garden ornamental. One wonders to whom the book is addressed. Vegetarians and food lovers will be disappointed that so little thought is given to questions of taste and nutrition. Gardeners, accustomed to feasting on the rich, dark purple and the mottled pink and white of their beautifully rounded eggplants, may feel puzzled or even irked by the subtitle, The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens. Unexpected? I don’t think so. Even if Alexander Pope and Katherine Lane Weems were foolish enough to banish the vegetables to the periphery, Susan Pennington joins a host of contemporary gardeners, writers, artists, and foodies who know just how delicious and beautiful the feast can be.

—Ilona Bell, Williams College

The Human Evolution Cookbook
Text by Harold L. Dibble
Recipes by Dan Williamson; Illustrations by Brad M. Evans
103 pp. Illustrations. $19.95 (paper)

What is a good way to teach people about human evolution? The Human Evolution Cookbook teaches its readers about the evolution of humans in an amusing way. It is filled with recipes such as Flint Fritters and Glacial Gravlax. These recipes, however ancient the names may sound, are actually made from modern ingredients that were not available in the Stone Age. The book offers all kinds of humorous information about humans, from Australopithicus to Homo Sapiens, followed by three study questions in each section, which are partly amusing, partly serious. For example, one question asks: “What would you rather do and why: face down an angry hippo or chase away a pride of lions from their dinner? And what do you call a bunch of hippos anyway—a hoard, herd, gaggle, school, or flock?” (p. 29).

This book uses a great strategy for teaching people about social studies: hilarity. It includes humorous cartoons about what cave people liked, as well as what they believed in. The cartoons are informative, but some of them are just plain funny, such as the one with the caption “Never watch a caveman movie with an anthropologist.” The book also suggests a few activities, mostly having to do with the main character, a Neanderthal named Thag. One activity is to “Dress up Thag in modern clothing.” Most of you can guess what this entails—a paper cut-out of Thag, with paper cut-outs of modern clothes next to it (including a “Bush 2000” T-shirt).

Although this description makes The Human Evolution Cookbook sound a little ridiculous, the book contains plenty of serious information. Here is what we learn about the Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian Period: “Most of the tools characteristic of the Mousterian are made of flakes. These flake tools come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and for a long time people didn’t know what to call them or how to interpret them” (p. 51). This is information that might be found in a college textbook. Of course, then the reading goes on in its own funny way, ending with these three delightful study questions:

1. What is your favorite Mousterian tool type and why? Explain exactly how you would use it to provide food for your family. Would you expect to live for a long time like that?

2. Explain in detail why you ended up spending good money on this stupid book in the first place.

3. It’s true that archaeologists learn about the past by finding and analyzing the discarded trash of our ancestors. Do you think that this reason alone is sufficient enough to designate the state of New Jersey as our official National Archaeological Site (state motto: “Come Dig Us”)? (p. 56)

I believe that The Human Evolution Cookbook would be best for readers who are seventeen or older, as most younger children aren’t very trustworthy with fire (for cooking, of course) and aren’t ready for human evolution in as much depth as it is explained here. Still, this book taught me a lot that I never learned in Social Studies, and made the learning of that material fun and easy to remember (another thing that never happened in Social Studies!).

—Leila Crawford, Williamstown, MA