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PORTRAIT GRANT SCOTT

A letter from home

It's that time of the year when the English garden comes into its own. When the patch of nature we have at home – however large or small – becomes part of our living space, an extra 'room outdoors'. I love the sense of increased space. The feeling of throwing open the doors and allowing the outside in. The realisation that the garden is ours again to enjoy while the sun shines and encourages all we have planted to bloom. The reminder that our gardens are a vital and very usable part of our homes.

I don't profess to being a gardener, but I love to potter, plant herbs and flowers, and gather ideas from other people's far more polished schemes than my own. This issue is full of inspiration to allow you to do the same. Inside, you'll find three beautiful country homes whose owners have paid as much attention to the gardens as to the incredible interiors.

We also bring you an abundance of ideas which can be scaled to suit domestic settings from some of England's most renowned gardens and their head gardeners on page 100. And we glean insights from renowned gardening expert Sarah Raven on mastering the art of planting in pots to bring colour to outdoor spaces of all sizes on page 124.

Alongside ideas for prolonging that spring feeling with flower styling courses on page 118, we look to English gardens for decorating inspiration in our feature on incorporating botanical designs and hues in interiors. Colour palettes and prints inspired by nature are a mainstay of timeless, uplifting English schemes, and our curation of the latest fabrics, papers and paints is certain to bring the joy of nature's bounty to your home year-round.

Samantha

Samantha Scott-Jeffries, Editor

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NOTEBOOK

Our monthly edit of news, shopping inspiration and inside information



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Capturing Fleeting Beauty

Florists and pressed-flower specialists Melissa Richardson and Amy Fielding of JamJar Edit are launching an online flower-pressing course at Create Academy. Favourite of the fashion set since they were commissioned to create pressed-flower invitations for Mulberry's spring/summer 2015 fashion show, they became fascinated by this traditional craft. The JamJar Edit studio now specialises in creating pressed flower artworks, from single-stem framed pieces to ambitious installations, private commissions and exhibitions. "We think a lot of people see pressed flowers as being a bit fusty and Victorian, but we want to show that this ancient craft can actually be a beautifully modern and inexpensive way of decorating contemporary homes," they say. *jamjaredit.co.uk*



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MADE IN BRITAIN

Eclectic Emporium's Golden Feat

Graham & Green celebrates 50 years

With her baby son Jamie sleeping in a Moses basket under the counter, in 1974 Antonia Graham (*pictured far right*) opened independent interiors and lifestyle store Graham & Green in an old dairy in Notting Hill. Importing homeware from India, Morocco and Europe to the UK, her mission was to enrich homes with colourful and vibrant handcrafted treasures.

Today, 50 years later, not only is this eclectic home brand still owned and run by the same family and thriving, with four stores plus an outlet and strong online sales, but Jamie is running it with his wife Louise. Antonia says: "Jamie and Louise have gradually made it their own – it's the same ethos but adapted to make it attractive to a different generation. I'm thrilled with it and very proud of the whole family."

Antonia's lightbulb moment came aged 17 while working for cookery doyenne Elizabeth David, who brought French Le Creuset cookware to the UK. "Through Elizabeth, I met all sorts of interesting people," she says. "It was the Swinging Sixties, the era of Mary Quant, Terence Conran, David Mellor and others who were rethinking what a shop could be."

The Graham family (*Jamie and Louise pictured right with son Max)* has particularly strong connections to India, working with many of the same local craftsmen for decades and travelling the country extensively to source and design products. To celebrate the brand's 50th anniversary, it will launch a limited-edition heritage bone-inlay furniture collection among other exclusive products, and from 6 April until the end of the month, the original Notting Hill store will be transformed into an Indian bazaar filled with vintage furniture, textiles and homeware, with in-store events. *grahamandgreen.co.uk*



New Treasures – Old Values

Debut of Mooch The Cotswolds

Wise grandparents would approve that the values they held dear many decades ago are the height of fashion today. Emma Sinclair's beloved grandmother inspired her new 'slow' interiors brand Mooch The Cotswolds – quality homeware handcrafted in small quantities by artisans and which she hopes will become future heirlooms. "She was a unique, one-of-a-kind individual and a proud Yorkshire lass," says Emma of her grandmother. "Every purchase was carefully considered, holding deep meaning and significance. With her, I learnt that some things are worth waiting for, that patience and anticipation can lead to finding true treasures in life that can be passed down for generations. I love the concept of 'fewer things and nicer things', products that are durable, practical and made to last."

From her shop in the Gloucestershire town of Chipping Campden and online, Emma sells hand-block-printed homeware, pyjamas, dressing gowns, accessories, stationery and more, all handmade and designed in the Cotswolds. *moochcotswolds.co.uk*





Grounded Wellness

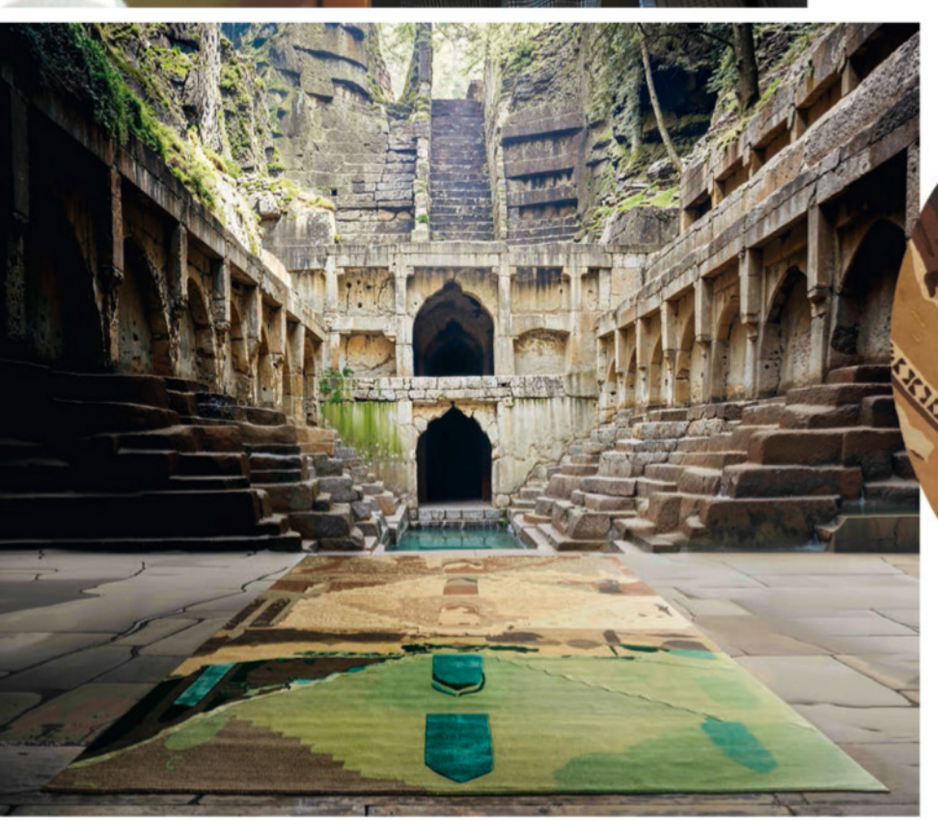
New rugs designed by Shalini Misra

Architect and interior designer Shalini Misra has long been fascinated by the ancient stepwells of India, intricate structures that descend to a water source that were once at the very heart of communities. They acted as reservoirs while doubling up as unifying spiritual centres, a place of refuge for ritual purification and prayer. For women, they provided a safe haven, offering protection and shelter from the heat as they fetched water for their community. They inspired Shalini's new collection of three statement rugs, made in Nepal by Italian maker CC-Tapis, available via her online store Curio. "These rugs are not just beautiful pieces of art but also a reminder of the importance of sustainability and community," says Shalini. "I have always been inspired by the incredible architecture of India's stepwells, and for our first exclusive Curio collection we wanted to create pieces that would not only showcase extraordinary craftsmanship, but that would be really rooted in a sense of place."

