

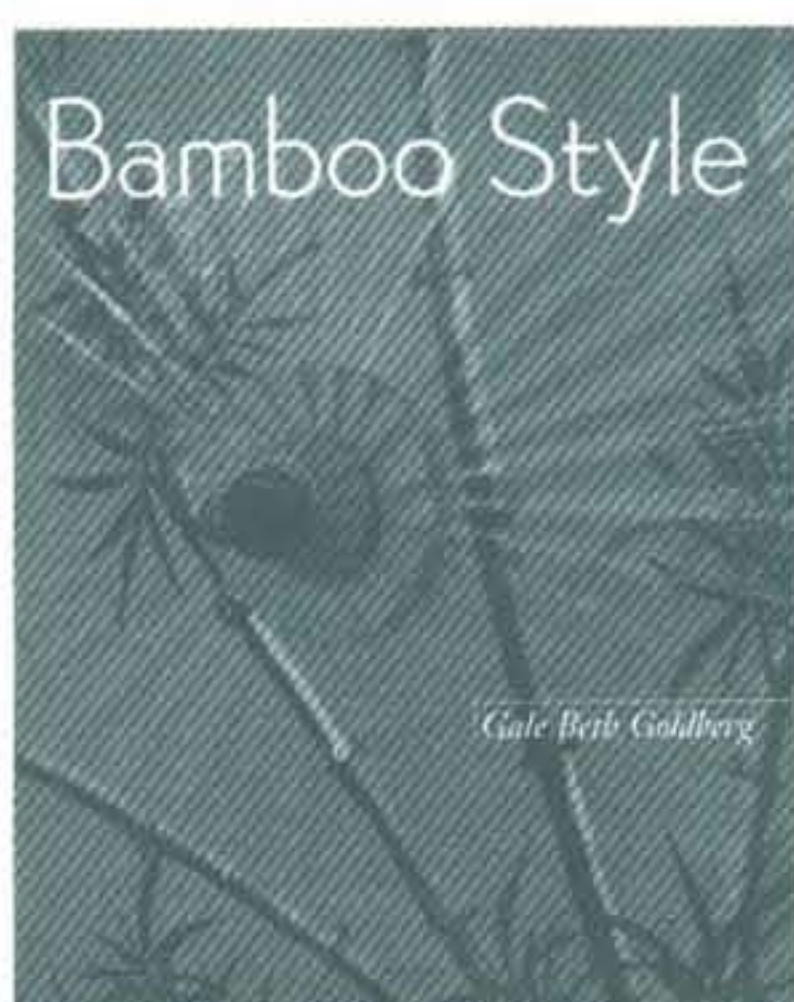
Timeless, Timely Bamboo

Home & Garden staff writer Kelly Fenley

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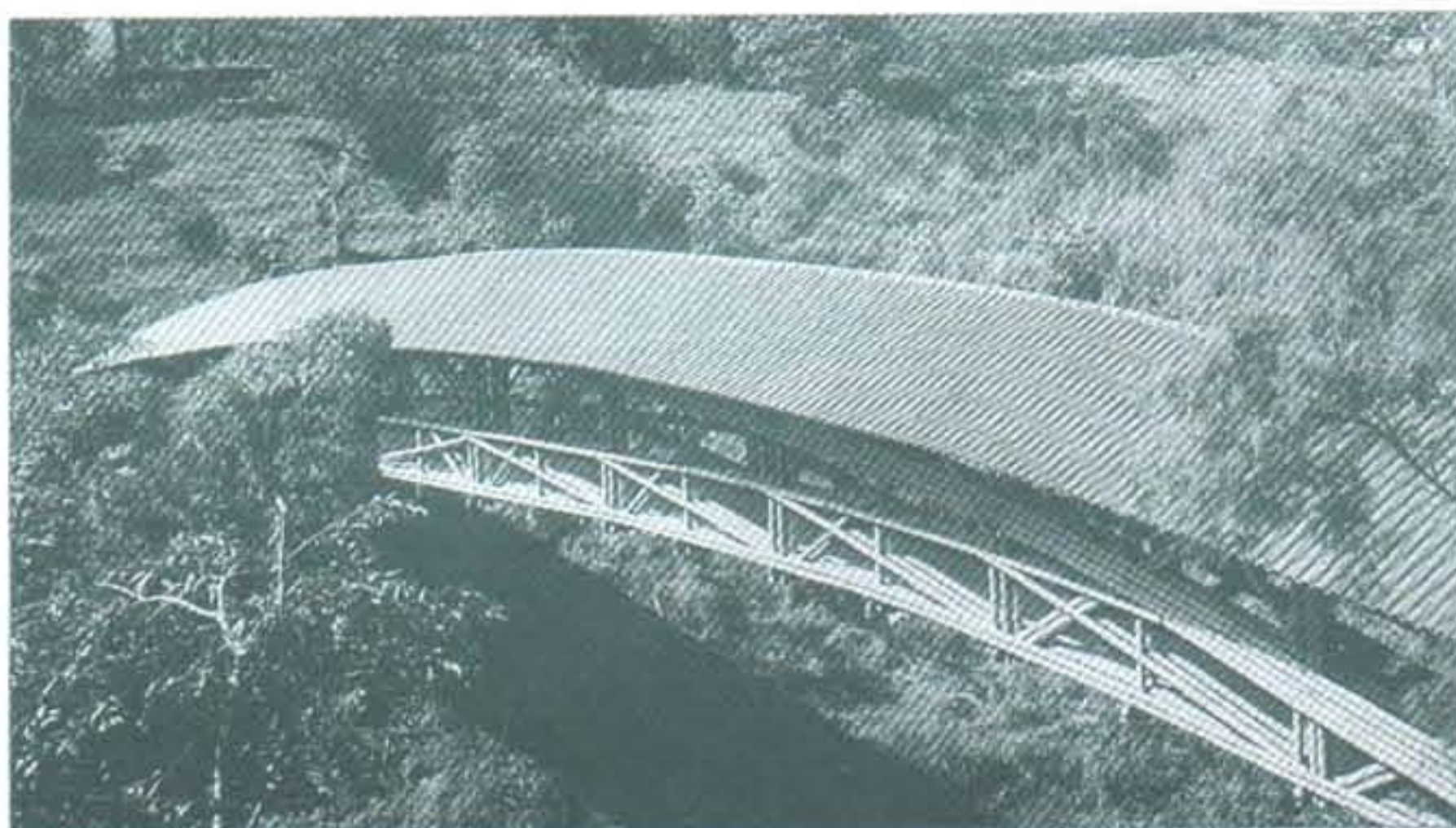
Here is an account of a newspaper journalist coming face to face with Gale Goldberg. Do you think the interviewer was smitten by bamboo by the end of their conversation?

Gale Goldberg has completed a book *Bamboo Style*, and will be a speaker at the ABS Annual Conference in New Orleans. Ed.



One thing you can't make with bamboo is a magic wand. But who needs to when the grassy plant already can be transformed into such a dazzling array of items for the home and garden? Presto, it's a salad. Season tender bamboo shoots to taste, place in a bamboo bowl and eat with bamboo chopsticks. If you're so inclined, serve with bamboo beer. For a tropical mood, ease into a bamboo dinette set sitting on a bamboo hardwood floor. Open the bamboo window shades for a view of an evergreen bamboo hedge in the garden, and then, perhaps one day soon, sleep in peace knowing an earthquake won't topple your bamboo house. "Bamboo is a world unto itself," says someone who should know, Gale Beth Goldberg of Santa Barbara, Calif. A veteran architect with MIT credentials, Goldberg has traveled afar - Bali, Costa Rica, South America - exploring a plant she's come to admire as "iron grass, vegetable steel."

