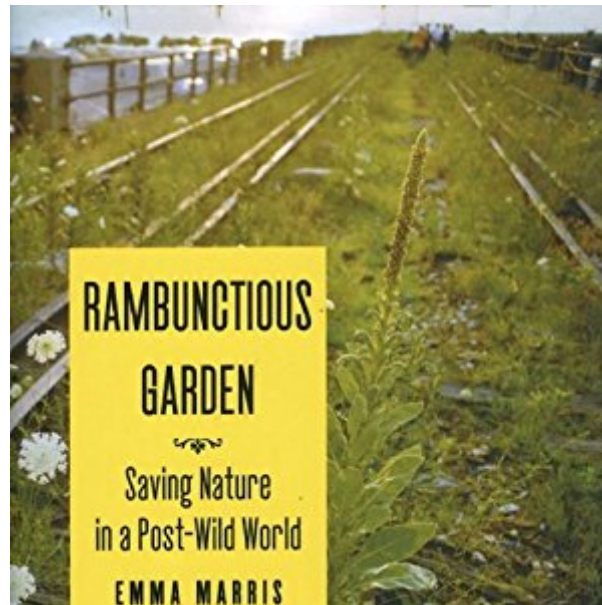


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# Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature In A Post-Wild World



## Synopsis

A paradigm shift is roiling the environmental world. For decades people have unquestioningly accepted the idea that our goal is to preserve nature in its pristine, pre-human state. But many scientists have come to see this as an outdated dream that thwarts bold new plans to save the environment and prevents us from having a fuller relationship with nature. Humans have changed the landscapes they inhabit since prehistory, and climate change means even the remotest places now bear the fingerprints of humanity. Emma Marris argues convincingly that it is time to look forward and create the "rambunctious garden," a hybrid of wild nature and human management. In this optimistic book, listeners meet leading scientists and environmentalists and visit imaginary Edens, designer ecosystems, and Pleistocene parks. Marris describes innovative conservation approaches, including re-wilding, assisted migration, and the embrace of so-called novel ecosystems. Rambunctious Garden is short on gloom and long on interesting theories and fascinating narratives, all of which bring home the idea that we must give up our romantic notions of pristine wilderness and replace them with the concept of a global, half-wild rambunctious garden planet, tended by us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Emma Marris, the author of Rambunctious Garden (RG), has written a book that one should read, if only to become familiar with new proposed strategies and tools that seeks to expand conservation beyond traditional approaches. She does not think the earth should be managed solely (or even

mostly) to benefit people, does she argue that more traditional preservationist strategies should be abandoned. Nevertheless, I worry that an emphasis on these alternative approaches will distract conservation efforts from proven conservation strategies like parks and wilderness. But you owe it to yourself to read her book and determine whether her arguments are convincing. Here's my take on her book. She loves the nature hiding in back street alleys and along the highway median strip. Marris believes it's time to abandon (or de-emphasize) what she sees as outdated and naïve conservation strategies such as creation of national parks and wilderness reserves. She feels the biggest obstacles to a bold new world of "designer" and "novel" ecosystems is the "wilderness cult" that naively wants to preserve "natural" landscapes--which she says do not exist anymore. Marris espouses the anthropocentric perspective that the Earth is more or less a resource cookie jar for humans--to be used carefully to be sure--but she doesn't really question whether ethically or ecologically this is ultimately a good idea. Marris is a cheerleader for the dangerous concept that humans are both intelligent enough and wise enough to "manage" the Earth--the 'smart resource management' school of thought. She is a prime example of the kind person biologist David Ehrenfeld had in mind when he wrote his book *The Arrogance of Humanism*. Embrace weeds, we are told.

This book should be read by anyone who cares about the future of the planet. Marris does a great job of summarizing in one compact book the many pros and cons, successes and failures, of efforts to prevent the loss of the vast and amazing array of life on earth. Her final chapter embraced all scales of efforts from back yard to national parks, to my surprise, because the majority of the book implied that many of those efforts are futile. It is this tendency for Marris to overstep her ability to fairly critique the thousands of conservation projects that requires readers to read critically. Readers should note a number of ridiculous suggestions. They should read with an awareness that biased language is used to try to make some arguments stronger than they are. Readers need to beware the author's tendency to rely on outlier, or even contrarian, voices that question well-accepted positions in order to provoke a discussion, while those voices mostly offer little of value as alternatives. There are many sections in this book with useful information that could help us keep life on earth for the future. I am glad she uses 1491 and other great books of the past two decades to reinforce our awareness that pre-European Americas had human influence. to set goals based on what we hope for the future, rather than making a questionable baseline be the goal. I am grateful to Marris for her recommendations that every place that is conserved should have clear goals with measurable criteria - so we can decide if they are working, or not. But Marris shows poor judgment in

throwing out the preservation of species as one of those measures. The use of DNA to dictate changes to taxonomy is in its infancy, with tens of thousands of genes yet to be analyzed in even commonly known plants.

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