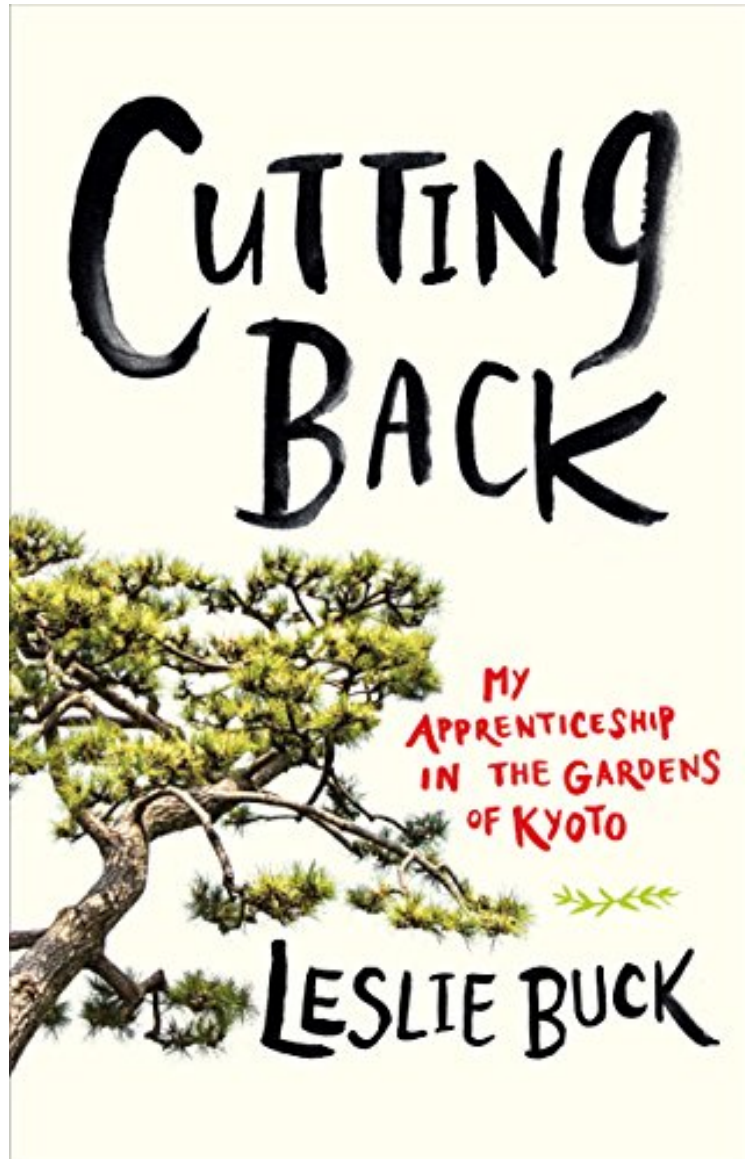


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## Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto

Leslie Buck

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**Leslie Buck : Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerThe book was very good.7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Naturalist DelightBy Jill BemisThere is a difference between learning the tricks of the trade and becoming a master artisan. The author devoted over twenty years learning how to prune trees. Cutting Back is specifically about time spent in Japan where its society reveres traditional gardeners like Olympic level athletes. She

shares her experience through vivid descriptions of the people, places, and a love affair with plants. The passion and care that goes into making each plant shine and thrive within its environment is similar to a spiritual journey. Delightful images, like the one of a pruner snoring in a tree fifteen feet above the ground, are woven throughout. It was interesting how little difference there was in Japanese and American culture when it came to a female working in a male dominated profession. One overriding premise came through loud and clear, gardening is very hard work when done correctly, but the results can be spectacular. The author is a certified aesthetic pruner and owns her own landscape pruning company in the San Francisco Bay area. She has also worked with the Merritt College Pruning Club and other public institutions including the UC Botanical Garden, Portland Japanese Garden, and Tassajara Zen Center. I received this book free through Net Galley. Although encouraged as a courtesy to provide feedback to the publisher, I was under no obligation to write a review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating Look at Japan's Garden Craftsmen By Barbara C. Even though I'm not a gardener, I found this book to be charming, entertaining and educational. It's an account of the author's apprenticeship in Kyoto, Japan pruning trees and working in the city's beautiful and historic gardens. Yes, there's lots of information about plants, but I loved the cultural insights about the people, the food, their homes, habits and more. Especially interesting is the astonishing work ethic and pace of her Japanese colleagues and the rigid employee hierarchy by which it operates. Read it if you want to broaden your horizons and gain a deeper appreciation of how great gardeners enhance the natural beauty all around us.

