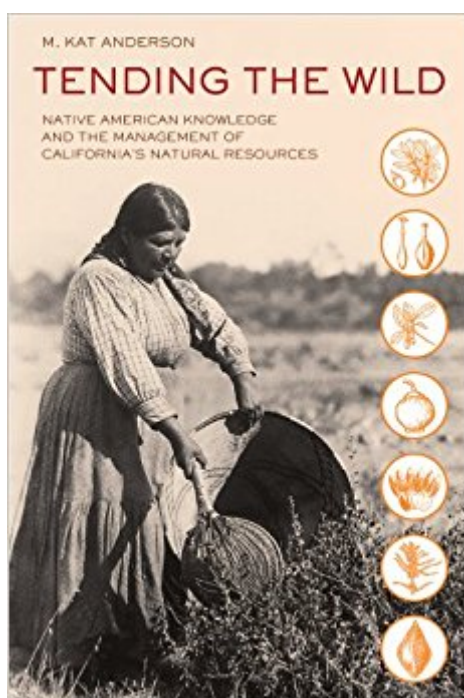


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# Tending The Wild: Native American Knowledge And The Management Of California's Natural Resources



## 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>^</sup>

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This fascinating book is rich with information and beautifully written for a broad audience of both laypeople and professionals." - Sue Rosenthal, Bay Nature "Tending the Wild is an enormously rich and highly readable text on the remarkably diverse land management techniques practiced by California Indians over millennia. This book serves as an invaluable resource as we strive to conserve California's enormous cultural and biotic heritage in the new century. A triumph!" - Michael H. Horn, California State University Fullerton "Tending the Wild supports the little known fact that Indian groups in California historically practiced a kind of "environmental bonsai" through their centuries long management activities. Kat Anderson's work is timely and will make an important contribution toward a better understanding of the historic ecologies of North America." - Greg Cajete, University of New Mexico" --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"This is a highly significant one might argue revolutionary book. It, and the author's previous research, has the potential to completely change the way western land managers relate to the land and the resources they are trying to regulate. Even more, it has the power to influence the way that all of us approach Nature and will reinforce the importance of Native Americans and the sophistication of their knowledge." Nancy J. Turner, University of Victoria "Tending the Wild is an enormously rich and highly readable text on the remarkably diverse land management techniques practiced by California Indians over millennia. This book serves as an invaluable resource as we strive to conserve California's enormous cultural and biotic heritage in the new century. A triumph!" Michael H. Horn, California State University Fullerton "Tending the Wild supports the little-known fact that Indian groups in California historically practiced a kind of "environmental bonsai" through their centuries long management activities. Kat Anderson's work is timely and will make an important contribution toward a better understanding of the historic ecologies of North America." Greg Cajete, University of New Mexico

This book is quite thorough and an important WEALTH of information concerning the fact that CA was very carefully tended by the unimposing interactions of native peoples that were in the 100s of thousands before white settlers' arrival. The "garden of Eden" that many described CA to be was not "wilderness" as defined by most as untouched by man. This book exemplifies how human beings are an integral and vital part of nature and our responsibility to its sustainability is crucial. I am not thrilled by the need for the author to legitimate everything through academic--not necessarily empirical--findings, for it leads the reading to be a bit tedious at times. Otherwise a MUST READ for

anyone who takes the slightest bit of pride in what is left of this beautiful place we now call California.

Changed my entire way of thinking about wilderness areas. Very good as a resource and just to sit and read. Impressive research went into this. Highly recommend it.

Blown away by the 360+ pages of "Tending the Wild" by Anderson. It is an amazingly detailed and researched book. The book squashes firmly the idea of innocent, unsophisticated savages roaming carefree in a garden prepared by nature in a balance that included not affecting it in any significant way. Instead the book shows how better science, including anthropology, paints a picture of Native Americans in California carefully and industriously tending and improving their patch of "nature" to keep it productive for the human harvest of plants, animals, and fungi. What we see now as nature is the untended, weed-filled, stunted, and overgrown remnants of what were essentially Native American gardens. I also like very much the details, from tending to production of useful articles to cooking and eating. I am learning many new things! Right now I am particularly struck by the various things used to season food for salt, sweet, sour, etc. Definitely will re-read and add some notes about things that did not make the index. Over 100 pages of footnotes referencing documentation! A huge amount of detailed how-they-did-it and why-they-did-it information readily adapted to current "primitive" practices. Highly recommended.

As the great, great, great Granddaughter and a 5th generation California farmer, I found this book to be a courageous and inspirational account of what our ancestors encountered on their arrival into early California. Intuitively I am sure the findings are accurate, but I appreciate the level of academic rigor the author has pursued as well. In the last 5 generations, our family has suffered the negative consequences of human dominated farming to the point of genetic degeneration in our progeny as well as the eventual loss of our original family farm. We now have the opportunity to take these lessons and communicate the outcome in ways that help people adjust to working with nature - not against it. This book is powerfully helpful in this regard. For me, it is an essential study. Thank you, Kat, for doing the enormous amount of work required to write it!

In the last three years, I have watched 500,000 acres of San Diego county burn. I came to M. Kat Anderson's book after we nearly lost our home, which is neatly tucked between two pieces of reservation land; I got infinitely more understanding than I thought possible. She has given us a

timely, well researched work, that gives homage to the people who came long before us. This book will sit on my shelf, next to "1491" (another must read, Americas before Columbus). The land nourishes all of us, regardless of race, color or creed. We need to learn from the past practices, to better care for the land. Many environmentalists use "pristine" when describing wilderness, and it is a misnomer. Without fire, there are no sprouting redwoods. Controlled burns are necessary. But try and tell your local political leaders that. Buy this book, read it and understand.

I love this book for the history and culture.

Interesting and full of information. I see this as a good, in depth account of how an adapted, hunter, gatherer, and integrated form of society can nurture and survive without destroying the environment. Insightful look at how our Native Americans used the natural environment, selected and nurtured native flora, and shaped the diversity of the continent before the European invasions.

We refer to "wilderness," but Kat Anderson makes it clear the wild has not been "wilderness" for quite some time. When coupled with Kat's "Before the Wilderness" you gain a better understanding of what sustainable is.

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