



★ **Unrooted: Botany, Motherhood, and the Fight to Save an Old Science**

Erin Zimmerman

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Erin Zimmerman's resonant memoir *Unrooted* is candid in chronicling her scientific career centered around the splendors of botany.

Zimmerman grew up in rural Canada and opted to study physics in college. But the purchase of an orchid led to an obsession, followed by a fascination for bonsai. Zimmerman soon realized that her true calling was not physics, but in the realm of plant science.

The book details Zimmerman's undergraduate and doctoral studies in plant morphology. Research led her to fieldwork in Guyana and the revered herbarium at London's Kew Gardens. At the Chicago Botanic Garden, Zimmerman took part in "Botany Bootcamp" as a twentysomething plant scientist with "scarlet-dyed hair," poring over a microscope for hours. But beyond the purposeful thrill of research and defense of her dissertation, Zimmerman discovered an increasing lack of funding for botany and limited academic opportunities; this paucity restricted studies on climate change, too, limiting information on how the loss of plant life devastates ecosystems.

The book reveals Zimmerman's ambiguous emotions regarding motherhood, from her sense of awe following the birth of her first daughter to the inhospitable environment at her postdoctoral research position. When she resigned from the job to spend more time with her child, Zimmerman's supervisor suggested that he'd hesitate to hire another pregnant woman. Zimmerman further recounts the earlier struggles of other women in science, including British botanist and suffragist Lydia Becker. And she finds inspiration in the later life of Charles Darwin: while Darwin discontinued his expedition-based research to help raise his children, he found continuing scientific inspiration in his countryside "home and gardens."

From verdant jungles to hushed herbariums and the burgeoning field of "citizen scientists," *Unrooted* explores botanical wonders, conflicting realities, and boundaries that are meant to be challenged.

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