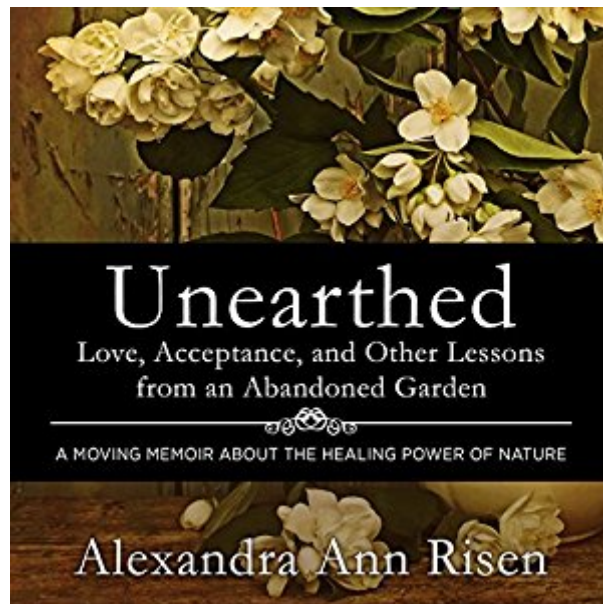


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# Unearthed: Love, Acceptance, And Other Lessons From An Abandoned Garden



## Synopsis

Alex's father dies just as she and her husband buy a nondescript house set atop an acre of wilderness that extends into a natural gorge in the middle of the city. Choked with weeds and crumbling antique structures, the abandoned garden turned wild jungle stirs cherished memories of Alex's childhood; when her homelife became unbearable, she would escape to the forest. In her new home, Alex can feel the power of the majestic trees that nurtured her in her youth. She begins to beat back the bushes to unveil the garden's mysteries. At the same time, her mother has a stroke and develops dementia, and Alex discovers an envelope of yellowed documents while sorting through her father's junk pile. The papers hold clues to her Ukrainian-born parents' mysterious past. She reluctantly musters the courage to uncover their secrets while discovering the plants hidden in the garden - from primroses and syrup-producing sugar maples to her mother's favorite, lily of the valley. As every passionate gardener knows, to spend time with the soil is the opposite of escapism; it is to embrace our own circle of life and hold it close.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author Alex was the much younger daughter of Ukrainian emigrants. Her relationship with her parents was always less than she wanted. Her older sister Sonia, seemed to have a bit more understanding, but given their age difference they never really grew up together. Essential her parents were strangers to her and apparently each other. When they communicated with one another, it was mostly in an argument. For the most part Alex's Dad never spoke to her, but instead communicated through her mother or things he made for her. Her Mom was obsessed with

her garden, her father with tinkering in the garage. Raising a child was not really on the agenda. Alex thought it was because they had wanted a boy. The book starts with Alex visiting her father in the hospital, when he was in a coma. She spoke to him still not fathoming what he was all about. He passes shortly thereafter. Soon after her Mother seemed to be deteriorating. As Alex lived 2 hours away her sister Sonia has the burden of dealing with the day to day issues. Alex's mother has to move from her family home and garden. Alex can understand the pain, this may cause. Back at home, Alex happens upon a gem of a property with a garden, her mother would envy. The family (Alex, her husband Cam and son Max) buys this unique home & land. It seems Alex buys the property with the aim to make her mother proud, however her mother's poor health takes precedence. The book is an interweaving of the garden restoration, some natural item recipes, Alex's mother's decline, and reminiscing on the past. It is presented in a way so it is not confusing. That is a pet peeve of mine in books that do this, sometimes you get confused as to what is going on but this author does this well.

Just as the author and her husband buy an acre property just outside downtown Toronto, her father dies. This doesn't make much of a difference in Risen's life; in her entire life he has hardly ever spoken to her. He didn't ignore her; he would work on projects with her- silently. That was pretty much their only interaction. It wasn't that he couldn't speak; her parents had long, loud arguments all the time. Her mother, always working in the garden or putting food by, is now alone and getting fragile, and has always preferred Risen's older sister; she also almost never spoke to her younger daughter. The restoration of their new house and property, a chunk of a former large estate, is narrated concurrently with Risen's quest to understand her parents. The reason that the author was so taken by this rundown and overgrown piece of property is that it's on a ravine and is like a piece of forest in the urban setting. As a child, she would escape into the forested ravine behind her house, spending hours there away from her parents, who apparently didn't care that she was never home. It's also a challenge, I suspect; if she can make this garden beautiful and orderly, maybe her gardener mother will finally think her worthy of love and attention. Sadly, over the ten years of so it takes to renovate the acre, her mother has a stroke and then develops dementia. Despite Risen's insistence that she get on a plane and visit, she will never see this piece of property. But when the author and her sister clean out her mother's place as she is moved to a home, they find a cache of old papers- papers that may hold some answers to her questions about her immigrant parent's origins. I really felt for the author; like her, my now dead parents are a deep mystery.

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