



# Notes from an Italian Garden

*Joan Marble*

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## Notes from an Italian Garden Joan Marble

Thirty years ago journalist Joan Marble and her sculptor husband, Robert Cook, bought an unpromising piece of land near the little hamlet of Canale, north of Rome where the ancient Etruscans once lived. Here they built a house and, more important, set out to start a wonderful garden.

All was not easy, however. They faced blank incomprehension from the local inhabitants. "Why do you want to have a garden here?" they were asked. "There's no water, the ground is like cement, it's too cold in winter and too hot in summer, it never rains. . . ." But Joan and Robert's enthusiasm for the land, their ignorance of the obstacles that faced them, their downright obstinacy and the unexpected friends who helped them -- all served to conquer the intransigent terrain.

"I fell in love with Etruria one chilly evening in the middle of winter," says Joan. "They were having a New Year's Eve festival in a little town near Campagnano, and a group of local boys dressed in Renaissance costumes were marching in a torchlight parade down the main street. As I stood there in the cold watching the flames lurching to the sky, I realized that I felt very much at home in this ancient place. If ever we should decide to move to the country, this was the kind of place I would choose....."

Inspirational, aspirational, enchanting -- this is an account of a passion for a place and an obsession with a garden that will charm all who love Italy, gardening, and life.

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