Shalini sees rugs as functional and textural foundations acting as grounding elements for entertaining and everyday living, bringing people together, and she draws parallels with the historical use of India's ancient stepwells, also known as baori, bawdi or vav. All three rugs are named after the stepwell that inspired its design, marrying historically informed architectural detail and a locally inspired colour palette with established textile motifs.

Each rug passes through the hands of many expert artisans in Kathmandu – the finest natural Himalayan wool is carded, spun, dyed, knotted and finished by hand following ancient techniques.

Shalini earned her architecture degree in India and honed her expertise with studies in New York and London. She founded her interior design practice Shalini Misra Design in 1997, which has offices in London, New York, Dubai, India and Italy, and has long prioritised holistic wellness and sustainability. *shalinimisra.com*





TOP Architect and interior designer Shalini Misra.
LEFT The Ujala Baoli rug and the ancient stepwell in India that inspired its design.
ABOVE The Adalaj ni Vav rug inspired by the stepwell built by Mahmud Begada in 1411 to commemorate Queen Rudabai.



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Craftsmanship Fit For Royalty

The King's Lodge at The Connaught

Master craftspeople from India, Myanmar, Afghanistan and the Levant region of Asia were commissioned to create every element of new suite The King's Lodge at The Connaught in partnership with charity Turquoise Mountain and the hotel's interior designer Guy Oliver.

His Majesty King Charles III (then Prince of Wales) founded the charity in 2006 to support artisans in those regions and preserve their heritage skills.

Intricate architectural woodwork, made in Jordan by Syrian artisans, handwoven carpets and miniature paintings from Afghanistan, fabrics from Myanmar and carved marble panels and mirrored glass insets from India all showcase the highest levels of craftsmanship.

Turquoise Mountain creative director Dr Thalia Kennedy said: "The King's Lodge has brought together over 100 master artisans and team members from across Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Myanmar and India to create and celebrate the finest craftsmanship and heritage design. Thanks to commissions like this suite, and the vision and commitment of Guy Oliver and The Connaught, artisan communities and these important traditions continue to thrive today." *the-connaught.co.uk*





Horticouture

RHS Chelsea Flower Show returns

Unmissable and inspirational, this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, from 21 to 25 May, promises to be its most sustainable yet. Every garden will be relocated and live on after the show is over.

Harnessing the therapeutic power of nature, Muscular Dystrophy UK's Forest Bathing Garden by Ula Maria will create an oasis of tranquillity in the middle of London with over 40 birch trees. Resilient planting and cutting-edge technology to deal with climate change will feature in The WaterAid Garden by Tom Massey and Je Ahn. Robert Myers' tranquil and lush biodiverse garden will be moved to St James's Piccadilly after the show to create a welcoming green space in the city. And The National Autistic Society Garden by Sophie Parmenter and Dido Milne *(above left)* will aim to capture an autistic person's everyday experience of the world, moving to one of the charity's supported living sites after Chelsea. Browse tempting wares from elite brands, explore the scent-filled Great Pavilion – and be sure to visit the stand of our sister magazine *The English Garden* – EAE522 on Eastern Avenue. *rhs.org.uk*

Diary



See the world's largest private collection of tea heritage – owned by Newby London founder Nirmal Sethia – as part of *The Craft Of Tea: 1660-2024* exhibition at The Goldsmiths' Centre in London from 1 May to 27 June. *goldsmiths-centre.org*



London Craft Week (13-19 May) will celebrate its 10th anniversary with events and demonstrations including new free-to-attend show *Craftworks* (15-17 May) at Shoreditch Town Hall by Jay Blades in partnership with Cox London *(above). londoncraftweek.com*



Ornate clockwork automata collected by China's emperors are on show in the UK for the first time for *Zimingzhong: Clockwork Treasures from China's Forbidden City* at the Science Museum until 2 June. *sciencemuseum.org.uk* ■

FEATURE SARAH FEELEY **PHOTOGRAPHS** P13 © DEBORAH GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR CREATE ACADEMY. P15 (TOP) © MEL YATES. P16 © COPYRIGHT SHALINI MISRA 2024: (TOP) PHILIP SINDEN, (BELOW LEFT) ROBERT SHINN, (BELOW RIGHT) GARETH HACKER. P18 (TOP) © THE CONNAUGHT; (CHELSEA FROM LEFT) THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY GARDEN © SOPHIE PARMENTER+DIDO MILNE; CHELSEA PENSIONERS ARCHIE FERGUSON & BILLY KNOWLES © RHS/OLIVER DIXON; (DIARY FROM TOP) TEAPOT, GILT COPPER ALLOY AND SILVER, TIBET, 18TH CENTURY, CHITRA COLLECTION; JAY BLADES MBE WITH CHRIS & NICOLA COX OF COX LONDON © ALUN CALLENDER FOR COX LONDON; © ZIMINGZHONG WITH PARTS FROM CHINA AND BRITAIN © THE PALACE MUSEUM

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DESIGN DISCOVERIES

Engaging prints and heritage techniques from across the globe have inspired new designs that contribute to eclectic and effortless schemes with a fresh energy



PARISIAN SCENES

A toile de Jouy blind lends a classic charm to kitchens and small windows. This hand-drawn example features sketches of Parisian cafes, bicycles and iconic landmarks. Part of Hillarys' new Parisian Edit, the collection also includes faded ginghams, vintage ticking and stripes, all available as Roman blinds and curtains.
Roman blind in Toile de Paris, from £155, Hillarys



NEUTRAL TOUCH

Those with a keen eye for elevated neutral designs will be drawn to the interesting textures that characterise Harlequin's new edit (also available in brighter colours). Inspired by architecture, art and nature, Reflect encompasses wallpapers, fabrics and weaves in tactile finishes that play with perspective and scale.
Arran fabric, £69 a metre; Lacuna Stripe wallpaper, £79 a roll, both Reflect collection, Harlequin



EXOTIC TABLESCAPE

Tableware decorated in lotus flowers adds a glamorous distinction to any occasion. For a traditional tablescape, use seasonal flowers as centrepieces or, for a contemporary scene, lean into the theme with an arrangement of tropical blooms.
Blue Lotus decorative plate, £170; dinner plate, £150; dessert plate, £140; side plate, £100; carafe, £440; wine glass, £200, all Dior Maison



PRINTS OF TRAVEL

Penny Morrison's Ethnic range takes inspiration from across the globe and with such varied cultural origins – from Africa to India – each pattern will happily work within a medley of different types and styles of prints. *Ashok wallpaper, £228 a roll; Totem vertical stripe fabric (as seen on the sofa), £228 a metre; cushions, from £170; Pineapple ceramic lamp base, £630; lampshades, from £230, all Penny Morrison* ▶



SPANISH COLLECTION

The playful details of the Andalusia range from Birdie Fortescue nod to the Spanish region's crafts and architecture. The furnishings, such as this rattan and carved side table and headboard, have a light and fresh mood apt for guest bedrooms.

