

Angelica Gray

The author of *Gardens of Marrakesh* tells
Anne de Verteuil where her zest for life comes from



**“YOU NEED TO TRUST AND
TAKE THAT LEAP TO CREATE
SOMETHING SPECIAL”**

What was your first recollection of being outside in a garden or wild space?

I think I was nine or 10 years old but the magic of being in a country house garden, early in the morning, is still with me. Coming from London, I found the stillness profound and was struck by the beauty of the dew, especially on the cobwebs all over the potager. Then I came upon a mature mulberry full of red glowing fruit and I really felt that this was some enchanted land.

What aspect of your past has influenced your present?

No one escapes their childhood. My father was a portrait painter with a hugely charismatic personality and a talent for extracting people's darkest secrets. Being visually aware and articulate was important, as was a sense of fun, and a taste for humanity in all its guises.

What or who has been your most unexpected source of inspiration?

My grandmother was a flying trapeze artist and my grandfather, apart from owning the circus, performing a world-famous loose-wire act and training the big cats, was her catcher. Whenever I need a boost of confidence I think of their partnership and am reminded that risk is an

essential part of an interesting life – you need to trust and take that leap to create something special.

Which one book would you pass on to your grandchildren – or your students?

Robin Hood And His Merrie Men, preferably the Thames & Hudson Regents Classics version. The story has everything, romance, adventure, comradeship, right against might, and, for me, Sherwood Forest represents nature as both refuge and source of inspiration. For gardeners, the book I adore will come as no surprise – it's Russell Page's *The Education of a Gardener*.

What one object sums up the way you look at the world?

A glass half full which is about to be replenished.

What's on your mood board?

I am working on two garden books at the moment so I have images of the 20 gardens in France I'm discussing, and the other involves understanding the Arts and Crafts garden, so I've made a visual aide-memoire of key elements.

What caused your sharpest learning curve?

Saying yes to things I haven't done before and being right in the thick of it.

What has been the high point of your life?

I don't see life like that: it's more like a Jackson Pollock, with bursts of intense events embedded in the tangle of everyday. So, childbirth, Sunday lunch and unsolicited professional moments, like Katie Campbell's review of *Gardens of Marrakesh* for GDJ.

And the low?

Again, how to choose just one? Being dumped by my first boyfriend, seeing the devastation caused by a mini tornado on a French house we had bought just three months before, or when a series of random events appeared to be threatening the security and happiness of my family.

If you were left to wander for eternity in one garden or one space, where would it be?

Am I allowed to say London?

Why will we remember you?

I laugh far too easily at terrible jokes, often my own.

Gardens of Marrakesh is published by Frances Lincoln, £20.