



# Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime

By Kenneth I. Helphand

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How is it that during a war, one can still find gardens? In the most brutal environments, on both the home front and the battlefield, they continue to flourish. Wartime gardens are dramatic examples of what Kenneth I. Helphand calls “defiant gardens” — gardens created in extreme social, political, economic, or cultural conditions. Illustrated with archival photos, this remarkable book examines gardens of war in the 20th century, including extraordinary examples built behind the trenches in World War I, in the Warsaw and other ghettos during World War II, and in Japanese-American internment camps, as well as gardens created by soldiers at their bases and encampments during wars in the Persian Gulf, Vietnam, and Korea. Winner of the Environmental Design Research Association award and other honors, *Defiant Gardens* proves that these man-made constructs are far more than decorative diversions or simple sanctuaries from the stresses of daily life.

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**\*Starred Review\*** Gardens that ignored the rules of nature and gardeners who challenged the laws of man are vitally united in Helphand's seminal and revelatory study of life during some of the most lethal conflicts of the twentieth century. From the torturous 475-mile trench line that formed the western front in World War I to the alien landscapes of the Japanese American internment camps in the U.S. during World War II, the sites of unfathomable human brutality also gave rise to acts of uplifting horticultural resistance. Whether they were subsistence vegetable beds improbably tilled beneath barbed wire fences in Nazi-created ghettos or symbolic topiaries artistically carved from brittle desert sagebrush, each audacious example bears solemn testimony to the assertive efforts of determined soldiers, POWs, Holocaust victims, and others to vanquish war's horrors through the spiritually ennobling act of gardening. Helphand's extensively researched history of gardens in wartime illuminates the grotesque juxtaposition of willful devastation and the astonishing tenacity required to create life in the face of death.

*Carol Haggas*

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### Review

"An incredible and deeply moving history of the ways in which soldiers and civilians, often in the most grievous and immiserated circumstances, have created little pockets of horticultural hope throughout the twentieth century... The photographs alone are extraordinary, but the chronicles of imaginative resistance are almost beyond belief. (New Statesman)

### About the Author

Kenneth I Helphand is a professor of landscape architecture at the University of Oregon. He is the author of several previous books, and the former editor of *Landscape Journal*. A fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, he is also an honorary member of the Israel Association of Landscape Architects.

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