



# Flowerbed of State

*Dorothy St. James*

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## **Flowerbed of State** Dorothy St. James

Cassandra "Casey" Calhoun's passion for gardening has carried her to President's Park on which sits the White House. But when she finds a dead body in a trash can, Casey has to root out a killer before she ends up planted herself.

## **Flowerbed of State Details**

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Author : Dorothy St. James

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# **From Reader Review Flowerbed of State for online ebook**

## **LORI CASWELL says**

Casey Calhoun is not your typical assistant gardener at the White House. She was brought in by the First Lady to make the gardening at the White House more organic, more earth friendly. Casey is also very organized, observant and detail oriented. While getting the grounds ready for the annual Easter Egg Roll she is also developing a plan to present to the Grounds Committee for implementing her new organic ideas.

Fighting back a case of the nerves about her presentation she ventures out to weed one of the park's gardens. While there she is attacked from behind and ends up face down in the garden. As she comes to and is explaining what happened to a Secret Service Agent, she notices some broken limbs on a tree. When she works her way over to the damage, it leads both her and the agent to make a shocking discovery. A dead woman that has been stuffed into a trash can. Casey can't help herself from digging into case and trying to root out the killer. Doing so she puts herself not only in danger from the assailant but also may lose her job before she even has a chance to bloom.

A wonderful start to a new series!! Casey Calhoun is a gutsy, full of life character, who is not afraid to get her hands dirty. Her character develops perfectly throughout this story. You couldn't have a more perfect setting and the plot is entertaining and fast paced. A friendship that may bloom into love is also planted that I cannot wait to see flower in future editions.

Flowerbed of State is the perfect Springtime read. It also includes information on how to keep our yards and gardens blooming in more earth friendly ways as Casey prepares her presentation and fights for at least gradual change. I can't wait for the next book in this series to see where Casey takes us.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from Berkley Prime Crime, A Division of Penguin Publishing. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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## **Gigi Ann says**

This book started off as a promising fun cozy mystery...Cassandra "Casey" Calhoun's passion for gardening has carried her to President's Park on which sits the White House. But when she finds a dead body in a trash can, Casey has to root out a killer before she ends up planted herself. Well that's about all the excitement the book held. I really tried to like this book but it just did not draw me into the storyline.

I found it very boring, nothing seem to be happening except that Casey was kept from her important meeting with the First Lady, running from one place to another, running from someone or another. Someone had just

tried to kill her, and all the secret service did was drag her from one place to another trying to interview her, they didn't seem to care that she was covered in mud from head to toe. It just seemed unreal...

I read 100 pages and said "ENOUGH" of this, I turned to the last chapter, read it and guess what I had guessed who the killer was in the first 100 pages, so feel I didn't miss much by bypassing the other 165 pages, except maybe a lot more of the same boring reading.

I awarded this book 1 star, because I didn't finish reading it. The book is a part of my Nook library.

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## **Carol says**

Welcome to President's Park locate at the White House.

Casey Calhoun works as an assistant White House Gardener. Casey is preparing to present a organic gardening system to the First Lady. To calm her nerves, Casey goes outside to dig up some roots she noticed that were choking the tulips. Big Mistake.....

Someone hits her on the head. she wakes up face down the garden. When she wakes up...she has to face a Secret service agent plus they find a dead body in a nearby trash can. Does Casey hold the key to the murderer?

The book describes the gardens, trees and shrubs growing on the White House grounds. You will learn about organic gardening with tips at the end of the book on how to keep your home garden growing productively.

You will meet Milo, the young White House puppy as he digs up the roses and leads the staff on a good chase.

A diverse array of characters keep the reader entertained.

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## **Nora-adrienne says**

Flowerbed of State

By Dorothy St. James

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Casey's passion for organic gardening and eye for detail have carried her into the most important patch of land in America-President's Park, on which site the most important home in America: the White House. But while she's readying the final touches on an innovative cultivation program for the First Lady to inspect, she's attacked from behind by an unknown assailant who then disappears. When she comes to, she notices some damaged foliage that leads her and the Secret Service to a dead woman in a trash can.

With the biggest opportunity of her life ready to bloom, and all the President's men plowing up her perfect plans, Casey has to dig in and root out a killer before she ends up planted herself...

