

# Kitsap Life

Sunday, July 6, 2014

BOOKS

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WELL BEING

GETAWAYS



BARBARA  
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BOOKMONGER

## Text gives essentials for 'green' gardening

**"Gardening for Sustainability" by John J. Albers (Vista Gardens Press) 118 pp. \$26.95**

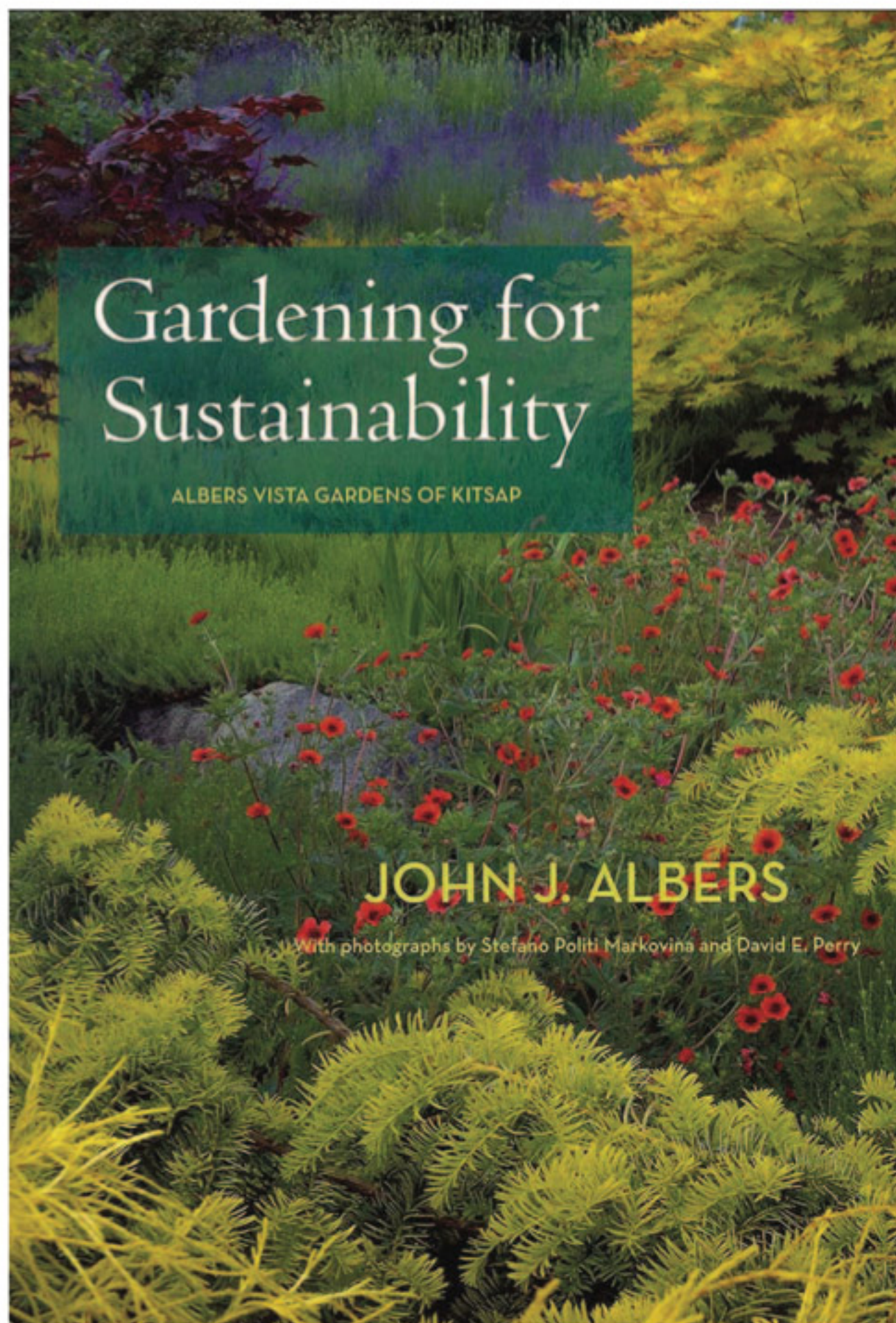
I'm a nut for gardens — from tending my own, to coordinating an annual community garden tour, to visiting the marvelous botanical gardens throughout the region. There are some intriguing new ones opening to the public — if you haven't yet had a chance to visit the enchanting Soos Creek Botanical Garden on the outskirts of Auburn, do yourself a favor! And I'm definitely keeping my eye on developments at the Bonhoeffer Botanical Gardens, just off Interstate 5 in Stanwood.

No, I haven't converted this column into a garden review space, but I got to thinking these green and leafy thoughts thanks to a book that came in recently. "Gardening for Sustainability" is a reflection by Dr. John J. Albers on the 4-acre garden site that he and his wife, Dr. Santica Marcovina, have developed in East Bremerton over the last 15 years.

This book shares the history and development of the garden, in terms of both its horticultural and artistic elements. The garden's southwest-facing slope allows views of the Olympics and Mount Rainier, as well as the Port Washington Narrows and Phinney Bay. Albers wanted to frame those vistas while honoring the native woodland remnants that remained on the property.

But other areas on the site had been overrun by invasives including Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, and English holly, and these needed to be eradicated and replaced with sustainable plantings. Likewise, lawn areas have been minimized with a preference for plantings that, instead of requiring high maintenance, performed significant work themselves in the form of erosion control, biofiltration, wildlife habitat or encouraging pollinators of various kinds.

Albers talks at length about the plants that were selected for the 14 different garden "rooms" on the property. Full-color photographs by Stefano Politi Markovina and David E. Perry complement these descriptions — and may well have readers lusting for a dwarf Cedrus



■ **Jill Pertler**

On the ropes after being tied up with yardwork all weekend. **3D**

libani or some Oregon Sunshine sunflowers of their own.

A chapter devoted to the garden's special collections of conifer, maple, and viburnum species demonstrates the remarkable versatility of these plants in the garden. The conifer collection alone includes 28 genera, 120 species and 240 cultivars — ranging from the Siberian cypress used as a ground cover, to a group of Japanese cedars that serve as both backdrop and windscreen, to a distinctive Dawn redwood that stands sentinel at the garden entrance.

The second half of the book is organized around Albers' thoughts on gardening principles and maintenance.

Both Albers and his wife are researchers in the University of Washington's Department of Medicine, and this scientific background certainly shows in Albers' well-laid-out case for the importance of environmental stewardship and practices that contribute to landscape sustainability. His advice on pollinators, soil health and composting, weed management, and pruning is cogent, smart and useful.

Now in his 70s, Albers hopes that his garden will be maintained and preserved in perpetuity. To that end, he has established the Albers Vista Gardens of Kitsap nonprofit foundation, and all proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit the foundation.

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