

Book Review

Founding Gardeners:

The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation

Andrea Wulf

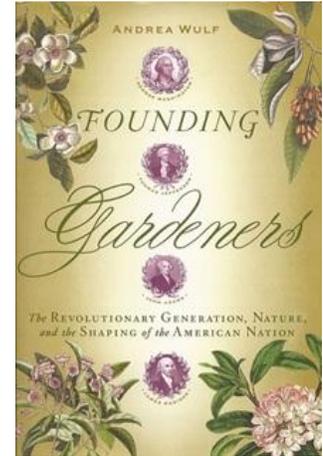
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Debbie Moore Clark

A series of synchronistic events led me to purchase Andrea Wulf's new book *Founding Gardeners*. Then given my keen interest in visiting the historic plantations of our nation's founding fathers, reading this new book on *The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* proved to be a serendipitous experience. Beautifully written, in easy-to-read prose, Wulf crafts the stories of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, whose passion for gardening shaped their ideas, language and politics as they helped form and lead a new nation. That each man considered himself first a plantsman and farmer—and second a politician—came as no surprise: each found solace and peace working the soil, and longed for escape to their farms, particularly when in the midst of political turmoil, and at retirement, following the rigors and trials of governing and public life.

“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” (jacket). Acquisition of plants, composting, use and promotion of native plants, and environmental conservation efforts embedded the hearts and souls of these men.



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Their passion found expression not only in their own gardening practices, but also in public policy and the expansion and development of public lands. Gardening metaphors were ever-occurring in the speeches, writings, letters, and conversations of these forefathers.

As one might expect of any book of history, *Founding Fathers* is sparsely, but pleasingly illustrated with photographic prints of historical paintings, botanical illustrations, sketches and maps. The tome is well documented with massive end notes, bibliography and illustration credits.

Fortunate for us, historic preservation efforts for Washington's Mount Vernon, Adams' Peacefield,

Jefferson's Monticello and Poplar Forest, and Madison's Montpelier make visiting these plantations possible. For information about each of these historic estates, respectively, please visit:

www.mountvernon.org

www.nps.gov/adam/historyculture/places.htm

www.monticello.org

www.poplarforest.org

www.montpelier.org



Debbie Moore Clark is a professional writer and an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer in Mecklenburg County, NC. She loves reading about and visiting historic gardens.