Pavilion side table, £450; Pavilion super-king headboard, £995; Etched-glass lamp, £175; Bordado lampshade, £115; quilted squares bedspread, from £255, all Birdie Fortescue





TILES WITH TEXTURE

These handmade tiles are crafted in Morocco and created using locally sourced materials. The scene above shows that selecting a design in a pared-back colour can highlight the textured finish and imbue a handcrafted touch to an elegant bathroom scheme.

Zellige tiles, from £119 a square metre, Mosaic Factory. Interior design project by Vaughan Design & Development

UNIQUE VESSEL

To create a one-off feel, this jug is carefully formed and hand-thrown by British ceramicist Fiona May. The decoration is hand-painted in blue and pink tones, then coated in a translucent glaze; the lower section of the jug is left raw to underline the artisan feel. Home-grown flowers or refreshing cordial would make the ideal partners to its uplifting individuality.

Flora jug by Fiona May, £54, Rowen & Wren

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NATURALLY WOVEN

Design studio Nobilis epitomises the French proclivity for effortless style, and its textiles, wallcoverings, furniture and rugs are inspired by a balance of contemporary and traditional influences. The Iconoclaste edit, as seen in this bathroom (*right*), features a mix of fabrics in natural materials which are decorated in elegant motifs, alongside plain textured weaves, all designed to co-ordinate without seeming contrived.
Virginia curtain fabric, £256 a metre, Nobilis



MIRRORING TODAY

The reimagination of traditional marquetry keeps the skills alive and evolves styles to a capture a modern classic aesthetic. Here, Chelsea Vivash's handmade marquetry mirror frame has a playful contemporary mood. The design celebrates a colourful combination of ash, maple, oak, beech, cherry, ebony macassar, walnut and dyed tulipwood veneers, backed with birch plywood.
Small round curved mirror by Chelsea Vivash, £340, Artists & Objects

TIME-HONOURED RUGS

Best known for championing recycled bottles as a raw material to create rugs, Weaver Green utilises traditional rug-making methods which aim to blend detail and durability. The Silk Road range is hand-woven using traditional kilim-weaving techniques, and the design of the Anatolia rug, in this hallway, pays homage to the origins of kilim weaving with a West Asia pattern.
Anatolia rug in green, £235, Weaver Green ■





FEATURE SUZANNA LE GROVE PHOTOGRAPHS (PENNY MORRISON) © MIKE GARLICK, (MOSAIC FACTORY) © CHRIS SNOOK PHOTOGRAPHY

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Holkham, Amber, outdoor fabric cushion, £45, Warner House



Aldsworth potting table, £315; Barrington plant stand, £130, Garden Trading



Glyndebourne rose, £25, Glyndebourne Shop



Amelie teak garden chair, £690, Baileys



Gardeners' canvas kneeler, £27, Highgrove Shop

PLEASING POTTING

Tactile essentials and decorative touches make it desirable to spend time in the potting shed

Porto solar lantern bundle, £64.99, Lights4fun





Thyme terracotta pot, £16, Neptune



Haws Fazeley Flow indoor watering can, £45, Toast

Tuff freestanding staging, 2ft x 4ft, from £159, Rhino Greehouses Direct



Wetlands Green (left) and Rhyne Green, £20 for 750ml Wood Paint, Thorndown

Leaf trellis, £59.99, Ivyline



FEATURE SUZANNA LE GROVE

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NATURAL HARMONY

Stay in tune with nature using materials such as wood, cork, leather and stone for organic beauty

Marcel weathered natural recycled elm mirror, £1,595, Oka

Topola ceramic vase, £68, Abigail Ahern

Riley leather medium ring chandelier, saddle and natural brass, £3,039, Ralph Lauren at Lux Deco

Blue cotton maché vase, £33, Birdie Fortescue

SlatWall natural oak, £129.99, Naturewall

Natural Vivienne 100 per cent cotton quilted throw, £139, The Secret Linen Store

Little Botanize Terracotta Blue eco-wallpaper, £150 a roll, Divine Savages x Natural History Museum

Stitched sideboard, ash and natural cord, £24,140, The New Craftsmen

Urbi stoneware vase, £65, Where Saints Go

Parfett marble board, £150, Soho Home

Louise jug, £95, Sharland England

Vincent butterscotch leather sofa, £10,566, Arteriors

Jack Welbourne brushstroke teapot, £86, Toast

Sinatra black marble and cork table, £875, Frama

Naturally dyed striped linen lavender pillow, £22, Ved Cooks

FEATURE KATY MCLEAN

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THE EDIT

Celebrating brands with anniversaries and specialist seasonal offerings this month



A STROKE OF GENIUS

For over 20 years, Natural Swimming Pools Ltd has been building beautiful, tranquil, chemical-free natural pools using biological filtration to achieve crystal-clear water which feels silky on skin. The company offers a complete service from design to completion. Its experts tailor each pool to a client's preferences and site, ensuring every pool works with the landscape and enhances a garden, and they can include garden design and landscaping around the pool. Attracting birds, insects and amphibians, these natural pools are available with or without plants and the company can also convert pools and ponds. *naturalswimmingpools.com*





SPRING VIBRANCY

Club Matters specialises in tableware to impress. Founded 16 years ago by Mary Corbett, after spotting a need for table mats that were attractive and durable, the company specialises in English-made mats that are built to last. A multi-layered process sees the artwork 'baked-in' so the designs – often nature-inspired – will not peel at the corners and can withstand a spill of red wine. A new design launching at RHS Chelsea Flower Show features watercolours of tulips that fulfil Corbett's philosophy that "a beautifully laid table speaks volumes". *clubmatters.com*

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CULTURAL EXCHANGE

With one foot in Hong Kong, the other in Wiltshire, Amanda and Stephen Clark have successfully married the two with an exuberant display of chinoiserie in their Georgian former hunting lodge

FEATURE CAROLINE DONALD PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES MCDONALD

Wisteria clads the back of the Georgian house. and tightly clipped yew hedges provide year-round structure for views from the house.



'Sometimes you fall in love with a place when you walk in. It feels welcoming, as though it has been waiting for you'

ABOVE The teak trellis was designed by Stephen and made in Thailand. It is clad in 'New Dawn', 'Cecile Bruenner' and 'Awakening' roses.

As at the beginning of many a great romance, a *coup de foudre* struck Amanda Clark on her first encounter with Seend Manor in Wiltshire. "Sometimes you fall in love with a place when you walk in," she says. "It feels welcoming, as though it has been waiting for you."

Amanda and her husband Stephen, an investment banker, had been looking for an English country base in the area, which they knew well, as Stephen had gone to boarding school nearby. It had to be Georgian, as they love that period's sense of scale and light-filled rooms. This would provide a happy contrast to their modern apartment in Hong Kong, where they are based for much of the year and where Amanda set up a successful design studio and multi-line furnishings showroom, Altfield. Their businesses take them back ▸



The Italian chair in the entrance hall is from an 18th-century set. Flowers from the garden stand on a gilded table made in China by a German master carver and gilder. An antique carved wooden sconce supports a pot of porcelain morning glory flowers from The Vladimir Collection.


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'The house may look a little grand, but it is completely comfortable; it is not precious'

and forth, so they felt it was time to put down roots here and have somewhere they could spend extended lengths of time.

The couple had looked at several properties but none had quite hit the mark until they came across the former hunting lodge, built in 1767 from Bath stone. No matter that it was somewhat "tired" and would need taking back to the bones both structurally and decoratively: it had high ceilings with fine plasterwork and tall, south-facing windows, through which the light streamed. "I walked around and, before we had left, I had bought it in my mind," says Amanda. Luckily Stephen was in accord, and the house became theirs in 1998.

