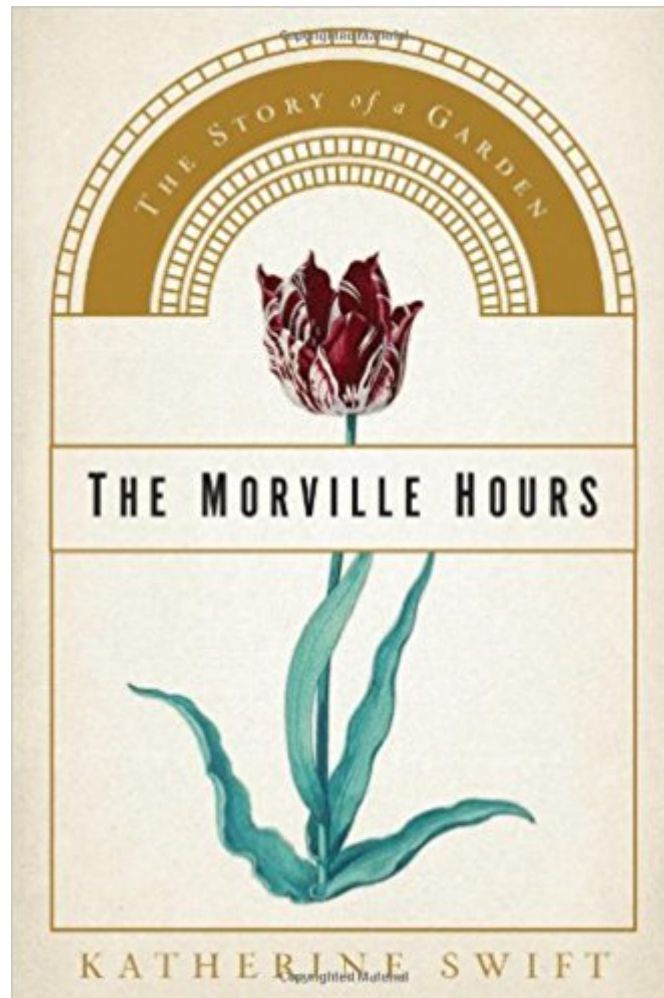


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# The Morville Hours: The Story Of A Garden



## 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

Swift, a former London Times gardening columnist, invites readers to slow down, taste the fresh fruit and sniff the blooming flowers. Entwining gardening with natural and local history, family memories, garden visitors like insects, animals and people, and religious traditions, Swift explores the cycles of the seasons and life while providing a fresh breath of country air. Was quince responsible for the

Trojan War as well as Adam and Eve's fall from Paradise? Garden tidbits, such as pear trees living for 250 years and damson plums having provided the dye for British military uniforms, are abundant. But more so, Swift offers an exploration of the world as seen through the eyes of a longtime gardener. The months in the garden are explored alongside the medieval Catholic book of hours; days and seasons cycle with Swift's narratives of garden design, Roman history, astronomy and brain chemistry. Swift's meditative prose should appeal to gardeners (armchair or soil-based) and nature lovers alike with its invitation to pause for reflection. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Taking possession of Morville, a centuries-old Shropshire estate, Swift had to prove to England's National Trust that she was equal to the task of restoring the massive gardens to a state that would both honor their venerable history and reflect their natural beauty. In truth, there was no one more capable of acknowledging a heritage that included gentry and clergy, royalty and paupers. A born naturalist with a keen eye, Swift delved into the property's past with the emotional sensitivity of a poet and the solemn tenacity of a historical scholar. Season by season, Swift chronicles the changes she envisioned and accomplished, using the monastic Book of Hours as both her guide and touchstone. Though her reflections might begin with the memory of a moonlight stroll down a snow-covered path, Swift is quick to position these personal revelations within the timeless context of Morville's ancestry. With a rhapsodic eloquence and passionate devotion, Swift imparts the rewards and discoveries inherent in such a multifaceted commitment to time and place.

--Carol Haggas

There are how-to garden books and lavishly photographed garden books, and then there's a third category: the offbeat, personal account of a person's garden that rises to the level of "garden literature", a delight that owes its strength to wonderful writing. Katherine Swift was clearly aiming at "garden literature" in "The Morville Hours". I think she tried too hard. She chose to tell her tale about becoming the chief gardener at Morville, a British National Trust property in Shropshire, by wrapping it within her account of the medieval Book of Hours, which made it heavy sledding for me.

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 HeartThe Elegance of the HedgehogThe Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden][[ASIN:0312427808 The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel

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.

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.

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.

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.

Yes, and you want to be a gardener as well as a lover of English local history over time to get the most out of this. I am so it worked well for me. I shall visit the Morville Garden!

First book I finished and immediately started it again. Have given it to special people as present.

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