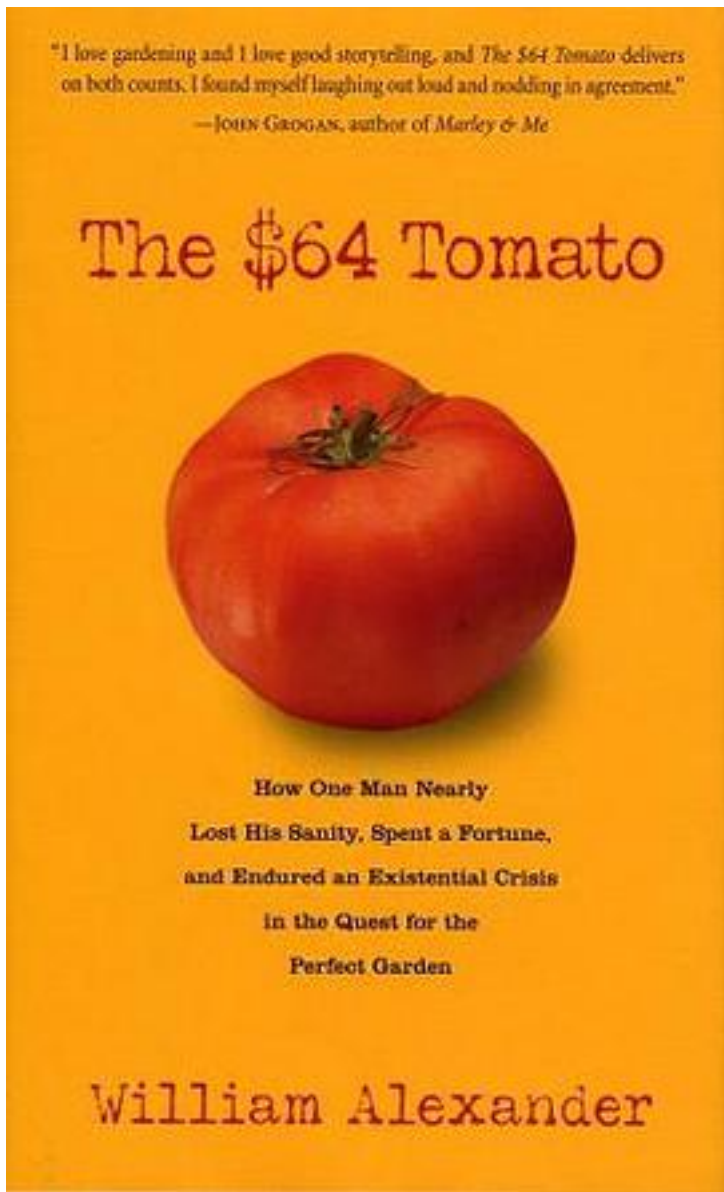


The \$64 Tomato



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William Alexander had a simple dream of having a vegetable garden and small orchard in his backyard. It was a dream that would lead to life-and-death battles with groundhogs, webworms, and weeds; midnight expeditions in the dead of winter to dig up fresh thyme; skirmishes with neighbors who feed the vermin (i.e., deer); the near electrocution of the tree man; and the pity of his wife and children.

When Alexander decided to run a cost-benefit analysis, adding up everything from the Havahart animal trap (\$60) to the Velcro tomato wraps (\$5) to the steel edging (\$1,200), then amortizing it over the life of his garden, it came as quite a shock to learn that it cost him a staggering \$64 to grow each tomato.

A gardener with an existential bent, Alexander gives excellent advice about everything from peaches to leeks, while tackling such questions as What do our gardens tell us about ourselves? Do we get the gardens we deserve? And why does the groundhog have to take one bite from half a dozen tomatoes when any gardener would gladly grant him six bites of just one?

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