That Seend was originally built for entertainment, rather than as a home, suited the couple well as there are three grand reception rooms and only six bedrooms: three large ones on the first floor, their dressing rooms now turned into bathrooms, the rest in the former servants' quarters on the second – plenty for most hosts these days, the Clarks included. Adjacent to the house is a large and rather beautiful classical stable yard, where Amanda's brother, William Lack, and his family now live. William owns and runs Altfield London in the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour. "He is my baby brother, so in many ways, his children are like grandchildren to us; it is a family compound," says Amanda. "The house may look a little grand, but it is completely comfortable and there are children and people in it all the time; it is not precious."

Today, children notwithstanding, the house is filled with beautiful antiques, furniture and paintings. Stephen is in charge of "the walls", and collects Old Master drawings, while Amanda deals with the decorative elements. It is, however, very much a joint project that has taken years to evolve. "When we started, it was our holiday home and completely empty," says Amanda. "The collection we have made since has been a real joy to do together. Slowly, we have bought things, largely at auction, and now we are telling ourselves that we had better stop."

Amanda and Stephen believe a home should be autobiographical and can remember the provenance

LEFT Adding to the stately grandeur of the drawing room is a glass chandelier from Denton Antiques on Kensington Church Street, London. The wall colour was specially mixed for the room and was taken from a piece of fabric that Amanda had. The rug was made for the room by Braquenié in France.



'This was the first traditional house I could play with. It was fun: my homage to Brighton Pavilion'

ABOVE The library walls are covered in a gold silk damask by Scalamandre; the sofa is in a Belgian mohair from Altfield London. The chimney piece is original to the house.

of every table, every painting, every rug. That there is a plentiful element of chinoiserie would be expected, especially as it was a style of decor that was very much in vogue in the house's early days.

What does come as a surprise is that the dining room, the walls of which are covered in panels of hand-painted Chinese wallpaper, with a decorative painted-wood chimneypiece and pagoda-roofed doors, is, in fact, a later addition to the house (it used to be the kitchen), and the chinoiserie fancifulness a work of Amanda's imagination, sketched and sent to be made by her workshop in China, then shipped here and assembled by local craftsmen.

Having been brought up in China, where her father worked in the colonial civil service, Amanda had always lived in contemporary spaces, or worked for ▸



Stephen had the 10 carver chairs in the dining room made in his bachelor days, so that all the diners could be equally comfortable. The porcelain figures are probably 1920s Portuguese and were bought from Paolo Moschino.



'The Georgians were strong on their colours; they didn't have white-painted walls, and, because of the amount of light, they can take it'

ABOVE In Amanda's reading room, the pretty chinoiserie wallpaper was made to her design.

others. "I have been in design all my adult life and this was the first home where I could do anything I wanted, and it was the first traditional house I could play with. It was fun: my homage to Brighton Pavilion." That the wallpaper in the dining room – including moments from the couple's life – was stained by a flood from a bath above a few years ago does not worry her, as it adds to its aged appeal. Dotted about the room are porcelain pagodas in all shapes and sizes – "you can never have too many pagodas".

The drawing room, on the other hand, has a much more European feel to it, hung with classic oil paintings. Like the Chinese blue-and-white porcelain on display there, some of the furniture is antique, some is contemporary, copies made in China of originals the couple have seen in auction catalogues.



Amanda has gone all out in this guest bedroom, with strong Chinese red painted walls, and a lacquered four-poster bed by Beaudesert.





The doors are the original painted pine, though Amanda points out that the cornicing has been put on upside down; one of the quirks of the house the couple love so much.

In Hong Kong, the couple's house is a Zen-like space of neutral tones. Here they have embraced rich tones in a big way, whether it is the gold damask on the walls of the library, or the rich red in the Chinese spare room. "When you buy a house it guides you. The Georgians were strong on their colours; they didn't have white-painted walls, and, because of the amount of light, they can take it," says Amanda.

The couple have never regretted taking on Seend. "Having restored and loved every inch, from the roof to the basement, we feel we have given the house another 100 years of life," says Amanda. She and Stephen may sometimes be on the other side of the world, but "our hearts are here". The romance continues. ■

ABOVE The Etruscan-arched pool house was designed by Isabel and Julian Bannerman to conjure memories of Amanda and Stephen's happy holidays in Italy.

LEFT Tucked into the southwest corner of the rose garden is a thatched cottage orné, the perfect place to sit for a glass of wine and to drink in the heady scent of the flowers around it.



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A GARDENER'S WORLD

American-born Allison Ilsley has swapped a career on stage in New York for life in a quiet riverside Essex village, creating a traditional English country home and garden to match

FEATURE KAY PRESTNEY PHOTOGRAPHY BRENT DARBY

ABOVE Allison, a garden designer, loves nothing more than spending time tending the wide variety of plants and flowers she has carefully grown since moving to her home 15 years ago.



The L-shaped old red-brick house and wooden-clad barn offer shelter to this part of the garden where the family enjoy al fresco meals surrounded by year-round colour and interest, thanks to Allison's thoughtful planting.





'I like to think of our home as an eclectic, stylish, quintessentially English elderly lady'

ABOVE A sunny windowsill in the sitting room is home to a collection of cut flowers, potted herbs and house plants.

Allison Ilsley, and her husband, Richard, a management consultant and ultra-walker, have lived a global life in Chicago and London. However, their latest move proved rather shorter than their previous trans-Atlantic journeys. "We had been living in a lovely Grade II listed cottage on the far side of our village, in the pretty Dedham vale, but with two young sons – Alex and Rowan, then three and five – we decided we needed more space and a bigger garden," explains Allison.

Their five-bedroom family home used to be the staff quarters of a large red-brick Grade II listed Georgian manor house which dates back to 1740. In the mid-19th century, the building was divided into three separate dwellings and Allison and Richard's property lies beyond a bricked portico entrance that historically allowed horses to enter the yard. "I love the sense



of history that we enjoy living with here. There is so much character to the building and returning home always feels a little like stepping back in time," says Allison. One of its most interesting previous residents was the former High Commissioner of Delhi, who had the wooden floors taken up and flagstones laid throughout the main house for fear of termites eating the wood. The house has also been immortalised in a painting by famous local artist John Constable, entitled *Dedham Church and Vale*.

A box of delights, the house is reached through the garden and a series of arches and porches that lend it a cottage-like feel, yet, once inside, it opens into generously proportioned Georgian rooms. Large windows offer beautiful views of either the walled garden or the surrounding countryside, each alive with flora and fauna regardless of the season.

Moving in 15 years ago, the couple found the house was dated both in terms of decor and functionality – their priority was linking the property to mains water. "We were on a borehole water supply, which had stained the bathroom suite and lacked the pressure for a dishwasher or proper shower. It was a big expense, but life-changing when we had two small boys who spent all day getting dirty in the exciting new garden," smiles Allison. Modernising the kitchen/dining room with a new customised kitchen to create a light-filled large space where they love to entertain was also a

ABOVE A jewel-coloured antique rug picks out the vibrant blue of the velvet sofa from Loaf and the walls in Farrow & Ball's De Nimes.





game-changer. Richard is a keen chef and the couple enjoy running a local supper club with their friends and fellow foodies Briony and Paul.

With running water and structural work completed, Allison and Richard were able to turn their attention to the decor. "I would describe my style as eclectic, yet grounded in a traditional English country house style," she says. "I love antiques and old textiles, but am also partial to a charity shop rummage. I am inspired by designers such as Ben Pentreath, James Mackie and Rita Konig, and also seek design ideas from visits to stately homes, watching old films and my collection of vintage decorating books."

