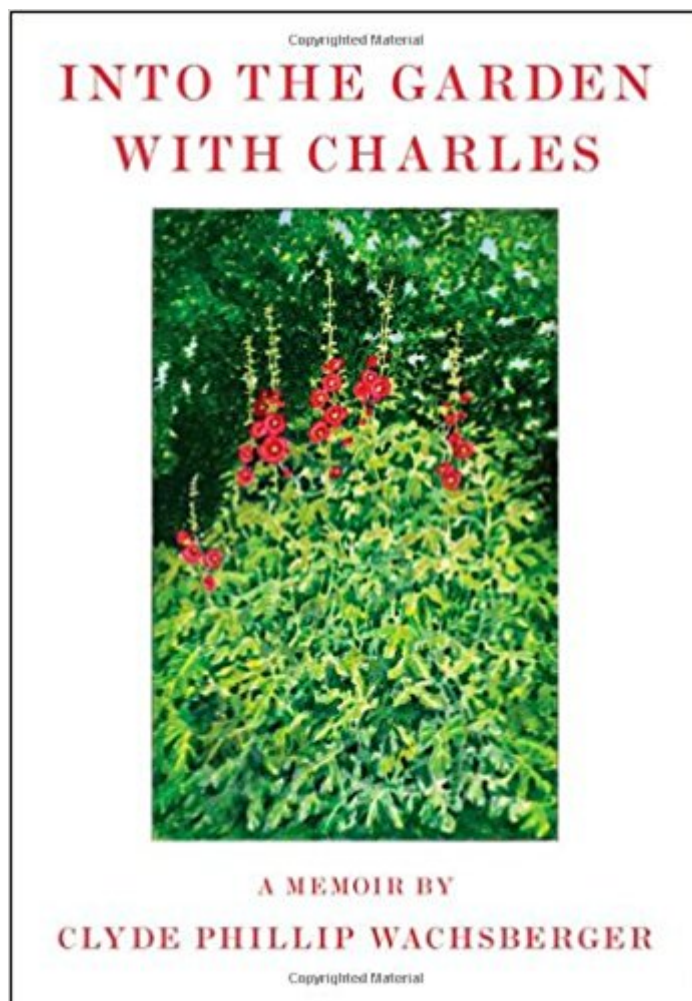


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# Into The Garden With Charles: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Set in the tiny village of Orient, Long Island, and in New York City, *Into the Garden with Charles* is a memoir about falling in love. As a boy in suburban New York in 1940s, Clyde Wachsberger daydreams about storybook gardens where magic happens under the huge leaves. Through the 1960s and 1970s, when most gay men disdained monogamy, the author—*an artist and set-designer in New York City*—searches unsuccessfully for a soul mate. In 1983, approaching middle-age and having given up on finding love, he moves to a three-hundred-year-old house on a third of an acre, where he channels his passion into creating a garden appropriate to his historical home. Then remarkable circumstances lead him to Charles—a connoisseur of art, a gardener, and the man who will become his life-partner. Together they create a garden of sensuous wild beauty. *Into the Garden with Charles* is infused with the author's artistic sensibility and is written in a voice that is unaffected, generous, and straightforward. Enriched with the author's paintings—giving it the look and feel of an antique children's book—*Into the Garden with Charles* is a unique and moving memoir about growing old and falling in love.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“There is something about the way they blend their lives, the way they are kind to each other, that is so comforting. It makes a reader long for the book, for the world of the book--the long winter evenings, the summer days with visitors and friends. Wachsberger has a wide-eyed, boyish gratitude--how could this life have possibly come to him? He does not seem to realize that he

