

The Gardens of Spain, Michael George and Consuelo M Correcher, 1993. Harry N Abrams, 12¹/₂ × 9¹/₂ inches, 200 pages including index, \$60

Mention of the gardens of Spain brings to mind scenes of shaded patios, colorful *azulejos*, the sound of water, and the scent of lemons, all derived, if we know Andalusia at all, from visits to the Alhambra and Generalife. I suppose that such visions are inevitable—the romance of them is so colored by the history and literature of the country. But there is more to Spanish gardens than these, and Michael George has recorded for us with his camera, not only the Moorish patios, but many gardens recently made and seldom seen. It surprises those of us limited in our conception of Spain and its gardens to learn of an Augustinian monastery near Toledo where the ruins are preserved and a modern garden is being made that includes a dramatic water labyrinth. The labyrinth is shown here with pink roses, but appears on the cover of the Winter '93 issue of this magazine with its exquisite geometry unveiled.

Surprising, too, is the private botanical garden at S'Avall begun in the middle years of this century that now has 2,000 kinds of cactus, among many other plants. Rainwater is collected in underground cisterns, and there is a desalinization plant purifying sea water; there is no municipal water.

Far from the Mediterranean, in the northwestern province of Galicia, the moist, mild climate fills gardens with rich greenery, drapes rocks with thick moss, and erodes statuary to facelessness. Here we wander in the garden of the Palacio de Oca, where "water [is] treated reverentially, though without vain display, as it is in other parts of Spain where it is indeed a scarce resource." And we learn of Suero de Oca, whose twelfth-century fortress was attacked and taken by Alonso de Fonseca, Archbishop of Santiago. Suero's wife, abducted by the Archbishop, pined and died in sadness. The garden at the Palacio de Oca, conducive to reveries on such tragedies, is shown in mellow scenes of still canals thick with rushes, ancient granite figures, and green masses of hydrangeas.

Michael George is steeped in Spanish history, and he photographs its relics with particular sympathy and great beauty. His

rendering at the Alhambra of the columns and carving in the Patio de los Leones conveys the mystery of the place as visitors today are seldom allowed to feel it. At La Granja de San Ildefonso, too, he was clearly at home among the fountains and cascades; the water plays just for him in the Fuente de los Baños de Diana.

But I find myself returning to what is, perhaps, the least prepossessing of gardens included here—that adjoining an old factory building in Brihuega. The nineteenth-century garden is small and crowded, with elements of a distinctly Spanish character, but it is a picture of the circular factory building (resembling a bull ring) seen against the slope of the sere *mesita* that rivets me. In this picture is the essence of Spain, its countryside and character as I have known them.

From the introduction, an excellent summary of the country's long struggle with its climate and successive tides of invaders, to the last photograph, an elegant and simple garden reflecting Roman and Moorish occupation of the locality, the author, the landscape architect and professor Consuelo Correcher, and the photographer present not simply a sampling of Spanish gardens or a table-top book of fine photographs, but also a delightful introduction to Spanish history and culture, including horticulture.

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