A traditional yet playful array of wallpapers, paint, textiles and accessories has created a characterful, timeless home which offers plenty of talking points, cosy corners and interesting vignettes. Natural cottons, thick woollens, richly coloured wood and heritage

ABOVE Inherited antique wooden furniture and a grandfather clock sit in front of a cartography-themed gallery wall in the entrance hall, which is painted in Stoney Ground by Farrow & Ball.

LEFT A granite-topped island and stools from Cox & Cox create a sociable area for the couple to entertain while cooking. Pendants from Pooky on dimmer switches provide mood lighting.



A woodburning stove keeps the open-plan kitchen/dining room cosy in the colder months. The Neptune table works hard and is one of Allison's favourite possessions. She has painted the legs and wooden chairs a deep blue to contrast with the herringbone wooden floor. Billie the cockapoo enjoys the view from her favourite perch on the sofa.





'There is so much character to the building and returning home always feels a little like stepping back in time'

ABOVE LEFT In the family bathroom, Allison has used the gentle and calming hue of Lichen by Farrow & Ball to highlight the traditional panelling and sash windows.

ABOVE RIGHT The botanical thread running through the house continues in this master bedroom gallery wall collection of vintage prints.

paints all offer a natural palette which allows the old house to breathe. "It has been a challenge living in a Georgian home, but I have learned to embrace its imperfections and to decorate in a style that celebrates wonky walls and uneven floors," Allison says. "I'm a firm believer in filling your house with things you truly love and eschewing trends; I like to think of our home as an eclectic, stylish, quintessentially English elderly lady."

With a previous career acting and singing off-Broadway in the United States, Allison stepped away from the limelight to raise her two boys, now both living away from home, studying at university. She opened a successful toy shop in the village and for seven years enjoyed the sociable side of running it, but tending to her walled garden is what ignited a passion. "Our garden is a wonderful voyage of discovery, entering through the portico into the lawned front garden, you are surrounded by period buildings entwined in flowering climbing plants and shrubs designed for year-round impact. I am constantly adding to it and each year I dig the border a little wider to make room for yet more plants!" she laughs.

Meandering lawned pathways lead to a series of 'rooms', all carefully created to make the most of their position in the garden. From an elevated seating area beneath the giant yew hedge, designed to enjoy the last rays of sunshine in midsummer, to a small gravel garden, where Allison is experimenting with plants that will survive in an increasingly dry climate. An array of English roses, standard, shrub and rambling varieties, cover the garden in sweet-scented flowers throughout the summer.

Wide perennial borders are filled with traditional English country garden planting, interspersed with plentiful herbs. Allison is passionate about encouraging bio-diversity and pesticide-free gardening, using her planting to encourage pollinators and wildlife. One of her favourite places to seek inspiration is the nearby renowned Beth Chatto garden in ▸



A muted botanical wallpaper by Sanderson makes a design statement in the principal bedroom, its theme blurring the lines between the indoors and the beautiful country views through the windows opposite. The bedside table is a family heirloom made by Allison's great-grandfather.





Elmstead, Essex where she has spent the last four years attending a series of gardening courses and is currently completing her Royal Horticultural Society Level 2 qualification. "I love to design borders for my clients with a view to creating sustainable schemes that attract wildlife with plenty of texture and diversity. Plants are always chosen with the famous Beth Chatto motto, 'Right plant, right place'," she explains.

Allison's talents can be seen throughout the village, whether it is her home-grown wreaths decorating doorways or foraged floral arches that she creates over the stone entrance to the historic local church marking special occasions. Plans are already afoot for the next addition to her garden: "I am planning to devote more space to cut flowers as it brings me great joy to gather my own blooms for the house, as gifts for friends or to be able to use them in my work," Allison says as she reaches for her secateurs to cut another sweetly scented 'Rambling Rector' rose from her favourite garden archway. ■

ABOVE Inspired by the nearby renowned Beth Chatto gardens, Allison has created a small gravel garden where a wooden Lutyens bench offers a beautiful place to enjoy a good book.

LEFT Part of the gravel garden, the tall, purple lupin spires echo the gothic metal gate pillars behind.





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The Mediterranean-style terrace outside to the rear of the property sits beside a lawn and border of roses and perennials.



FULL *BLOOM*

A French-style house in Essex has been sympathetically restored by owner Victoria Single, who has added rococo flair and connected the interior to the garden and views beyond

FEATURE ANNETTE WARREN PHOTOGRAPHY CLIVE NICHOLS





'I wanted to highlight the enfilade aspect of the linking ground floor rooms, ensuring the decor didn't detract from the beautiful view'

A French-style hunting lodge is not the usual architecture for rural Essex, but hidden down winding, wooded lanes lies a house with unmistakable Gallic features. At the end of an espaliered-lime avenue and overlooking a sweeping valley, this house has had an injection of *joie de vivre* from its owners, who could not wait to start renovating when they bought the property five years ago.

At the time, Victoria Single and her husband were living overseas, making property hunting tricky. "The agents soon knew how serious we were when they realised how far I was travelling to view properties," she remembers. The first thing the couple did was to convert the black-painted weatherboard cottage annexe in the grounds, giving them a temporary base while the house underwent major refurbishment, with the help of local architect Roger Balmer. "What is now our kitchen and boot room was previously a warren of smaller rooms. Designed by architects Quinlan Terry and Raymond Erith, the 1970s house had hardly been touched since it was built and didn't have central heating, so we knew were embarking on a big project," she adds.

Victoria collated mood boards for each room, maintaining her vision that the interior would retain a light and airy feel. "I wanted to highlight the *enfilade* aspect of the linking ground floor rooms, and ensure the decor didn't detract from the beautiful view," she explains. Painting each reception room in complementary neutral tones and dressing the rear French windows in the same cream linen curtains was the starting point. Two of the reception rooms were blessed with original parquet

ABOVE LEFT
Victoria on the elegant Georgian-style cantilevered staircase. Visit *bellamyandsingle.com* to see her interiors and garden design work.

ABOVE RIGHT
In the hallway, a wooden rocking horse is framed by French windows opening onto the terrace and grounds beyond.



French-style sofas in the sitting room are upholstered in Belgian linen. The landscape above the fireplace is by John Barker and the mother-of-pearl chest was sourced on Victoria's travels in the Middle East.





ABOVE The cupboards of the boot room are painted in a custom-mixed colour, similar to Pigeon by Farrow & Ball. Victoria enjoys creating seasonal bouquets and arrangements from flowers gathered in her garden.

LEFT The rococo-style chandelier in the dining room is from Norfolk Decorative Antiques and matches the one in the sitting room. The dining chairs are from Decorative Collective and the mahogany desk is a family piece. *The Duchess* painting is by Mandy Racine.

Victoria's design inspiration can come from a tiny detail such as the shape of a table leg or a floral motif on a mirror

flooring, so Victoria arranged for the dining room to be laid with reclaimed parquet to match and continue the feeling of flow through these spaces.

Victoria relished the task of project managing the grittier parts of the renovation but admits that bringing her mood boards to life, sourcing antique furniture and finding the perfect paint shades were the most enjoyable aspects. Luckily only one attic room had to be redecorated after a colour error. "It was supposed to be celadon green but turned out grey and depressing," she says. Prior to installing heating, the house was so cold that it was warmer outside than in, which gave Victoria the impetus to plant hundreds of trees, as well as replanting the garden.

