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Gardening Without Work: For the Aging, the Busy & the Indolent

Ruth Stout

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Garden expert and lovable eccentric Ruth Stout once said: "At the age of 87 I grow vegetables for two people the year-round, doing all the work myself and freezing the surplus. I tend several flower beds, write a column every week, answer an awful lot of mail, do the housework and cooking-and never do any of these things after 11 o'clock in the morning!"

Her first book about her no-work gardening system, *How to Have a Green Thumb Without an Aching Back,* was the kind of book people can't bear to return. She reports, "A dentist in Pennsylvania and a doctor in Oregon have both written me that they keep a copy of my garden book in their waiting rooms. Or try to; the dentist has had twenty-three copies stolen, the doctor, sixteen."

Gardening Without Work is her second gardening book and is even more entertaining and instructional than the first, so hide it from your friends!

How does it work? "And now let's get down to business. The labor-saving part of my system is that I never plow, spade, sow a cover crop, harrow, hoe, cultivate, weed, water or irrigate, or spray. I use just one fertilizer (cottonseed or soybean meal), and I don't go through the tortuous business of building a compost pile. Just yesterday, under the "Questions and Answers" in a big reputable farm paper, someone asked how to make a compost pile and the editor explained the arduous performance. After I read this I lay there on the couch and suffered because the victim's address wasn't given; there was no way I could reach him.

"My way is simply to keep a thick mulch of any vegetable matter that rots on both my vegetable and flower garden all year round. As it decays and enriches the soil, I add more."

Regardless of topic, Ruth Stout's writing is always about living a joyous and independent life, and *Gardening Without Work* is no exception! This book is a treasure for the gardener and a delight even to the non-gardener. First published in 1961, this Norton Creek Press version is an exact reproduction of the original edition.

Ruth Stout, who, in her teens helped temperance activist Carrie Nation smash saloon windows, could turn any aspect of life into an adventure. She may have been the only woman who both gardened in the nude and wrote a book on being a hostess *(Company Coming: Six Decades of Hospitality).* She died in 1980 at the age of 96.

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