Goldberg's new book, "*Bamboo Style*", will be released in May by publisher Gibbs Smith. Meanwhile, she'll share insights on living with bamboo indoors and out in a Saturday workshop at the Lane County Home & Garden Show at the fairgrounds in Eugene. Goldberg's talk, sponsored by the Oregon Bamboo Association, is at 4 p.m. in the home show's Green Thumb Garden Theater. Following her session will be a presentation by Jiro Yonezawa, a



Northwest bamboo artist, at 5 p.m. and then a plant sale by the Oregon Bamboo Association at 6 p.m.

Forgive Goldberg and certain other bamboo enthusiasts if they wax sentimental over the giant grasses. "Bamboo is a metaphor for living a strong and healthy life," says Goldberg, extolling its vigor and resiliency. "When the snow comes, it gets covered and bends down. When the sun comes, it dries out and springs back to life."

Veneta artist Cathleen Coulson-Keegan, whose raw silk lanterns with silk-screened and hand-painted bamboo art will be among exhibits at the Oregon Bamboo Association's home show booth, admits to an almost mystical solace in the plant. "It's very elegant and simple," she explains. "There's something so serene about bamboo - its simple, clear, elegant lines are conducive for living restful and meditative."

Others bitten by the bamboo bug, including Jim Hueske of Cottage Grove, OR, appreciate the plant less for its mystique - what some call the "Feng Shui" of good energy - than its pure beauty. "We're like the rose growers who love their roses," Hueske explains.

Untold varieties of temperate and mountainous bamboo are ideal for Willamette Valley gardens, and many species are non-invasive with roots that clump rather than run wild and shallow through the yard.

Hueske and wife Gloria, organizers of bamboo events at this week's home show, had planted a mini-forest of black bamboo and other towering varieties on property they recently owned in the country. After teaching all day at Cottage Grove Middle School, Hueske would often decompress by strolling through the 300-by-300-foot stand of fluttering evergreen shoots. "The wind would blow through it, the sunlight filter through it," he says. "It was like walking through a bamboo forest."

Ancient as their origins may be, bamboo art and furnishings can be mixed with any decor, from Victorian to traditional to contemporary, Goldberg says. The woody stems and textures can be like a tropical kiss in homes darkened by rainy and cold

days. "The tropics are where people like to vacation," Goldberg says. "Colorful drinks with little umbrellas - it all conjures up a laid-back life-style that's different from the daily routine. If you want to bring that back to life, bamboo can do it. You can have a tropical mix, or a sun-room, or maybe your kitchen has a tropical look."

When used as furniture or for structural details such as flooring, bamboo needs a protective jacket, such as beeswax or a polyurethane sealant, Goldberg adds. While bamboo flooring has a hardwood durability similar to maple, it should be separated from the home's entry by a "transition area" for removing shoes. "You want to keep bamboo from wicking up water," Goldberg says. While water is a definite bamboo no-no, yet bamboo's arch enemy is the powder beetle. The pest feasts on starch inside walls of bamboo stems, or culms. Once cut, bamboo culms should be preserved with a non-toxic borate solution.

Bamboo culms can truly be a grass of steel. The stout stems are used as construction scaffolding in Asia, and Goldberg hopes that testing in Hawaii, the Netherlands and the state of Washington will eventually result in building codes for homes framed with bamboo. Several years ago, most of the bamboo homes in Colombia survived an earthquake that trashed brick and mortar houses, Goldberg says. "Bamboo bounces," she explains. "It dances with the earth." The biggest knock on bamboo, in fact, is its reputation as an aggressive invader. "People will say, 'Oh, it's an invasive plant. It's a weed I can't wait to get rid of.'" But even invasive bamboo "runners" can easily be controlled with barriers 2-3 feet beneath the soil or simply by whacking off their shallow underground stems, called rhizomes. Bamboo "clumpers," on the other hand, don't spread far beyond the mother plant.

"Our goal, as an organization, is to dispel some of these fears about bamboo," says Hueske.

Story by Kelly Fenley

Bamboo Style by Gale Beth Goldberg available through Gibbs Smith, Publisher (ISBN: 1-58685-092-X) costs \$39.95, and is available now.

Look for a book review of *Bamboo Style* in the August edition of *Bamboo*. Ed. ■