Casey's job as an assistant White House Gardener is everything she could wish for. She's even working with the First Lady to design a new garden area that will utilize the new no chemical fertilizer techniques. Coming

to work the day of her presentation she dressed in a suit to show a more professional appearance. Wouldn't you know that she spots some damaged foliage that "calls" to her for immediate attention. And that is where she should have left well enough alone and just sent one of the workers to handle it. While out there pulling at the offending plants she is attacked from behind and knocked out briefly. When she wakes up she finds herself being watched by a Secret Service member and then a dead body in a trash can. This is the first book in Dorothy St. James' new White House Gardener Mysteries and I'm thrilled with her main character Casey and the crew of associates that were designed as her co-workers and foils for each of her new ideas. I'm looking forward to book two and beyond and think this is going to be a long running and very popular series.

Ms. St.James can be found at <http://www.dorothystjames.com/>

FTC Full Disclosure: This ARC was sent to me by the author in the hope that I would consider reviewing it.

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## Hannah says

There are a number of issues with *Flowerbed of State* that prevented me from rating it any higher than 3 stars, but despite this I still found it enjoyable because of the likeable main character and her relationship with the potential love interest.

Casey Calhoun has the typical qualities of an amateur detective; she's spunky, obsessed with justice and incredibly nosey. I am generally turned off by heroines who do stupid things in an effort to "discover the truth" despite being *repeatedly* warned by (perfectly capable) law enforcement people, and Casey definitely stepped right over the line into being TSTL. What saved her character for me was that she was at least aware of how irritating she was being and made a conscious effort to tone her "sleuthing" down. Thank God for self-awareness! I also appreciated her sense of humour and relatively calm reactions to danger; here's a girl who'll fight her way out instead of descending into hysterics.

Her potential love interest/Secret Service agent who saves her butt, Jack Turner, needs some major character development, but I liked what little we know about him beyond the fact that he's a hunk and is a gruff man-of-few-words - he definitely has a sense of humour (I LOLED at his reaction to Casey's announcement that he's the sidekick to her Miss Marple) and he's a surprisingly good listener. I love that Turner actually listens to Casey and seriously considers her theories. So often these "policeman boyfriend" characters spend more time lecturing their girlfriends about not jumping into danger than they do listening to what insights they have to offer.

The downsides that I mentioned earlier: the writing, particularly in the middle third of the novel, can really use some tightening up. I found myself skimming quite often because there are so many wordy, unnecessary sections. Why do we need to know about Ambrose's stress over organizing or Seth Donahue's crazy micromanaging? Who are they anyway? The author was perhaps attempting to flesh out the setting of the White House by developing various staff, but if the character(s) have no actual role to play (like Ambrose), then they should have been removed altogether. Inserting all these random people who make useless cameo appearances only makes the story more confusing and messy.

Confusing and messy also applies to the plotting of the mystery, which felt like a huge jumble of unrelated events and characters. Right up to the end, I still had only the vaguest idea how the villain, victim and red

herrings were connected. It doesn't help that Casey's "sleuthing" involved crashing headlong into things, not-so-subtly grilling suspects for information... and then promptly getting herself almost killed. I think she was also hauled off by the Secret Service and lectured/questioned at least 3 times. At one point, I thought I was reading a novel about Hurricane Casey rather than a cozy mystery set in the White House.

Thankfully, the pacing picked up in the last stretch, the conclusion was reasonably satisfying even though I had guessed the murderer right at the beginning, and Casey's relationship with Jack Turner shows promising development. There are definite sparks, but I love that they're becoming friends first. I'm looking forward to the next book!

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### **Trish says**

Well, this grabbed my interest at the beginning, but as it went on, it began to annoy me. While some of the supporting characters are okay (and I liked poor Turner), Casey seemed pig-headed to the point of stupidity, and from about halfway through the book I started hoping that her theory on the murder being related to the banking hearings was wrong, so she'd look stupid, and maybe get fired.

Julie Hyzy does a much better job of a White House cozy.

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### **Jill says**

First in series about Casey Calhoun a new assistant in the White House Grounds Department. She was hired by the First Lady to introduce organic gardening practices in the White House gardens. With Mystery in the series name, you know there must be a dead body that will show up sometime. Light reading, but makes me want to learn a little more about places in Washington DC.

