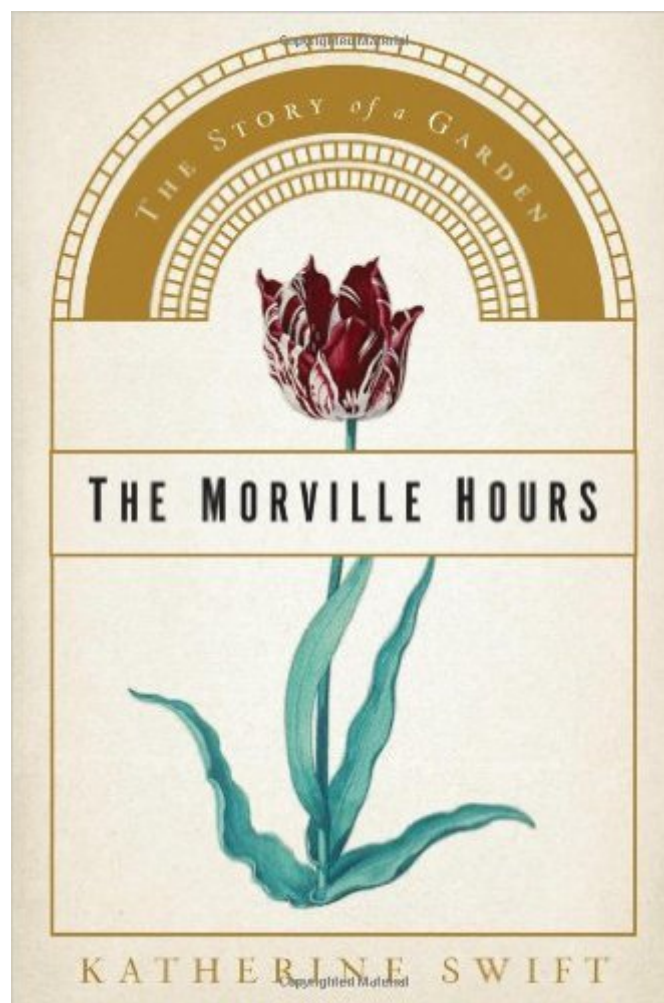


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# The Morville Hours: The Story Of A Garden



## Synopsis

An exquisitely written book about one particular English garden and about the arc of life. Nobody writes about gardens like the English. And few English writers have ever been as eloquent or astute as Katherine Swift. Some twenty years ago, she and her husband leased a house in the town of Shropshire with a garden that became her passion. Driven to uncover its history, she takes readers on a journey back through time, linking the stories of those who lived in the house and tended the same red soil with her family's own saga. Spanning hundreds of years, *The Morville Hours* is also deeply personal—a journey through the seasons and also one of self-exploration, of finding one's place in the world and putting down roots. With each chapter bringing to life an hour of the day or night—from the crunch of grass underfoot at midnight on a frosty New Year's Eve to the bloom of blue-black damsons picked on a golden September afternoon—Swift pulls us into her world and, at the same time, expands and illuminates our own. For anyone with a passion for gardens and gardening, *The Morville Hours* will be unforgettable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm currently reading it, and I absolutely love it. I can see where it might not be everyone's cup of tea, but I find her soliloquies on gardens, animal life, history, the liturgical year and a million other things enchanting. It's a slow, meditative book, very thoughtful and intelligent. It reminds me a little of 'The Cloister Walk', which is of a similar meditative bent.

The Morville Hours is a meditation on gardening, history, one's place and time. It is beautifully written. It's not a gardening book but a gardening book of the soul and place. I love some of her descriptions of breathing the air, and tilling the soil that generations have breathed and tilled. Perhaps we are too solution conscious to stop, stand still, and look at the snow by moonlight. If you like these things, I highly recommend this book to you. I am buying 5 as gifts. I would recommend the following: Clear Mind, Wild Heart, The Elegance of the Hedgehog, The Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden, [[ASIN:0312427808 The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel

I confess I am American and not a botanist. This lovely story had elements that were tough going for me and I gave up after 25 pages. The author gives long lists of plants, for example. There is much detail of historical traditions in monasteries (the Hours) including the Latin names. The style was repetitive. Sigh. Then she tells the enchanting tale of walking the garden at midnight, New Year's Eve. I think I'd have loved just those stories.

I bought this book on impulse when I was browsing a gardening section after reading the mention of the Book of Hours on the jacket. I am fascinated by gardens and Medieval history and culture and Ms. Swift's book does a beautiful job of merging local history, memoir, gardening discussions, and the history of England. I have not read much by way of traditional gardening books but I found this book both charming and a seamlessly blended way to approach such a diverse set of subjects. Those who dislike it for its lack of gardening "how tos" have likely approached it for a different reason than I did, for the pure enjoyment of a lovely, thoughtful meditation on life, history, and nature. Perhaps its classification as a "gardening" book is where the problem lies.

Wonderful story of a garden and how the author brought it back to life. In my opinion, however, she spent way too much time complaining about what a tough childhood she had. We all have our problems and I didn't buy the book to read about hers.

Morville Hours interweaves the natural (seasons, months, geology) with social (family history, local history) from the starting point of her village, and especially her garden. Gardening never dominates the book and while I'm sure it would help to be knowledgeable on the topic, you needn't be (I'm certainly not) to appreciate the book. The writing is excellent: the metaphors and synthesis of material are also excellent and told in an intelligent and engaging but never pedantic way. I can highly recommend the book to anyone who is interested in the seasons and rhythms of nature,

microhistory, or is (or aspires to be) a polymath. Reading the book won't help you become a specialist in anything but will help you see a greater interconnectedness in life, history, and the words we use. If, however, you are looking for a book about gardens, this book is probably too broad for you.

I can't whether I like it or dislike it. My expectation, being a gardener, was that the book would focus on gardening. I have found that it is an amalgam of autobiography, intense history, the meaning of the sacred hours translated into months and gardening. I am a fast reader, but, this book is so dense, without a common thread, that I am muddling through it. That being said, and not pejoratively, it is a worthwhile read.

As with all great books, this one is about ....everything. Katherine Swift weaves the narrative thread offered by the annual cycles of the liturgical "Book of Hours" into a skein of history about her garden, her life, her part of the world. It is beautiful, enchanting, enlivening.

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