



GARDEN

INHERITING A GARDEN WHAT TO DO, WHEN AND HOW



Inheriting a garden is both a privilege and a responsibility, especially when it surrounds a listed property. Whether you've just moved into a new home or are finally ready to put your own stamp on a garden, the first step is to have a clear and well thought out plan.

This will ensure a robustly designed garden space to suit your needs for years to come. However big or small the space, it needs to reflect personal lifestyle and should also echo



Arundel Castle Gardens
© Sara Moore

the overall aesthetic of the property. Above all, it is important to consider how the garden will be used.

Before starting, find out whether there are any restrictions on what can be done. As gardens typically fall within the curtilage of a listed building, some works carried out within these gardens may require listed building consent, because in some cases, garden structures within the grounds may be individually listed.

In most cases, planning permission will be required to erect new structures within gardens associated with a listed property. However, routine maintenance such as replanting and rearranging existing beds does not usually require consent or permission.

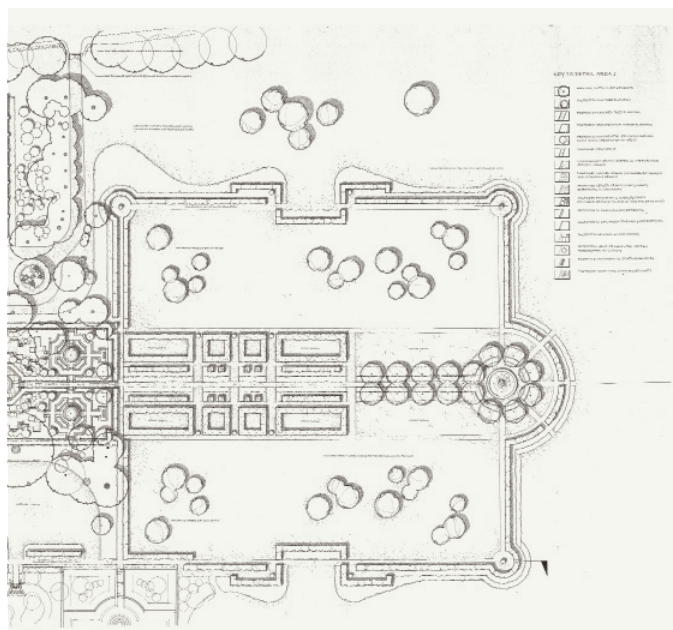
Each approach to a new garden starts with observation. It is prudent to take time, particularly as a new owner. Live and learn with the garden. See the garden through at least a whole year's cycle. Make notes of where pockets of sunlight are captured at different times of day and which parts of the garden are shaded. These observations will guide key decision making on where to place seating



HEAD GARDENER'S TOP TIP

'If you are working within an historic landscape, your garden records become your bible. At my current garden, information is very thin on the ground with no historic records at all, including on infrastructure such as lighting and irrigation. So particularly for this garden, observing is the most valuable tip. Identifying through observation is key to building a picture of what your garden is already telling you and where you can go from here.'

Sally Hughes, Head Gardener for Nyetimber Estate, West Sussex.



areas for dining, catching some rays and places to keep cool in the heat of the summer. Also note how water drains after rainfall and where there are frost pockets. This will help to inform where to have borders with planting, tree placement and the creation of waterways such as rills and ponds.

Consider opening up views to bring the wider landscape in. Or it might be about using structures or plants for screening to bring some enclosure to the garden, especially if it is overlooked.

Watching the garden grow and taking time to record noteworthy plants helps preserve the garden's historic and horticultural identity before making any changes. Preserving topiary and heritage plants is particularly important in helping to define the original character of the garden. Utilising the existing plants not only saves on cost but is an indication of what grows well and forms a solid foundation for extending and developing planting schemes. Check for any plant records by previous owners, especially if they were plant enthusiasts. There may even be information

at local or county record offices or other archives. This historical background can be particularly useful where listed building consent or planning permission is required.

Some gardens are steeped in history and often carry layers of design from different eras. Some features may need removing or redesigning completely but living with these initially will form ideas for the future of the garden space.

Take note of the existing features such as trees, plant groupings, fences, sheds or slopes and think how to incorporate these into a plan for structure and character. It is important to decide which elements to retain and where relocating certain features or plants might work better. Sometimes a simple adjustment can transform a garden and help to define a space.

Introduce a personal style to the garden, which might reflect a cottage garden style, a design that is inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, a modern contemporary twist, or a more informal approach. The choice of planting style will also be guided by the

garden's intended function. For example, selecting drought-tolerant species in response to climate change, choosing plants that can withstand wetter winters, or perhaps designing a garden space that enhances and supports biodiversity.

The key is to observe and appreciate the garden as it exists. Respect the current layout and planting, while introducing personal style in a way that is sympathetic to both the property and the wider landscape. Any new planting or alterations should enhance the garden's historic character. Together, these considerations will help define the planting character and guide how the garden will ultimately take shape. 🌿

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