An unusual and entertaining memoir. New York Times Book Review At thirty-five, Leslie Buck made an impulsive decision to put her personal life on hold to pursue her passion. Leaving behind a full life of friends, love, and professional security, she became the first American woman to learn pruning from one of the most storied landscaping companies in Kyoto. *Cutting Back* recounts Bucks bold journey and the revelations she has along the way. During her apprenticeship in Japan, she learns that the best Kyoto gardens look so natural they appear untouched by human hands, even though her crew spends hours meticulously cleaning every pebble in the streams. She is taught how to bring nature's essence into a garden scene, how to design with native plants, and how to subtly direct a visitor through a landscape. But she learns the most important lessons from her fellow gardeners: how to balance strength with grace, seriousness with humor, and technique with heart.

Leslie Bucks compelling story bring together three themes a womans journey in life, adaptation to a new and strange culture, and discovery of a career that fulfills through its challenges. The connecting threads are Japanese gardens and gardening. Gardening is both Bucks profession and a metaphor for Bucks reflection on her life as a cycle of planting, nourishing, and pruning to achieve rich yet balanced growth. These familiar themes feel fresh in Bucks light yet sensitive prose that transmits her adventurous spirit yet reflective soul. Japanese gardens have long been recognized as special, almost magical, places that inspire and nourish. Leslie Bucks memoir gives them a human dimension. Kendal H. Brown, author of *Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America* Leslie Buck offers a graciously pruned story about learning garden care in Japan, where no-one-telling-you-how leads to intimately discovering for yourself what's what--a learning that is entrenched in your body. Leslie tells her story with charm and good-humor. Edward Espe Brown, author of *Tassajara Bread Book* Gardening in Japan is traditionally a male-dominated occupation. It is awkward and certainly not easy for Japanese women to enter, let alone a young woman from a foreign country. Leslie's strong conviction to learn Japanese pruning enabled her to dive into this uncharted world. Most impressive of all, however, was her bold move to select Uetoh Zoen in Kyoto, one of the oldest and most highly acclaimed landscape companies in Japan, as her host gardener. The secrets of Japanese gardening are subtly yet evidently revealed throughout the memoir, in describing such things as the way we handle pine tree branches, and the way we examine and correct the performance of a novice gardener. Her undeterred enthusiasm has opened a new door for her and for her followers. Sadafumi Uchiyama, head curator at the Portland Japanese Garden, and third generation Japanese gardener An unusual and entertaining memoir . . . she learns about durability and resilience. She learns to prune trees exquisitely. Most of all, she learns that an apprentice must . . . be the good student. Not a bad lesson for any gardener. New York Times Book Her writings, inevitably, are a reflection on the contrasts between the roles of the gardener in two very different cultures. The Washington Post Buck has as good an eye for cultural dissonance as she does for pines that need pruning. . . . This is an absorbing read about the formative interplay of humans, cultures, and gardens. Publishers Weekly starred review The descriptions of the gardens the author tends while in Japan will transport readers; it is an armchair tourists treat to wander the temple gardens as she describes them. Library Journal Read *Cutting Back* for insight into Japanese gardening culture, for descriptions of naturalistic Japanese gardens, or if you enjoy travel memoirs. NYBGs Plant Talk If you love losing yourself in natural settings, this memoir is definitely for you. . . . the life lessons Buck learns away from her pruning shears will appeal to any reader. Bustle Told with beautiful, carefully crafted language and a perceptively candid voice. . . . the books core is its intuitive appreciation for nature. Forward Magazine As much a story of bravery and the challenge of adapting to an unfamiliar culture as it is of horticulture. Anyone contemplating a brave career gamble will learn from it. San Francisco Chronicle Informative and

inspiring. . . . the book will appeal to both gardeners and non-gardeners. As much as Bucks story is about Japanese garden aesthetics, it is also about stepping out of your comfort zone and taking a chance. The American Gardener This should be on the reading lists of university Japanese studies courses because of its insights into the countrys apprenticeship systems. Post Magazine