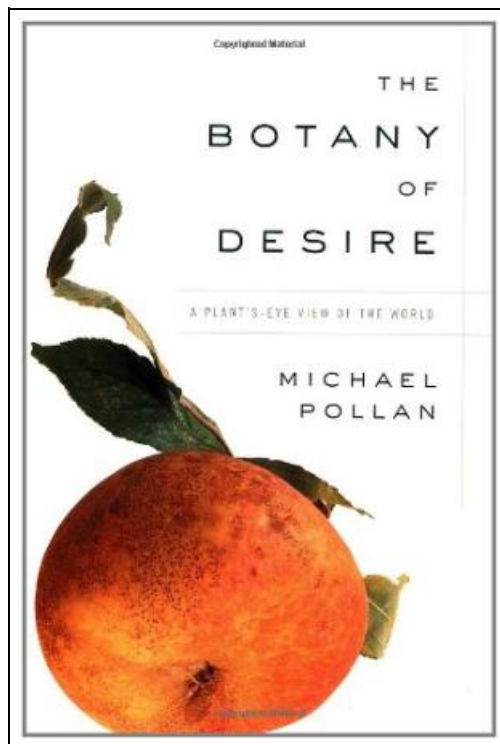


The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World



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Reviews

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THE BOTANY OF DESIRE: A PLANT'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD

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Random House, 2001. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Gift quality, Fine. Clean, unmarked pages. Good binding and cover. xxv, 271 p. ; 25 cm. Hardcover and dust jacket. Summary: An Idaho farmer cultivates Russet Burbank potatoes so that a customer at a McDonald's half a world away can enjoy a long, golden French fry. A gardener plants tulip bulbs in the fall and, come spring, has a riotous patch of color to admire. Two straightforward examples of how humans act on nature to get what we want. Or are they? What if those potatoes and tulips have evolved to gratify certain human desires so that humans will help them multiply? What if, in other words, these plants are using us just as we use them? Every schoolchild learns about the mutually beneficial dance of honeybees and flowers: The bee collects nectar and pollen to make honey and in the process spreads the flowers' genes far and wide. What Michael Pollan ingeniously demonstrates in *The Botany of Desire* is that people and domesticated plant species have formed a similarly reciprocal relationship, a relationship that is just as common and essential to the way nature works. In this utterly original narrative that blends history, memoir, and the best science writing, Pollan tells the story of four domesticated species—the apple, the tulip, marijuana, and the potato—from the point of view of the plants. All four species are deeply woven into the fabric of our everyday lives, and Pollan illustrates how each has evolved a survival strategy based on satisfying one of humankind's most basic desires. The apple gratifies our taste for sweetness; the tulip attracts us with its beauty; marijuana offers intoxication; and the genetically modified potato gives us a sense of control over nature. And just as we've benefited from these plants, the...

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