

Book Review by conscious Palmer homesteader Alys Culhane

**Ask Mother Nature:  
A Conscious Gardener's Guide**

By Ellen Vande Visse

(Findhorn Press, 2009, Softcover, \$14.95)

Attention, gardeners of South-Central Alaska! We are served a double treat: a horticultural How-To book finally pertinent to our region, plus a spiritual guidebook for co-creating with nature. I chuckled my way through the illustrative stories this author tells on herself, because this is no technical manual. Instead, I vicariously learned both practical organic strategies that work in our cold growing season, and how to ask for divine counsel and cooperation from the soil, plants, and pests themselves.

Slugs, cutworms, root maggots. Oh, the shock of discovering their devastating assault on our beloved lettuce, basil, and broccoli! We automatically reach for a chemical control, determined to exterminate the ever-looming enemy. If you are expecting to do battle again, hold on! Long-time Alaskan gardener Ellen Vande Visse suggests that there are more peaceful options available in her new book ***Ask Mother Nature: A Conscious Gardener's Guide***. How? Ellen demonstrates ways to reach out to the God-like core of so-called "pests" and respectfully negotiate with them. She believes you can apply this same earthy spirituality to achieve a harmonious partnership with all of nature, as promised by the Findhorn and Perelandra Gardens models.

Ellen's narrative gives us a glimpse of the unseen energies in our backyards, and reveals how eager these conscious Beings are to work with us humans. She introduces us to Devas or "the overlighting angel of a plant, animal, or mineral," as well as Nature

Spirits, who joyfully carry out the energy functions and processes of nature. Each chapter teaches how to have two-way conversations with these magnificent spirits of nature. What are the results of working at the life force level of growing vegetables and flowers? Ellen shows the astounding gains in yield, balance, and vitality. Everyone wins—humans, plants, and yes, even slugs.

I admit was highly skeptical at first. I'm the product of a society whose win/lose language presumes gardeners deploy arsenals to stop invaders. It was a tough sell to convince me that Devas and Nature spirits actually exist and are willing to assist us in making our gardens harmonious and fruitful. Yet Ellen's own doubts and awkwardness make all this spiritual gardening both believable and captivating. You'll have a good laugh as Ellen introduces you to Charlie the Root Maggot Deva and Robert the Slug Deva. At the same time, you'll be book-marking the recipes for slug patrol and trap-cropping.

Some of that angelic guidance from nature still makes my head spin. And what about the problems in my garden that this book does not address? This year, I will do what Ellen recommends. I will ask Mother Nature directly.