The triple-aspect kitchen is the hub of the home with custom joinery by local company Churchill Brothers, painted in Edward Bulmer Natural Paint's Cerullian Blue to blend with the walls in the same hue. Although a hard-working space, the kitchen retains a refined elegance, accented by several pink-toned artworks. The central table is where Victoria and their two children do arts and crafts and flower arranging. "Luckily we all seem to share the same hobbies," she jokes.

Churchill Brothers was also responsible for the adjacent boot room cupboards and hidden storage behind wall panelling in the dining room. "The company was brilliant and rose to every design challenge," Victoria says. The boot room has to fulfil many uses including laundry, dog room and flower room, but is spacious enough to accommodate Victoria's extensive vase collection.

When asked where her design inspiration comes from, Victoria says it can be sparked by a tiny detail, such as the shape of a table leg or a floral motif on a mirror, which might then inform the choice of wall lights, furniture and fabrics. Mixing styles and eras gives the home a timeless appeal. "My love of antiques stems from my childhood



The kitchen table is a reproduction of a French monastery table and the Swedish chairs were found on Decorative Collective. The Ribchester Belfast sink is from Shaws of Darwen and the taps are from Perrin & Rowe.





'My love of antiques stems from my childhood holidays in France, rummaging around brocante fairs with my parents'

holidays in France, rummaging around brocante fairs with my parents."

The pleasingly symmetrical, single-width house stretches out from a central entrance hall. Painted in Portland Stone by Little Greene, the hallway is dominated by a floor-to-ceiling mirror that is original to the house. The elegant space features a rococo console table, a bergère sofa given a modern twist by being reupholstered in Artemis – a flamboyant floral by House of Hackney – and a vintage rocking horse. The sinuous staircase mirrors the curved cloakroom door beneath it, original to the building and the inspiration behind Victoria's Instagram page 'The Curved Door'. The walls of the hall cloakroom are papered in vintage Nobilis wallpaper, bought in Sheffield when Victoria was studying law there. "I fell in love with the design and bought three end-of-rolls for £3. We had to hang the paper in panels to eke it out – luckily we had just enough!"

Stately plaster panels and busts adorn the walls of the hall, stairway and landing. "It's my homage to [Sir John] Soane," laughs Victoria. While some of the pieces are antique, most are reproductions, such as the plaster casts of the Elgin Marbles.

Victoria sourced all the antique or second-hand furnishings for the house, including a couple of enormous antique rugs which soften the parquet floors. The matching rococo chandeliers in the downstairs reception rooms were a local find. "We all gather in the sitting room to play board games and watch television," Victoria says. The dining room, despite its formality, is often host to groups of family and friends, presided over by *The Duchess* – a modern take on an old master, painted by Mandy Racine.

ABOVE LEFT The enormous mirror in the hallway is original to the house. The spherical lantern is from Jamb and the gilt sconces were sourced from LCT Home.

ABOVE RIGHT A pale pink striped cushion on the bed in the guest bedroom, complemented by cut roses from the garden. The antique portrait is of a relative of Victoria's.



Looking through the upstairs landing towards the guest bedroom, where the walls painted in Cuisse de Nymphe Emue by Edward Bulmer Natural Paint are teamed with Artemis wallpaper by House of Hackney.

'I like nothing more than spending time in the garden. We are blessed with several old varieties of roses which are superb for cutting'



Having been brought up in the Cornish countryside, Victoria is happiest outside. "I like nothing more than spending time in the garden. Previous owners used to grow roses commercially here, so we are blessed with several old varieties which are superb for cutting," she says. Having recently completed a garden design course at Beth Chatto Gardens, she has set up a new design venture, Bellamy & Single, with her friend Stina, providing interior and garden design and antiques sourcing services. Victoria's late mother was a huge influence on both her house and her garden. "I learnt so much about gardens, antiques, art and floristry from her and have inherited her extensive collection of gardening books," she explains. ■

ABOVE The view in the early morning light looks out over a stone balustrade to the woodland planted by Victoria and her predecessors.

LEFT Espalier limes line the gravel driveway, framing the view of the French-style hunting lodge. The front door is framed by two Haddonstone grey planters, each housing topiary box balls.



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GLOBAL SPIRIT

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FEATURE CHARLOTTE DUNFORD PHOTOGRAPHY ASTRID TEMPLIER

ABOVE Colourful textiles collected by the homeowner, Annabelle Hicks, have been hung on the wall and draped over an antique Victorian faux bamboo ladder from Clubhouse Interiors. The 18th-century Swedish sofa is from Nikki Page Antiques.
LEFT The Midsummer Night's Dream chandelier from French Bedroom adds a whimsical touch to the salon. A Love Your Home Bloomsbury loose cover sofa has been upholstered in Designs of the Times' Mula, and the elm coffee table is from Andy Thornton.





'I have a lot of things I've collected and my own slightly wild, eclectic style'

ABOVE The arch leading from the salon to the adjoining snug has been highlighted with Red Ochre from Edward Bulmer Natural Paint. Wittle Designs reupholstered the mahogany Bergere five-piece suite from Brown Elliott.

LEFT The existing Bulthaup kitchen has been updated with marble worktops from Marble City, a stainless steel section by Luxury Building Services, and Farrow & Ball's Treron on the kitchen island.

A fusion of cultures, brought together through a fascinating array of global textiles and artwork, dominates the interiors of this London home. A contrast from their 18th-century farmhouse in Buckinghamshire, Annabelle Hicks and her husband were searching for a second home in the city when they came across the four-storey townhouse. Over the past year, with the help of Adam Knight of Nefarious Design and his team, their home has been imbued with personality through a playful mix of colour and pattern.

The couple were attracted at first by the central location of the 19th-century Georgian house. "We wanted to be somewhere in London where my husband could walk to work and where we were close to museums, shops and galleries," explains Annabelle. "We also liked the idea of there being lots of different nationalities in this area. It is a little bit eclectic."



The palette for the breakfast nook follows the colours of a set of plates collected by Annabelle which now hang on the wall. A repainted storage bench creates the banquette seating, covered in cushions in an array of striped Ian Mankin fabrics.



Having seen the team at Nefarious work with one of her friends, Annabelle was keen to collaborate with them. However, she wanted to be sure they were going to be able to capture her unique style, so she invited them to her Buckinghamshire home to experience and understand the intricacies of her aesthetic. "I have a lot of things that I've collected and I have my own slightly wild, eclectic style. They needed to understand that, that it was never going to be purely elegant."

The couple were blessed with good foundations to build upon as the townhouse had seen many additions over the years, including an extension at the rear and the excavation of a basement floor. Yet, the period details, renowned in Georgian buildings for bringing a sense of elegance and character, had been largely covered up and so undoing this became a priority. "When we bought the house there were parts of it that were sort of boxed up. Some of the mouldings were not visible because people had built cupboards over them," Annabelle recalls. "We removed all the joinery, cupboards, shelving, everything except for the original staircase, and we tried to expose what we could of what was there originally."

A major influence in the interior decoration was Annabelle's love of colour and pattern, passions that have undoubtedly developed due to her immersion in various cultures worldwide, from her South African heritage to living in both Japan and America. "I am obsessed with textiles and I come from a family who have been involved with them for generations. I collect them and I sew," she says. Her extensive collection, amassed over years of travelling, tells tales of her adventures and has ensured her own personality is woven throughout the home.

Old and new furnishings in a mix of styles blend effortlessly



ABOVE In the hallway, an antique lantern from Haes Antiques complements the gothic detailing on the bespoke radiator cover painted by Amanda Sutton. The stair runner is from Roger Oates Design.
LEFT Mandarin Stone's Calacatta Amber honed marble tiles create a serene atmosphere in the main bathroom, seen in a variety of shapes on the floor, wall and bath. The bespoke basin was designed by Nefarious.

