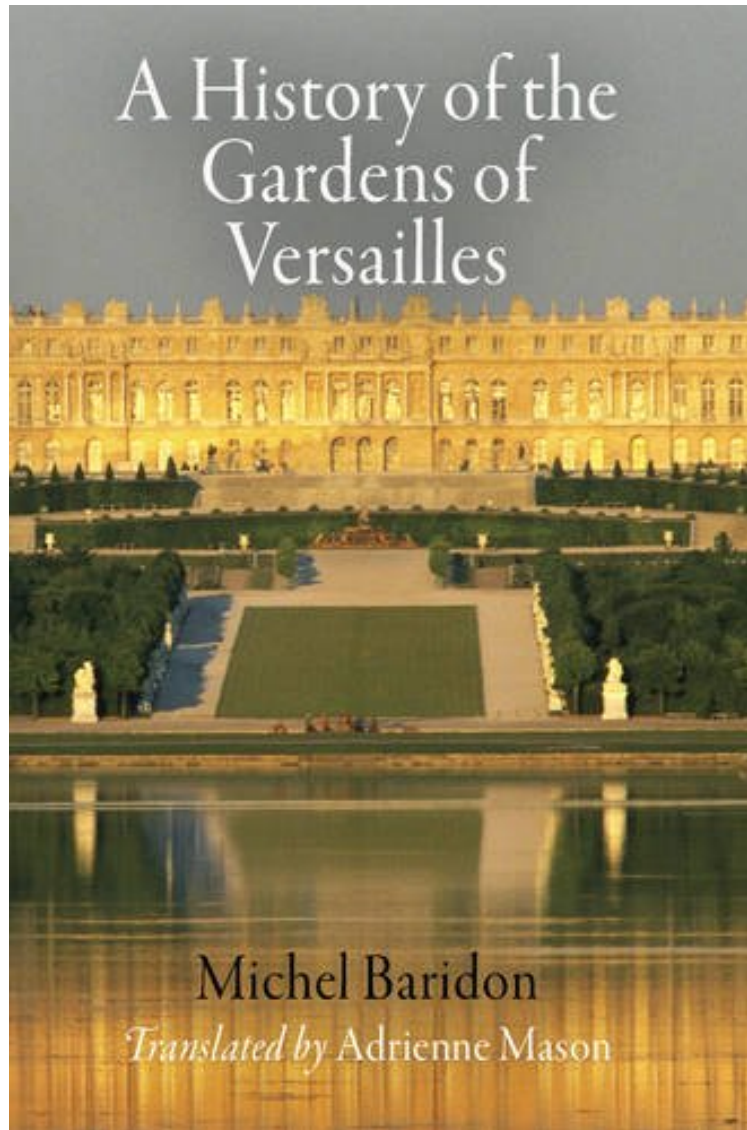


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## A History of the Gardens of Versailles (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)

*Michel Baridon*

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**Michel Baridon : A History of the Gardens of Versailles (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of the Gardens of Versailles (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture):

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Lost opportunity By L. Dyer So much for buying sight unseen without any reviews to guide me. This is a textbook. The only color photo of the gardens in the cover. With such a

grand subject, the lack of photos is a disservice to the reader and the grounds. The only visuals are a few small quarter and half page drawings that depict various stages of the gardens during their development. The history of the gardens is hard to follow for anyone who has not visited the site. Without visual reference, it is impossible to appreciate what was done in the field. The only clear part was the political history. If you are looking for a better understanding of WHY the gardens were built, this will suffice. But if you want to come away with an understanding of HOW they were done and see the end result you will have to look elsewhere.

The gardens of Versailles are perhaps the most famous in the world. Seemingly open to the horizon, their scale is monumental. Their grand east-west axis celebrates the Sun King, even as they offer an expression of the scientific spirit of the age in their geometrical layout and exploitation of the optical properties of reflecting water. The original park design, realized by Andr Le Ntre, a few advisers, and Louis XIV himself author of *The Way to Present the Gardens of Versailles* remains largely intact. Yet Louis XV made his own original contribution to the gardens at the Trianon, where later still Richard Mique and Hubert Robert designed the English garden and the delightful village beloved by Marie Antoinette. Michel Baridon traces the history of the gardens from their inception through three centuries of their history. He stresses the cultural importance of the landscape, provides a chronology to show the stages of its growth, and discusses the contemporary challenges posed by its conservation and historical interpretation. Beautifully illustrated with archival images and commissioned photographs, *A History of the Gardens of Versailles* provides visitors and enthusiasts with a guide to these legendary grounds.

"Known the world over, the gardens of Versailles are often visited hurriedly by crowds of tourists. . . . In contrast, this book examines the political and cultural intrigues during the era of the gardens' creation. To achieve his masterpiece, Louis XIV mobilized the seventeenth century's artistic and scientific elite. This work enables us to discover this universe." *Jardins*, in a review of the French edition "A wonderful, deep, scholarly treatment of the development of the gardens of Versailles during the reigns of Louis XIV, XV, and XVI, based on original sources including government records and works of philosophers, artists, garden designers, and others." *Choice* "This work treats its subject from an original angle, recalling that the gardens were conceived according to the will of Louis XIV and reflect the politics set in motion by Colbert, which profoundly altered the structure of French society." *L'Express* About the Author Michel Baridon (1926-2009) was Professor of English at the University of Burgundy. Adrienne Mason is Director of Inter-Faculty Programs in Humanities at the University of West England, Bristol.