

‘A Life in the Garden’ and ‘Bitter Passage’

Barbara Damrosch's latest book takes a personally involved approach to gardening, and Geoffrey Bates' gives us a gritty murder mystery.

A LIFE IN THE GARDEN: TALES AND TIPS FOR GROWING FOOD IN EVERY SEASON

American homespun philosopher Texas Bix Bender has this advice for gardeners: “The best way to garden is to put on a wide-brimmed hat and some old clothes. And with a hoe in one hand and a cold drink in the other, tell somebody else where to dig.” This advice works well if you have a lot of summer houseguests. Put them to work.

Barbara Damrosch's latest book, “A Life in the Garden,” takes a more personally involved approach to gardening, with valuable information, tips, quips, anecdotes and cooking ideas for vegetable gardeners of all ages, abilities and interests. She and her husband, Eliot Coleman, live and work on Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine (out on Cape Rosier). She's written numerous gardening books, but this one may be her most fun and useful.

Their farm is a “nationally recognized model of small-scale sustainable agriculture,” but the book is not intended to turn anybody into a farmer; rather, it shows anyone how to garden efficiently and productively year-round to grow food, an effort that also adds to our mental and physical well-being. Damrosch describes the philosophy of the “kitchen garden,” with careful consideration of the money, time and space we can devote to gardening.

She explains soil science, the importance of organic matter, clever ways to use space for greater food production, how to create a plan for your garden, and the basic tools needed (without spending much money). She also offers wonderfully easy cooking tips for a variety of vegetables (soups, stews, side dishes, salads), using olive oil and garlic generously.

Learn about “garden geometry,” how to make pemmican, the difference between

good spinach and bad spinach, why a sweet potato isn't a yam, and which tasty vegetable is called “the stinking rose.”

BITTER PASSAGE: AN ALLEGHENY BECKHAM NOVEL

As a police officer in Chicago, Allie Beckham became disgusted with big-city corruption and rampant sexism in the police department. After five years she quit and moved back to her hometown in Maine, and became a deputy sheriff in fictional Chamberlain County. She thinks life in Maine will be different, but she's wrong.

“Bitter Passage” is coastal Maine author Geoffrey Bates' gritty cop-drama/murder-mystery set in a cold Maine winter. Bates isn't a cop, but he thinks like one, creating a suspenseful tale of a savvy female deputy up to her gun belt in gruesome crimes, deadly intrigue and professional treachery. And despite promises of support, Beckham finds herself very alone dealing with killers and more dangerous sexism.

This is a complex story involving numerous plot lines that seem unconnected to Beckham, but Bates deftly weaves them together into a compelling tale with a strong lead character and loads of clues and action. Beckham was hired to replace a deputy who died in a shooting accident (cleaning his gun?). The county sheriff treats her like a bumpkin, blaming her for things she didn't do, questioning her professionalism, and acting like he's hiding something.

A gruesome murder quickly leads to a double kidnapping and ransom demand connected to two wealthy families. A sheriff detective seems friendly enough, but something is just not right with him. Ignored by the sheriff and left on her own, Beckham uncovers a frightening criminal enterprise, and is not surprised when nobody takes her seriously.

Add a violent, gun-toting white-supremacy militia, fear and intimidation, threats, sex abuse and a police cover-up, and Bates has a well-crafted, tense crime drama.

And Beckham?

Well, she's not done yet, and the ending will surprise you. We can only hope to see her again.

Bill Bushnell lives and writes in Harpswell.



BILL BUSHNELL
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ON BOOKS

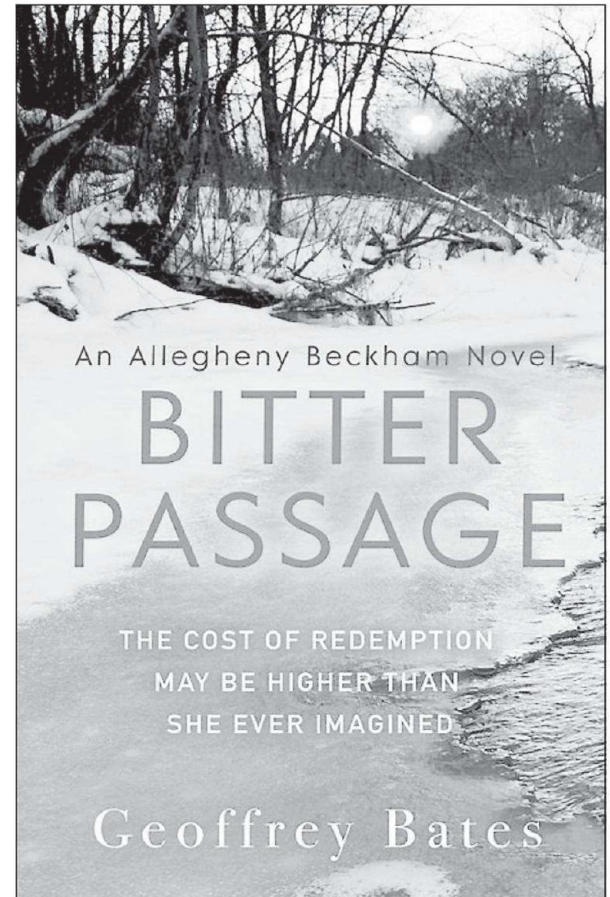
A LIFE IN THE GARDEN

• Tales and Tips for Growing Food in Every Season •



BARBARA DAMROSCH

A LIFE IN THE GARDEN: TALES AND TIPS FOR GROWING FOOD IN EVERY SEASON by Barbara Damrosch; Timber Press, 2024; 380 pages, \$40; ISBN 978-1-64236-181-2.



An Allegheny Beckham Novel

BITTER PASSAGE

THE COST OF REDEMPTION
MAY BE HIGHER THAN
SHE EVER IMAGINED

Geoffrey Bates

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