



GARDEN

ROOTED IN TIME: PLANTING DESIGN THROUGH THE AGES



Planting design, much like fashion, moves in cycles of revival and reinvention. Trends fall out of favour, only to return years later with a fresh perspective drawing on ideas shaped in eras before.

Gardens rarely stay faithful to one era. Instead they draw on historical influences, reimagined through a contemporary lens. The ability to mix old with new results in a more interesting, diverse landscape. A formal clipped yew hedge might sit alongside a loose, meadow themed border; or a Victorian terrace might swap traditional bright bedding for a softer, more natural palette.

The art lies in knowing what to borrow and how to make it feel current. Understanding how planting has evolved over time allows us to design gardens that suit a property's architecture and to adapt some of those ideas into today's gardens.

 **Bedding scheme framed by clipped hedging**

ORDER & SYMMETRY: 17TH-18TH CENTURY – FORMAL GARDENS

Early formal gardens were all about structure and control. Influenced by European design, gardens were defined by geometry, symmetry and precision. Parterres and knot gardens created intricate patterns, formed by low, clipped hedging. Gardens were viewed from above or along carefully planned sightlines with topiary shapes as key features that aligned pathways and framed informal planting.

Plants such as box (*Buxus sempervirens*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), bay (*Laurus nobilis*) and lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) formed the backbone of these spaces, evergreen, reliable and easy to shape.

NATURE IDEALISED: 18TH-19TH CENTURY – THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE MOVEMENT

The English landscape movement brought a softer vision. Carefully framed views replaced the rigid formality of past gardens and gave way to a more naturalistic landscape with far-reaching views, sweeping lawns, lakes and strategically placed clumps of trees. Boundaries dissolved through the clever use of ha-has, which allow views to merge into the wider landscape.

Typical trees of this era, oak (*Quercus robur*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and cedar (*Cedrus libani*), were often used to anchor these expansive scenes.

DRAMA & DISPLAY: MID-LATE 19TH CENTURY – THE VICTORIAN GARDEN

Victorian gardens took a very different turn, celebrating colour, contrast and drama. With new plant discoveries arriving from across the world, gardens became places of display.

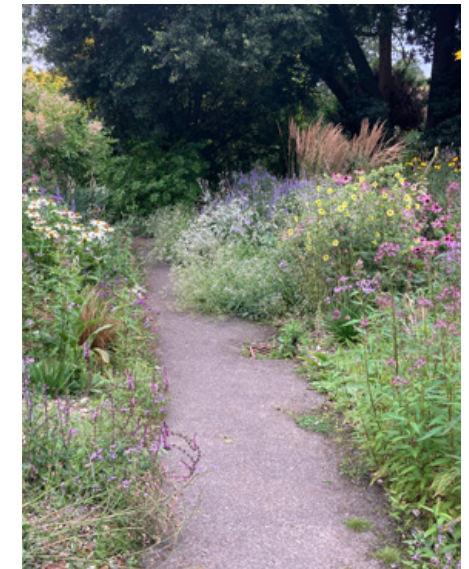


 **Parterre at Tatton Park**



 **Wander through the garden rooms at Borde Hill Garden**
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 **Drifts of perennials at west Dean Gardens**
© Sara Moore



 **Plants spilling over path at West Dean Gardens**
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Intricate bedding schemes, often called carpet bedding, used bright annuals to create striking, tapestry-like patterns. With today's desire for low maintenance planting, there can be a more sustainable approach using perennials instead of annuals and simplified layouts as a nod to this look.

Large-leaved exotics, such as castor oil (*Ricinus communis*), cabbage palm (*Cordyline australis*) and Canna sp., added height and a sense of spectacle alongside bedding plants like pelargoniums, begonias, petunias, lobelia, and marigolds.

ROMANCE & CRAFT: LATE 19TH-EARLY 20TH CENTURY – ARTS & CRAFTS GARDEN

Where the Victorian garden design was intended for viewing from afar, the Arts and Crafts movement brought the focus back to the experience of being in the garden. Gardens became a series of 'rooms' filled with airy flowering plants designed to be explored rather than simply viewed. A winning combination of seasonal interest and successional flowering allowed planting to spill onto paths to soften edges, enhancing the sense of being in the garden.

This era saw the influential partnership of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens blending structure with naturalistic planting with drifts of perennials softening architectural lines.

Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*), shrub roses and climbing roses (*Rosa* sp.), sage (*Salvia* sp.), peony (*Paeonia* sp.), phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) and lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) are some plant examples that contributed to this romantic, layered look.

OUTDOOR LIVING: MID-CENTURY MODERN GARDENS

Post-war gardens became extensions of the home rather than a separate, ornamental space. They were designed for functional, open spaces and everyday living, an approach which remains relevant today.

The planting focus shifted to order over abundance, with an emphasis on structure, repetition and ease of maintenance. Architectural flowering plants and grasses introduced movement and form, while outdoor seating areas became extensions of the home designed for relaxing, dining and everyday living.

Evergreen plants like New Zealand flax (*Phormium* sp.), Japanese aralia (*Fatsia japonica*), bamboo (clumping types like *Fargesia* sp.), ornamental grasses and flowering perennials such as miscanthus, stipa, calamagrostis, agapanthus and verberna brought structure without fuss.

The most interesting gardens rarely belong to a single moment in time. Planting and layout can be built on times past, blending eras to pair structure with softness or formality with looseness. This results in gardens uniquely connected to their setting with a sense of timelessness. It is possible to create spaces that feel both grounded and contemporary by drawing on the past while designing for how we live today. Ultimately, a garden should feel as though it belongs, not just to its setting, but also to the people who spend time in it. 🌿

Sara Moore
Planterra Gardens
sara@planterragardens.co.uk
www.planterragardens.co.uk