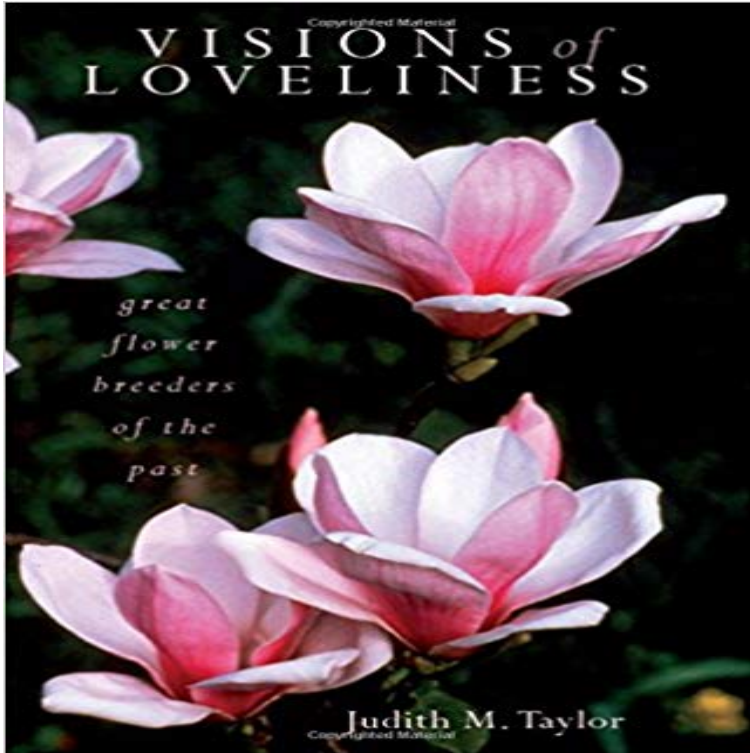


Visions of Loveliness: Great Flower Breeders of the Past



Gardeners of today take for granted the many varieties of geraniums, narcissi, marigolds, roses, and other beloved flowers for their gardens. Few give any thought at all to how this incredible abundance came to be or to the people who spent a good part of their lives creating it. These breeders once had prosperous businesses and were important figures in their communities but are only memories now. They also could be cranky and quirky. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, new and exotic species were arriving in Europe and the United States from all over the world, and these plants often captured the imaginations of the unlikeliest of men, from aristocratic collectors to gruff gardeners who hardly thought of themselves as artists. But whatever their backgrounds, they all shared a quality of mind that led them to ask *What if?* and to use their imagination and skills to answer that question themselves. The newest rose from China was small and light pink, but what if it were larger and came in more colors? Lilac was very nice in its way, but what if its blossoms were double and frilly? While there are many books about plant collectors and explorers, there are none about plant breeders. Drawing from libraries, archives, and the recollections of family members, horticultural historian Judith M. Taylor traces the lives of prominent cultivators in the context of the scientific discoveries and changing tastes of their times. *Visions of Loveliness* is international in scope, profiling plant breeders from many countries for example, China and the former East Germany whose work may be unknown to the Anglophone reader. In addition to chronicling the lives of breeders, the author also includes chapters on the history behind the plants by genus, from shrubs and flowering trees to herbaceous plants.

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