted founding people who served our nation in its birth, growing pains, and direction choices. So fascinating much about plants, and yet conversations are never just facts. Clearer descriptions of life in the Founders' times, the agriculture they hoped for America's future self sustainability, and their grinding nation-producing

hard work offset by joy and relaxing on garden tours. Founders with their sleeves rolled up, seed and plant exploration, yet sweating through the hours, days and months of deliberation to produce and protect the real America. Brilliant minds, scientific curiosity, real thinking and this book is a true horse and buggy ride in the lives and gardens across continents. Anyone who has ever enjoyed a seed catalogue or thought history was merely dead facts will travel with those astounding Founders.

This interesting book tells the stories of four patriots with emphasis on their gardening efforts in Virginia. The founding gardeners are George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison. There is also a fascinating section about the early development of a "City of Magnificent Intentions, Washington, D.C. The writing is direct although there are many very long sentences to trip up a naive reader. Once used to this style, it becomes easier. The author includes details about the lives of the founding fathers which suggest deep and thorough research. Details of place, conversation, and of many plants make the book fascinating. Colored pictures show the people and certain trees at their best.

Superbly researched and written book about the founding fathers of the USA. This describes a surprising side and passion to the character of these multi talented men. In addition, one gets a clear picture of the continental congress and how the two houses of the Congress came about.

In the prologue of this fascinating study of the inner lives of Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison, historian Wulf says that by carefully studying records, letters and diaries, she came to see "how vegetable plots, ornamental plants, landscapes and forests had played a crucial role in America's struggle for national identity and in the lives of our Founding Fathers. Wulf tells of Benjamin Franklin's early certainty that America's future rested on it's "endless horizons, fertile soil and floral abundance" - a belief, she states, "became the perfect articulation of a distant national identity - of a country that was young and strong." The author claims Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison felt the same and offers their stories and letters to prove it. Even as Washington struggled through the eight year ordeal of the Revolutionary War, his thoughts were constantly of his gardens, his fields and the wooded lands of Virginia. At the war's end, he wished to return to his life as a "farmer and plantsman". And, he did, throwing himself with passion into daily life as a "hands-on" gardener - an intellectual gardener, sending out seeds, acorns and thoughts on soil conservation, etc. He accepted the presidency with great reluctance. Jefferson would also serve as president but saw himself as "farmer, gardener and philosopher". Adams regarded himself as a

farmer first, stating, "zeal at my Heart for my country" was the reluctant drive that kept him in politics. Jefferson in Paris and Adams in London were profoundly affected by English gardens. When the Adames returned home in 1788, Wolfe claims they packed "books, seeds and plant lists of American trees, shrubs and flowers discovered in English gardens" for use at home in Massachusetts. The Constitutional Congress of 1788 brought fifty-five delegates to Philadelphia, bound only by the Articles of Confederation. Vicious disputes marked the convention. The tenuous bond between the delegates was that most were farmers or from a planter's background. Their unifying agreement was that the rich expanse of soil and the variety of possible plantings in this new land of theirs would allow personal livelihoods, individual state independence and a common commitment as a people. Wolfe moves from the national story to a detailed account of the first presidents' dedication to and involvement in their own lands, homes and gardens - Washington at Mount Vernon, Adams at Peacefield, Jefferson at Monticello and Madison at Montpelier. Well-described. Intimate details. Meticulously researched. A new favorite on my bookshelf.

This book lives up to its reviews. It is well researched and written and presents US history in a way not usually found in our school system. I needed a chronology of George Washington's life to put things in sequence in my brain. The war and the peace treaties and their impacts became clearer after reading this book. The gardening aspects are eye opening. Every one will find new and exciting bits of information in this novel. The resolution of the bad feelings between Jefferson and Adams was comforting. Lewis' preparation for his journey, directed by Jefferson, was as exciting as the trip itself. This is worth the reading time.

Having lived on a farm all my life I found the book a wonderful refreshing look at the way the founding fathers viewed the beginning farmers. Perhaps the beginning farmers hearing west had a very hard time when the crops failed but that is covered in so many other books. Those beginning farmers nurturing the crops and animals in the original thirteen colonies were cornerstone for the future of America. Our book club chose it to read.

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