

## **BOOK REVIEW**

21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SMALLHOLDER by Paul Waddington. Eden Project Books, ISBN 190391969X £12.99, 2006, 224 pages.

This book covers a lot of ground, from crops to livestock, biodiversity, the storage of home-grown food and the saving of energy and water, to becoming completely self-reliant on a smallholding with an energy-efficient and water-efficient house.

As such, in only 224 pages, the book can only skim the surface of each topic. A good list of books and websites for further reading is provided, so those fired-up with enthusiasm after reading Paul Waddington's book can turn to other sources for in-depth information.

The author has an allotment and grows crops organically using the "no-dig" method. He is keen to avoid man-made chemicals. However, his coverage in 32 pages of individual vegetables and fruits is necessarily brief and he omits to describe how to overcome pest problems. Those who already grow their own will not find much of value in the section on growing crops, but novices would find it of much interest.

The section on the design of balcony gardens and small and substantial plots is good. The section on the basics of raising livestock is very good, as is the section on energy and water. The costs of various methods of generating electricity and providing household heating and water should be enough to put off all but the most highly-committed eco-friendly advocate, for example "without a grant you won't get your money back from a solar photovoltaic system for 100 years".

He advocates the composting of newspapers, vacuum cleaner contents, teabags, egg boxes and paper bags – all of which I would not touch with a bargepole because of the man-made chemicals they contain. He advocates not composting docks, bindweed, couch grass and ground elder – all of which I have composted since 1973 with no problems at all.

There are not many spelling, grammatical or punctuation mistakes but there are a few lunacies. He says there are trailing and bush swedes, which will be news to those who grow swedes. He says that potato and tomato blight affects turnips, which I doubt.

On the whole, this is a worthwhile book for the novice seeking the basics of growing food and becoming self-sustaining and eco-friendly. Those who already know a lot about some of these topics will seek more in-depth information elsewhere.

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