



# African-American Gardens: Yards In Rural South

*Richard Westmacott*

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Much acclaimed upon its initial publication in 1992, this book was the first extensive survey of African American gardening traditions in the rural South. For this reprinting, author Richard Westmacott has written a new preface in which he describes the traveling exhibit based on the book and compares his original research with his recent observations of gardening practices in the Cayman Islands.

The book remains a valuable and richly illustrated resource for those interested in African American material culture and the history of vernacular gardens. It includes measured drawings and physical inventories of African American gardens in three geographic areas: the low country of South Carolina, the southern piedmont of Georgia, and the black belt of Alabama. The descriptions are enhanced by the author's personal interviews with the gardeners, in which he documents the aesthetic qualities, designs, and purposes of their yards and gardens.

Westmacott traces the evolution of African American yards and gardens and over the last two hundred years and discusses the possible African origins of certain traditions, such as the swept yard. He also notes similarities in attitude between rural southern blacks and whites regarding the importance of the agrarian lifestyle, self-reliance, and private ownership. Despite such similarities, he shows, the patterns and practices in which those beliefs are manifested among African Americans are uniquely their own.

The Author: Richard Westmacott is a professor of environmental design at the University of Georgia and lives in rural Georgia.

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