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# Book Review

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In 1899, Farrand wrote in an article about parks, "Their great artistic value is not as yet fully recognized, especially by those who have charge of our municipal finances." Echoing that sentiment, still urgent more than a hundred years later in these times of severe budget cuts, is Lynden B. Miller, author of **PARKS, PLANTS, AND PEOPLE: Beautifying the Urban Landscape** (Norton, \$49.95). "Beautifying your city brings environmental, social and economic benefits," she writes. "But to create successful public spaces you need energy, determination and above all a belief in the powerful connection between people and nature." Miller has directed the design and restoration of countless public gardens; she has seen firsthand how green spaces simply make people happy. I remember all

too well the experience of crossing Central Park in the late 1970s; it was so dicey that I resorted to roller-skating to get through faster. The park's transformation, briefly chronicled here, is remarkable, a valuable case history in the power of public-private partnerships.

Trained as an artist, and then a horticulturist, Miller was responsible for reviving the lost Conservatory Garden at 105th Street and Fifth Avenue: "I had inadvertently stumbled on a key to successful public space: a

planting design for four seasons." She is correct. When I recently dragged my reluctant sons into the park for an autumnal walk (it was so much easier to get them into gardens when they were strapped into buggies), I could tell, in spite of their grumbling, that they were enchanted

by the riot of Korean mums spilling from the deep beds. So were thousands of bees.

Miller was also responsible for the generous perennial garden at the New York Botanical Garden. Her recent work on that garden's "Ladies' Border" (as it's been called since the 1920s) experiments with plants that are pushing the limits of the region's hardiness zones. Miller's authoritative book should be required reading for any study of urban planning, but it's equally relevant to the home gardener. It's full of useful design and planting advice, clearly and unpretentiously presented.