Sample Non-fiction Book Review

*The Art of Garden Maintenance* by Ben Bosco  

According to Ben Bosco, “The two keys to a perfect ornamental garden are simply this: creativity and tenacity”. This is just one of the enlightening gems that Bosco shares in his newest book from Henderson Publishing entitled *The Art of Garden Maintenance* (2015). Topping out at just over 200 pages, Bosco’s newest addition to his highly successful *The Art of...* series offers readers (and gardeners) an enormous selection of full-colour photos, detailed diagrams, careful instructions, helpful tips, and the occasional burst of literary brilliance, features that this writer’s avid fans have come to expect. For his millions of devoted readers, Bosco’s newest guide to ornamental gardening doesn’t disappoint.

In his newest book, jack-of-all-trades writer Ben Bosco tackles the rudiments of creating and maintaining an ornamental garden. With his trademark wit and pragmatism, Bosco is able to render even highly complicated cultivation practices as easily digested (and followed) step-by-step instructions. Setting out to disprove the notion that ornamental gardening is a hobby reserved for the genteel set, Bosco provides directions that are applicable to any size garden, even the window box gardens to which apartment dwellers are sometimes limited. Beginning with a brief history of the ornamental garden movement, the author next provides an overview of the philosophy that undergirds the activities and designs of the movement’s modern day practitioners. While arguably the one slow spot in Bosco’s book, he keeps it brief, and I soon found myself absorbed in his descriptions of notable modern gardens and the philosophy discussion forgotten. The book’s crescendo, and the hallmark of Bosco’s *The Art of...* series, is his careful step-by-step guide for creating your own garden, to which the final half of the book is devoted. Here, I encountered a wealth of ideas for transforming my garden from Keats’s “cold pastoral” into a living, evolving masterpiece. Furnished with the series’ standard glossary, index, and wealth of pictures, *The Art of Garden Maintenance* is a beautiful and enlightening guide to turning your garden into a true neighbourhood ornament.

As a latecomer to Bosco’s *The Art of...* series of how-to guides, I have only recently discovered the author’s gift for finding beauty in the mundane and for crafting a lovely turn-of-phrase. Though less interested in ornamental gardening than I was in Bosco’s guide to semi-precious gemstone mining, *The Art of Garden Maintenance* made for good reading. It is by turns practical and literary, pragmatic and erudite. Coupled with beautiful photography, the author’s literary artistry and clear instructions propel this book to the top of my list of favourite gardening books (which is admittedly short). Whether you are looking for a relaxing read, a useful guide to gardening, or another engaging book from Ben Bosco, *The Art of Garden Maintenance* is sure to please.