

## Book Review

### *Linnaea's Almanac*

Authored by Christina Björk (text) and Christina Anderson (drawings).  
1989. Rabén & Sjögren Books. Stockholm, Sweden. 59 pp.

**Jorge A. Santiago-Blay<sup>1</sup>**

To those who make my teaching of horticulture such a memorable experience.

Earlier this year, my wife gave me a relatively old and delightful children's horticulture book, *Linnaea's Almanac* (Figure 1), I put it aside and then, something I had been eagerly hoping for, namely being asked to teach an introductory horticulture course, finally happened in the fall of 2023. I was rejoiced because the greenhouse at that institution was about to be repaired and the students and I could make the greenhouse flower. Eventually, my wife and I began reading each chapter, or months, which is the way the book is organized.



Figure 1. *Linnaea borealis* Linnaeus, 1753 (Caprifoliaceae) after which the main character of *Linnaea's Almanac* is named. The image shown herein is that of *Linnaea borealis americana* (twinflowers) (8 July 2015) (Firehole Canyon, Yellowstone, Wyoming, USA). Author: James St. John. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jsigeology/20703260091/>

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The whole persona of the main character, a curious and wholesome girl named Linnea, still reminds me of a person for whom I wish all the best every day of my life. The narrative is filled with insightful horticultural and natural history commentaries, many of which refer to organisms that we have in our backyard. Some of those remarks gave us ideas for teaching, such as two accepted names for several plant families or using plants for to put together beautiful art, and research activities, like testing whether bids like the seeds or seedpods of a species I have been studying for years. In the context of providing food for birds during the winter, we remembered with a smile the one loaf of bread that was so hard that we offered it to local birds along with all the morsels and habitats that we provide for our feathered friends year-round. Comments about mice brought a nice memory of my mom insisting that we close the door because leaving it open would facilitate the entrance or an “arriero”, the common name mom she used for *Mus musculus*. We learned about games we had never heard about, such as gutterball, or topics to lovingly engage in conversations, or ideas for plants to add into our already crowded garden. *Linnea’s Almanac* also gives us simple cooking recipes, such as fixing entrées with snow peas that very much look like eating edamame or the fruits of other legumes.

Of all, what I enjoyed the most was how the illustrations of Linnea fit so well with the accompanying stories and, in turn, match with the month she is living. And, as the time to come to the end of the year, we felt the sadness of letting Linnea go while admiring that she keep learning and maturing while working on her herbarium, bulleting board, etc.

A business card with a light beige, textured background. The text is in a serif font. At the top left, it says "Charles Witman" in bold, with "Owner" underneath. In the center, "Witman Landscaping" is written in a large font, with a stylized leaf icon to the right of the word "Landscaping". Below that, "& NURSERY" is written in a smaller, all-caps font. At the bottom left, the address "2495 Pine Grove Road" and "York, PA 17403" is listed. At the bottom right, the phone number "717.741.4236" is displayed.

**Charles Witman**  
Owner

**Witman Landscaping**   
& NURSERY

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