When first planning the house with Adam, Annabelle was adamant that she was not going to buy any more fabric. "I had absolutely stacks and stacks of all kinds: ethnic, quilted, patched, hand-woven, narrow-loom and so on." Keen on utilising this trove of textiles, the design team came up with clever ways to incorporate them seamlessly into the interior schemes, such as the pair of patchwork curtains in the principal bedroom. These were crafted from thin strips of African Kente cloth and make a colourful, one-of-a-kind addition to the home.

The house is full of myriad thoughtful and considered touches. From the installation of a stainless steel worktop in the kitchen to aid



The guest room has been painted with Paint & Paper Library's Paper III, a soft, calming shade. Pooky's in-built Mumford wall light has been paired with a colour-pop orange Ikat shade. The artworks above the bed are 19th-century etching prints.



Annabelle's penchant for cooking, to the bespoke joinery in the guest bedrooms with in-built wall lights and bedside tables. Taking Annabelle's idea of a hand-painted radiator cover in the entrance hall as a starting point, the team found decorative artist Amanda Sutton and proposed painting multiple areas of the home. Now, intricate frescos and motifs, with an ethereal feel, fill alcoves and create borders, drawing attention to the charming Georgian features and proportions of the house.

Although minimal building work was required for the majority of the rooms, the main bathroom was a different story. "I knew from the start that if there was one room I was going to change comprehensively, it was that one," says Annabelle. The previous American-style bathroom was ripped out and Adam designed a new scheme from scratch. "He decided to put an archway in front of the bath and he picked the marble and I immediately liked it when he showed me. Most people say it's the best room in the house."

One of the grandest spaces is the salon, with its high ceilings and tall 19th-century sash windows. "It's one of the reasons I bought the house, it is just the most beautiful room to me," Annabelle explains. The coving, architraves and ceiling rose have been carefully highlighted through the use of contrasting colours, while the original fireplace, which had to be removed due to restrictions by law, has been replaced with a limestone recreation. Old and new furnishings in a mix of styles, influenced by Annabelle's mantra of choosing things she loves rather than pieces that go together, blend effortlessly, creating a warm and welcoming space for entertaining. "It is meant to be a house where people can come and visit," she adds, and hosting friends and family continues to be one of the couple's great joys.

'I am obsessed with textiles – quilted, patched, hand-woven and so on'



ABOVE A large 18th-century Louis XV headboard from French Farmhouse Antiques brings a sense of grandeur to the principal bedroom. The Mini Wave tables are from Georgie Wykeham and the bespoke curtains were made by Elephant Road Studios.

LEFT For one of Annabelle's sons, Nefarious designed a bespoke shelving unit, made by Grey Oak Joinery, to maximise space and storage in the small attic room.

Just as collections continue to evolve, Annabelle's house is ever-changing. "I keep moving things around and getting Adam and the team back because I've changed my mind about something," she laughs. However, trips to what was meant to be their second home have become much more frequent for Annabelle and her husband. "We're spending more and more time in the townhouse here in London. When we're in England, it's almost now permanently where we stay. We just spend weekends in Buckinghamshire," she finishes. A true indication of the characterful and welcoming spaces she has created. ■

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STYLE INSPIRATION

Bring the beauty of the garden to interiors with botanical designs, glean designer advice on using checks, decide on wood or stone flooring with our expert guide...and more ➤



IN GOOD COMPANY

Celebrating the creative camaraderie that exemplified the Arts and Crafts movement, Morris & Friends showcases 160 years of designs by William Morris and his fellow artists. Updated designs sit together as good friends should, each with their own character yet complementing one another. The works of less recognised 19th-century female creatives in particular are championed, such as Kate Faulkner's Bramble, used on the cushion. *Wallpaper, Bamboo, Sunflower, £160 a roll; Redcar Stripe, Emery Blue, £105 a metre; Bramble, Sunflower, £99 a metre, all Morris & Co*

FEATURE KATY MCLEAN



THIS IMAGE *Selection of fabrics and trims from the Arboretum collection; wallpaper, Sycamore & Oak, Botanical Green, £329 a roll, all Sanderson*

OPPOSITE Step into an English country garden at bedtime with this charming trellis design. *Wallpaper, Rose trellis, Verdure, £320 a roll, Madeaux by Richard Smith, available at Jane Clayton*

Nature's palette

Introduce native flowers and trees into interiors through patterns and palettes inspired by English country gardens

Botanical motifs are a perennially popular choice for interiors and work best when in harmony with the garden using designs featuring native flowers and plants. From springtime bulbs to summer roses and autumn dahlias, as well as leafy patterns and trees, the world outside provides a perfect mood board of inspiration. Take cues from colour palettes to create a curated look – whether the rosy pinks of blushing blooms or taking a cleaner look through stylised blue interpretations, there are many ways to create a biophilic celebration indoors. ▸





Hand-painted depictions of garden scenes and beautiful florals fill The Gardens Vol II collection from Cole & Son. *Curtains, Grande Fleur Linen Union, £145 a metre, Cole & Son*

Leafy Greens

Greens are a natural choice for botanical designs and can be layered harmoniously for a calming yet fresh feel. Crisper whites can be used for a touch of contrast, and obviously, natural floral colours will sit well in highlights – pinks, yellows, or even a dash of purple can be a pretty addition. Leafy patterns are the natural choice for green hues, and the soothing nature of green allows for some bolder choices of large-scale patterns and mixing and matching motifs. Combine them with small-scale geometrics or trellis patterns and designs featuring organic leaves, trailing vines, or fruit trees. Larger scale, mural-style papers can help create an immersive garden feel, perfect for a sitting room that opens onto the garden.

PAINT SWATCHES, FROM LEFT *Trailing Willow, £59 for 2.5l Perfect Matt Emulsion, Designers Guild; Royal Grass Green, £60 for 2.5l Emulsion, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint; Summer Lichen, £51.50 for 2.5l Matt Emulsion, Fired Earth*

FABRIC & WALLPAPER SWATCHES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Elsi, Canopy, £73 a metre, Romo; Matilija, Sage, £205 a roll, Lake August at The Fabric Collective; Albie, Green, £69 a roll, Jane Churchill at Colefax and Fowler; Pivoine Grasscloth, Green, £940 a roll, Madeaux by Richard Smith, available at Jane Clayton; Showering Pears, Somerset Green, £144 a metre, Eloise Home at The Fabric Collective; Summer Peony, £179 a roll, GP & J Baker*



Rosy Pinks

Pretty pink tones work well for floral designs – particularly rose-inspired patterns. This palette can be taken to a dreamy, romantic look with blowsy chintz patterns on relaxed, antiqued linens, or given a more modern feel in more stylised, graphic depictions of blooms. This can be an unashamedly feminine scheme, so embrace intricate embroidery and embellishments that add prettiness. However, to avoid a contrived feel, pair a floral design on walls or fabrics with some block colour, perhaps in a sumptuous velvet or silk, or a soft wash of matt painted colour. A few soft touches of green will enliven and balance a warm, pink scheme – replicating the soft infusion of colours in a classic rose garden.