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### **Katherine Decker says**

Casey Calhoun loves gardening and enjoys being able to serve "at the pleasure of the president." Her dedication to the gardens also leads her into some trouble as she finds herself in the crosshairs of a killer. She is curious, wanting answers, and not about to sit on her hands despite warnings from DC Police, FBI and Secret Service. I really like her feistiness and determination despite the danger. The plot is intriguing and the various characters make the pages fly by. I was particularly excited by the way the setting descriptions pulled me into the story and made it very easy to imagine being right there on the grounds of the White House.

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### **Dawn says**

After a really bumpy start, so bumpy that I almost stopped reading this book not once but twice, I am glad to say I stuck with it. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the characters in it. The book finally gained momentum that instead of the three stars I was going to give it I am now giving it four. Looking forward to the next book.

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### **Linda says**

3.5 Stars. Pretty good first book in the series. I liked how Casey is an armchair sleuth like the rest of us and gets to put her Miss Marple skills to the test here. It was fun reading a book that takes place at the White House even though I have no interest in gardening, I always enjoy getting a glimpse at something I know nothing about. While there were parts of the mystery that I didn't figure out I wasn't that surprised at who was involved in the end. Would definitely read another in the series.

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### **Jeannie and Louis Rigod says**

This was the debut book in a new series of cozy murders set on the grounds of the White House. We are introduced to the newest gardener, Cassandra (Casey) Calhoun. Casey comes to work with a deep mystery in her past.

Anxious about a meeting with the First Lady, she runs out to pull weeds in Lafayette Square. Next she awakens a victim in her flowerbed. Why? As the Secret Service tries to aid her, they find a body. Casey, has a driven curiosity to solve the case.

You find yourself involved in the annual Easter Egg Roll and meeting various members of the staff, Senate, Banking World, and protestors...not to mention a hunky Secret Serviceman. And, who can resist Milo?

The book was a bit slow for me at the beginning but as I got past page 43 it picked up pace and my interest was captured. This tells me that I am sure to enjoy the future episodes of Ms. Calhoun.

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### **Grey853 says**

I had a terrible case of deja vu while reading this book. Since I'd already read Julie Hyzy's White House chef series, I really didn't need to read this one. I swear, the characters are way too similar in their behaviors. She even falls for the secret service agent the same as Ollie did.

I mean, really? Just plug in a different name and profession and you've got a different book? I don't think so.

If I had read this one first, I might have given it more stars, but because it's so much like the Hyzy series, I just couldn't.

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### **Beth says**

This is not a good book at all. It's not in the "should be used as a doorstop" realm, but it comes close. First the author doesn't know if she wants to have a mystery or a romance novel. A good cozy will often have a romantic understory. But this book crosses the line. Almost every man the protagonist meets is remarkably handsome. And all the men are attracted to her, and, of course, she doesn't understand why because she

thinks she is plain.

There is also the standard "don't involve yourself in the investigation" device. Which we all know will be ignored. It's hard to bring anything new to this, but the author doesn't even try.

The mystery itself isn't bad, I did stay around to see how it would play out so that is a positive.

If you are interested in a mystery that takes place in the White House try Julie Hyzy's White House Chef mysteries. They are much better written and plotted. They are really fun reads.

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## **Em says**

I picked this treat of a book up while browsing the mystery section of one of my favorite bookstores. What a delight! :) I absolutely adore mysteries of all types, and this cozy book was charming and fun! I am so excited for more books in the series. Perfect for fans of: Joan Hess, Carolyn Hart, Kate Carlisle, Julie Hyzy, Lillian Jackson Braun, etc.

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## **Sherry says**

After meeting Dorothy St. James at a writer's retreat last year, I had the good fortune to get an advanced reading copy of the first book in her new series, *Flowerbed of State*, scheduled for release in May 2011.

This book is well-written and charming--a bright blossom in the garden of cozy mysteries. Casey Calhoun, an assistant gardener at the White House wakes up to find herself lying in the mud surrounded by ruffled pink tulips. How she got there is a mystery quickly compounded by the discovery of a dead body nearby.

Casey is an intriguing protagonist. She's both spunky enough to be interesting and vulnerable enough to be believable. The rest of the cast of is interesting and varied, the setting captivating. The author skillfully draws the reader into the world of the White House staff and the beautiful city that is our nation's capital. I'll definitely be reading more in this series.

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