created it. *—* Susan Salter Reynolds, Los Angeles Review of Books *—* “Destined to become a classic, *Into the Garden with Charles* by Clyde Phillip Wachsberger is a jewel of a memoir. The author’s charming watercolors accompany this tale of a lonely New Yorker with an unsuspected botanical bent who abandons the pursuit of love and pours his heart into a garden—one that becomes ‘as demanding and manipulative as a jealous lover, and as high maintenance.’ That adoring care prepares him for the entrance into his life of an elegant Southerner named Charles. The two men blossom in each other’s company, reviving that ancient (but forever fertile) metaphor of a garden of love. *—* Molly Peacock, *More* *—* “Illustrated by Skip’s enchanting watercolors, [*Into the Garden with Charles*] charts the seasons of his magnificent garden alongside his 16-year relationship with Charles, until both love affairs are cut short by Skip’s cancer. Even the book’s chapters are landscape-based, with each focusing on a different offering from the private half-acre garden . . . The result is a luminous account of a life painstakingly sown and reaped. *—* Kelly McMasters, *Newsday* *—* “Clyde Phillip Wachsberger’s delightful memoir about tending beds of flowers as compensation for a lonely middle age only to find unexpected romance along the way is a sweet reminder that, as he puts it, ‘anything can happen in a garden.’ In prose that balances candor with perfect courtesy, he charms us with the message that keeping a garden with a beloved companion, this most ephemeral of all the arts, can bring us the most enduring joys and pleasures. *—* Philip Gambone *—* “Clyde Phillip Wachsberger has written a sweet and poignant book about loneliness and love and the restorative power of a garden. *—* Page Dickey, author of *Embroidered Ground* *—* “*Into the Garden with Charles* is well on its way to becoming a cult classic. *—* Mac Griswold, author of *Pleasures of the Garden*

Clyde Phillip Wachsberger was an artist, gardener, and writer who lived in Orient on Long Island’s North Fork. His published books include *Daffodil*, *Rose*, and *Of Leaf and Flower: Stories and Poems for Gardeners*, which he coedited with his partner, Charles Dean, and for which his illustrations won a Garden Writers Association Gold Award for best book illustration. He died in November 2011.

From the opening pages when he wonders if it is all a dream - his beloved but antiquated home and garden, his always-cheerful dog Rover, and his charming, Southern-born partner Charles - Clyde "Skip" Wachsberger draws the reader into his magical world in which the impossible is always possible, if you only believe. "*Into the Garden with Charles*" is the intimate story of one man’s

wonderful life filled with a love for opera, art, plants and friends. That he yearned for a companion with whom to share all of it is a familiar narrative. And just when it seems like he'll never find the love of his life, living as he does in a remote Long Island village populated with couples and having just passed his half-century birthday, Skip meets Charles. "Every garden tells a story. Ours tells a love story," he writes. And you will fall in love with both Skip and Charles, as well as Rover, their loyal Havanese, and all of their plant-obsessed garden adventures. Gardeners will especially relate to the ends to which these two men go to develop an otherworldly backyard where every tree, vine or flower has its own back-story! For those who love to read lush (but not flowery) language, the narrative will delight. And like a child's storybook of days gone by this one has beautiful watercolor illustrations throughout, painted by the author. Allow yourself to be drawn into Skip's dream world. You will be touched by his wisdom, kind spirit and optimism -- and that is a gift to the reader!

Clyde was a quiet boy, fascinated by the vast variety of flowers and trees, and appreciating artwork that depicted their beauty. Coming of age during the Stonewall era, Clyde knew he was gay, but falling in love (or even having sex) always took a back seat to his horticultural interests, and friends and acquaintances accepted that he was a loner. When visiting a friend in Orient, on the North fork of Long Island, he fell in love with an old, historic house with overgrown shrubs and trees, and bought it on impulse. The house's garden became his mistress, and he was happy, but lonely, in his world. A friend convinced him to answer a personals ad, and he was stunned to find a kindred spirit in Charles, who had a similar interest in unusual and beautiful plants and trees, and they soon settled in to a life together. The book is very well written, generally a positive life lesson on following your dreams, though it also has its share of disappointments and adversity. This is ideal for someone who, like the author, has a keen interest in unusual plants and trees, but the horticultural detail given may tend to diminish the enjoyment for those who, like me, have trouble distinguishing plants from weeds in a garden. Overall, four stars out of five.- Bob Lind, Echo Magazine

I was looking for the perfect Valentine's gift. And there it was. My Green Thumbed Charles is going to get such a kick out of it.

Beautifully written, and published. A real gem containing damn good watercolors done by the author. What a talented man and the partner who inspired him.

A gentle account of achieving two dreams - a great garden and a lover to share it with! Beautifully

written. A great "relax in the garden" read.

Wachberger's previous writings were all about specific garden plants. This book about the ever expanding garden behind his home is background to a sentimental memoir of life and love in the autumn of his years. Life as just another form of horticulture, but love makes a garden bloom.

Lovely and charming memoir that will engage all avid gardeners.

I really enjoyed this memoir of a relationship and the gardening that the two men enjoyed together. I read this for a book club; it is really great if you're a garden lover.

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