



What does a vegetarian in the 1980s do when arriving in Norway near Trondheim, where the supply of vegetables in the shops are minimal? He does the thing that people have always done, when there are no shops. Start to explore the surrounding nature for wild edible plants and then – when lack of time to collect them - grow them in your own garden. For Stephen Barstow this wasn't enough, however. The interest grew, despite the harsh growing conditions. But perhaps that was the very thing that caused him to begin looking far and wide for good, especially perennial edible plants that survive and thrive in his climate. And taste good too! This he has continued to do for over three decades. He has test cultivated several thousand plants. From those he has selected a smaller group of plants and written the book *Around the World in 80 Plants*. One could be called a plant nerd for less!



Salad greens from Stephen's garden in April.



Allium cernuum is one of Stephen's favourite onions

80 plants might not sound like much, but the book is crammed with plant information, hundreds of pictures, and many recipes from different cultures. Above all, Stephen Barstow has his own voice. He has his own stories to tell, his own failures and successes. This is not a flora, a how to garden book,

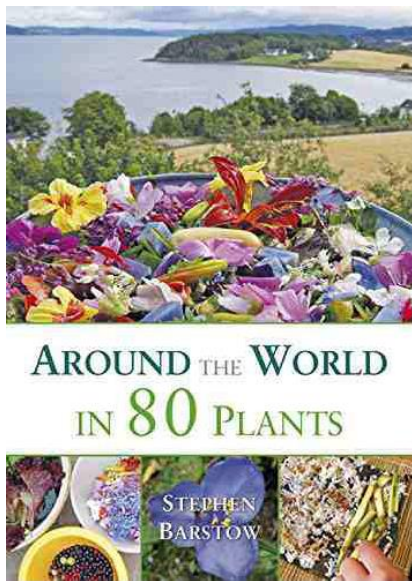
it's not a memoir nor is it a cookbook, but a very special mix of all this. The book reads like the story of an exciting modern journey of discovery. However, we are taken this time to a dimension of our world that we are almost unaware of....or choose to be unaware of. For it is almost too close to us to see.

But as we painfully have to recognize the different challenges that humanity is facing with climate threats, reduced diversity, health problems, loss of cultural heritage, etc., we have perhaps some of the solutions right in front of our feet. Stephen Barstow's book is a significant contribution that gives us inspiration both to begin learning more about nature we have around us, how we can bring more perennial crops into our gardens, learn and pass on the cultural heritage of the plant kingdom and even knowledge of how to breed plants in a natural way, as has always been done, and how we can increase our self-sufficiency. We do not know what different real challenges may come. But above all it can be a great deal of fun to broaden one's knowledge, get acquainted with new plants, offer them a place in our gardens and give family and acquaintances new experiences, both to the eye and at the dining table. The book is divided into different chapters that describe plants from Western and Central Europe, Southern Europe, the Mediterranean countries, the Caucasus to the Himalayas and Siberia, the Far East and Australia, America, Norway and Scandinavia. We recognize many of the described plants from all parts of the world as cultivated in our gardens.



You will surely recognize some of these good salad plants and edible flowers!

The recipes range from simple olive salad to a calzone filled with 56 different plants that it took five years to grow! Some of the ingredients are probably already in our gardens, and it will probably be a good calzone even with fewer plant species. The book is written in English. Many fine plant pictures and detailed descriptions leads you to spend many hours with this wonderful book.



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Stephen in front of its largest vegetable - Udo (Aralia cordata) (Photo: Elin Enger Mollestad)

Stephen Barstow's book also provides perspective on the work that Sesam (Swedish Seed Savers are doing). Several of the plants from the book are listed in Sesam's latest yearbook! So I recommend you read his book! I think I'll start my third read through! Then I'll also think about which of the plants that sound most interesting to be on my "wants" list!

The book also includes a long reference list, so there will probably be even more reading. But above all, I will try to take good care of the seeds, bulbs and plants that I have received from Sesam's lovely members and try one or two recipes from the book.

Katriina Anttila and Hildegard Nufer

(Pictures: Stephen Barstow)