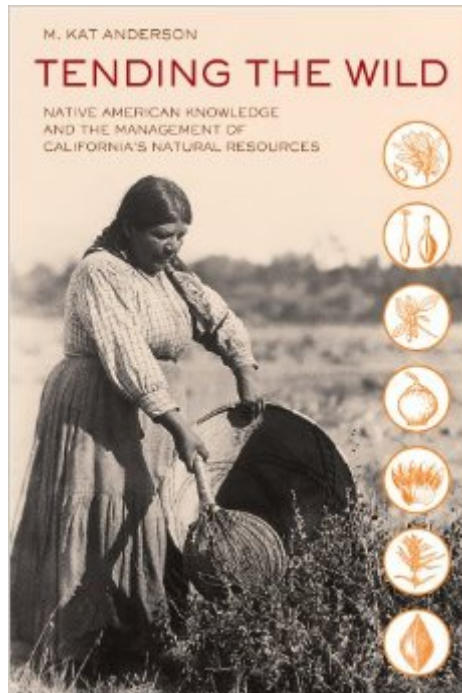


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# Tending The Wild: Native American Knowledge And The Management Of California's Natural Resources



## Synopsis

John Muir was an early proponent of a view we still hold today—that much of California was pristine, untouched wilderness before the arrival of Europeans. But as this groundbreaking book demonstrates, what Muir was really seeing when he admired the grand vistas of Yosemite and the gold and purple flowers carpeting the Central Valley were the fertile gardens of the Sierra Miwok and Valley Yokuts Indians, modified and made productive by centuries of harvesting, tilling, sowing, pruning, and burning. Marvelously detailed and beautifully written, *Tending the Wild* is an unparalleled examination of Native American knowledge and uses of California's natural resources that reshapes our understanding of native cultures and shows how we might begin to use their knowledge in our own conservation efforts. M. Kat Anderson presents a wealth of information on native land management practices gleaned in part from interviews and correspondence with Native Americans who recall what their grandparents told them about how and when areas were burned, which plants were eaten and which were used for basketry, and how plants were tended. The complex picture that emerges from this and other historical source material dispels the hunter-gatherer stereotype long perpetuated in anthropological and historical literature. We come to see California's indigenous people as active agents of environmental change and stewardship. *Tending the Wild* persuasively argues that this traditional ecological knowledge is essential if we are to successfully meet the challenge of living sustainably. <sup>1</sup>

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This excellent book written about the management of California land by the native people in the past, is also a textbook of what we will need to do in the future to survive. M. Kit Anderson has written a revolutionary book. The wealth of information on how Native peoples managed the California landscape in a sustainable way finally does justice to these people and their way of life - a people who were so cruelly treated by the Spanish and American invaders. The author explores the ecological management skills of California native peoples without romanticizing them or ignoring mistakes that they made. The modern environmental movement created the myth of the unspoiled wilderness untouched by human hands. *Tending the Wild* debunks that myth and levels some well earned criticism towards those environmentalists who failed to appreciate how the California native peoples were successfully and actively managing the California landscape, as were other indigenous people around the world. But the wealth of detail the book provides on how the Native Americans successfully managed the California landscape is also a model of sustainable living that has much to teach all of us. We learn an alternative to the destructive environmental, agricultural and development practices of our time. Practices that are destroying our ability to not only preserve the beauty of the landscape but to use the landscape wisely to provide for our needs in a sustainable way. Anybody who is interested in sustainable living should also explore books on Permaculture by authors like Bill Mollison, David Holmgren and Toby Hemenway. Permaculture is a modern attempt at designing for sustainable living.

"Nature really misses us," laments M. Kat Anderson. "We no longer have a relationship with plants and animals, and that's the reason why they're going away." Anderson is the author of *Tending the Wild*, in which she describes the relationships that California Indians have with the plants and animals, the rocks and streams, the sacred land which is their ancient home. It's an essential book for pilgrims who strive to envision the long and rugged path back home to wildness, freedom, and sustainability. In medieval Europe, hungry dirty peasant farmers succeeded in painstakingly perfecting a miserable, laborious, backbreaking form of agriculture that depleted the soil, and produced minimal yields with erratic inconsistency. They were malnourished, unhealthy, and most of them died young -- whilst the lords and ladies, who claimed to own the land, wallowed in a rich sludge of glitter and gluttony. When European explorers arrived in California, they discovered half-naked heathen barbarians who were exceedingly healthy, and enjoyed an abundance of nourishing wild foods that they acquired without sweat or toil. Clearly, these savages were people who suffered from a lack of civilization's elevated refinements: agriculture, smallpox, uncomfortable ugly clothing, brutal enslavement, and religious enlightenment from priests who preached the virtues

of love, but practiced exploitive racist cruelty.

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