

Susan McClure

by Laura Hengstler

The gardening community lost an excellent writer and I lost a good friend when Sun-Times garden columnist Susan McClure passed away January 23 after a long battle with ovarian cancer.

Susan authored the majority of the Sun-Times Homelife's "Homegrown" stories since 1996. Her degrees in botany gave her a depth of understanding from which we were all fortunate to have benefited. She helped us decide what to plant, she helped us keep our gardens thriving, and she told us how to take the best advantage of our garden bounty.

Susan also was an exceptional photographer. Most of the photos that appeared in her articles were Susan's. She also took about 50% of the photos for the 20 or so books she wrote. Among Susan's books, I



think my favorite is *Culinary Gardens: From Design to Palate*. With its detailed instructions for 11 garden layouts, beautiful photography and yummy recipes, you will as likely find it on my coffee table as on my kitchen counter or my potting bench. It inspires me to plant—and to cook.

Those handsome young men you sometimes spotted in Susan's photographs are her two sons Eric, 10, and Scott, 13. For Susan, gardening was a family activity—quality time spent with her sons.

She was involved with the Cub Scouts and many other activities moms of young

sons experience, but she also took a karate class with one of her sons. Though he lost interest, Susan stuck with it, eventually earning a black belt. Consequently, she wrote for *Black Belt* magazine.

She also wrote for The New York Times, Organic Gardening, and Better Homes and Gardens, among others. Among the books Susan authored was one on dressage-style horseback riding. She had ridden and competed since she was a child.

In between the children and the books and the magazine articles, Susan found time to teach at the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Morton Arboretum, and Cleveland State University. She was the gardening editor for Sun Newspapers in Cleveland from 1982 until 1996, when she and her family moved to Valparaiso, IN. And she was a regular guest on the Discovery Channel, QVC, the Home Shopping Network, and many Cleveland television stations.

Susan fought hard to beat the disease that took her life. According to her husband, Ted, she chose the most aggressive therapy available. And just as Susan spent her career teaching us about gardening and horseback riding and karate, she had planned to share with us what she'd learned from her battle against cancer. Susan was about to sign a contract to write a book about her experience, Ted said.

I will miss Susan's gardening advice. I fear my garden will reflect this loss. I'll miss the recipes she'd share for garden bounty. I'll miss our quiet chats about family. I'll miss Susan's enthusiasm—for garden writing and for life. She left no challenge unmet.



Laura Hengstler is the homes editor for The Chicago Sun-Times. This article was reprinted with the permission of Laura and the Sun-Times. You may write to her at 401 N. Wabash, Chicago, IL 60611. You may e-mail her at homelife@suntimes.com.

Gardening Books by Susan McClure

Water: How to Use and Conserve our Most Precious Resource (2000)

The Free-Spirited Garden (1999)

Midwest Landscape Design (1999)

Midwest Gardener's Book of Lists (1998)

Seeds and Propagation (1997)

365 Down-to-Earth Gardening Hints and Tips (1997)

Easy-Care Perennial Gardens (1997)

Culinary Gardens: From Design to Palate (1997)

The New Kitchen Garden, American version (1996, 1998)

Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening: Fruits and Berries (1996)

The Herb Gardener: A Guide for All Seasons (1995)

Preserving Summer's Bounty (1995)

Cleveland Garden Handbook: Expert Local Advice (1995)

Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening: *Low Maintenance Landscaping* (1994)

Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening: *Companion Planting* (1993, authored with Sally Roth)

Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening: *Perennials* (1993, authored with Cole Burrell)

The Greater Cleveland Garden Guide

The Harvest Gardener