PAINT SWATCHES, FROM LEFT *Faded Rose, £55 for 2.5l Elite Emulsion, Zoffany; Peony Pink, £49 for 2.5l Active Emulsion, Sanderson; DH Blossom, £49.37 for 2.5l Velvet Matt Emulsion, Dulux Heritage*

RIGHT Use pinks for a romantic, feminine bedroom scheme. *Duquette headboard, from £2,100, Trove by Studio Duggan*





FABRIC & WALLPAPER SWATCHES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Abberley, Clay, £163 a metre, Cloth & Clover at The Fabric Collective; Poles & Roses II, £148 a roll, Petra Palumbo; Dahlia, Red, £99.22 a roll, Sarah Vanrenen at The Fabric Collective; Pink Petal, £228 a metre, Penny Morrison*

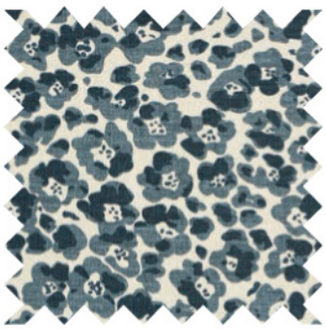
LEFT A classic rose print is given a smart feel in a tiled repeat combined with check. *Rose, Faded Red, £129 a roll, Långelid/von Brömssen*



Florals bring a pretty feel to a kitchen. *V&A Flower Meadow, Celeste, £124 a roll, 1838 Wallcoverings*











FABRIC & WALLPAPER SWATCHES, FROM TOP
Patanga, Azure, £270 a metre, Charlotte Johnstone for Soane Britain; Honeysuckle, £288 a metre, Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler; Florence, £141 a metre, Cathy Nordström; Briar, Indigo, £178 a metre, Inchyra; Mughal, Sky Indigo, £228 a metre, Molly Mahon



Blissful Blues

Shades of blue can bring a clean, unfussy look to botanicals. Blues are calm and cool so give a fresh feel that can temper the prettiness of florals. Cool and collected, blues are soothing and classic. They can allow for busier patterns in a pared-back blue and neutral palette that allows the design to sing. Hints of mustard yellow are a modern way to add another dimension to a blue-and-white palette, or for a more classic feel, blues chime with similar shades of green, too – perhaps at the duck egg or aqua end of the spectrum. Best of all, layering multiple shades of blue will always work, so mix in some inkier navy tones to add depth to fresh sky and cornflower blues.



Soft blue gives a new look to an oak leaf design. *Blanche, Dove Blue, £110 a roll, Cathy Nordström*

ABOVE An iconic William Morris design in fresh blues. *Fingal two-seater sofa in Pimpernel Indigo velvet, £1,600, Sofa.com*

PAINT SWATCHES, FROM TOP
Pompadour, £45 for 2.5l Chalky Emulsion, Craig & Rose; Pea Flower Tea, £54.50, 2.5l Estate Emulsion, Farrow & Ball; Pale Lupin, £57.50 for 2.5l Absolute Matt Emulsion, Little Greene





Naturally Neutral

Working with the chic, warm tones of brown, cream and beige combined with the delicacy of biophilic patterns can create a balanced scheme with character and calm. Woodland-style patterns are a clear choice here – perhaps with a few birds or animals for further charm. This colour palette brings warmth and a slightly autumnal feel, yet can feel fresh for year-round appeal when teamed with soft white linens or a gentle hint of nude pink. For a stronger look, look to ochres or embrace rich brown walls and add prettiness through a trailing leaf pattern or unexpected



LEFT Calming neutrals set the scene for a home office. *Georgia, Blue, £84 a metre, Colefax and Fowler*

PAINT SWATCHES, FROM LEFT *Grouse, £61 for 2.5l Marble Matt Emulsion, Mylands; Mink, £60 for 2.5l Pure Flat Emulsion, Paint & Paper Library; Blackthorn, £59 for 2.5l Chalky Matt Emulsion, Morris & Co*



FABRIC & WALLPAPER SWATCHES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Mawar, Chestnut, £480 a roll, Charlotte Johnstone for Soane Britain; Verdant, £1,145 a metre, Robert Kime x Chelsea Textiles; Nutcracker, Plaster Pink, £156 a roll, Juliet Travers; Folia, Calico, £95 a metre, Villa Nova*

RIGHT Ethereal sheers are given an extra level of pretty detail with a floral embroidery. *Fiora, Blush, £110 a metre, Villa Nova*



FEATURE KATY MCLEAN



For a soothing backdrop, embrace a truly nature-inspired scheme with a charming woodland scene. *Woodland Chorus, Cream/ Multi, £95 a roll, Sanderson*



CHECKS

Creative Combinations

Continuing our series celebrating the evolution of colour and pattern, we explore how trends and historical influences have shaped British interiors, this time examining the enduring appeal of checks

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE

Deriving from the ancient Persian word 'shah', which means 'king' in an early form of chess, checks have been a decorative staple in interiors and fashion for centuries. The chequerboard pattern has been identified in Bronze Age pottery as well as in Roman design, and its usage remains familiar on chess boards, in weaving and via its popular variant, tartan. In fashion, checks remain a perennial motif, from the lining of Burberry's coats to chic decorative emblems on suits and skirts. Its formation is repeated in architecture, too, in the form of bricks or tiles in varying tones or materials. Inside, chequerboard floors, particularly in monochrome, are a decorative staple of Victorian hallways. Like stripes, checks are ▸

OPPOSITE In this rural kitchen by interior designer Emma Ainscough, cabinetry in Farrow & Ball's Yonder is given a jaunty edge thanks to a burgundy-and-white check tile arrangement.

THIS PAGE A colourful blend of classic checks and stripes, including the Idler sofa from Nix by Nicola Harding in Checkmate and Intelligent Velvet, lend relaxed appeal to this sitting room.









'I enjoy the comforting character of checked fabrics. They are a brilliant way of adding depth and pattern'

Nicola Harding, interior designer

ABOVE LEFT A traditional chaise longue in a period scheme has been informally reframed with Schumacher's Crawford Check.

ABOVE RIGHT In this bathroom by Otta Design, zellige chequerboard tiles are complemented by mustard yellow linear wall panelling for a youthful feel.

LEFT The Pavilion suite at Lime Wood Hotel combines stripes, geometrics and a headboard in Susie Atkinson's Checkerboard for a layered, textural look.

` repetitive and harmonious to the eye, which has the effect of being reassuringly grounding. This pattern can bring both rigour and dynamism to a scheme, making it a timeless addition to interiors.

Check mate

Few patterns have transcended genres more successfully than checks, from tartans and plaids to ginghams. Their appeal extends beyond rustic chic and into modern schemes, thanks to evolving colourways and playful scales. They have a timeless quality that speaks of a bygone era, while their simplicity ensures they can easily complement a contemporary scheme. "I enjoy the comforting character of checked fabrics," says interior designer Nicola Harding. "They are a brilliant way of adding depth and pattern. You can layer them on top of each other or you can use them alongside more detailed or complicated patterns to create a sense of contrast. Traditionally seen as utilitarian fabrics, checks, along with ticking,



In this scheme by Tamsin Saunders of Home & Found, a sofa upholstered in Bennison's Tooth Check in Yellow Zanzibar on Beige gives this palette of neutrals depth and gravitas.



LEFT Bert & May's plain Stone tiles in Jade and Brighton laid in a check pattern offset the aged brass elements in this otherwise traditional bathroom.

BELOW LEFT This all-enveloping checked scheme featuring Salvesen Graham's Great Check allows bed and walls to blend seamlessly for a cohesive feel.

BELOW RIGHT In this rustic kitchen scheme, a marble chequerboard floor by Floors of Stone complements the Carrara marble fluted butler's sink and worktop from deVOL.





used to be consigned to the role of lining fabrics in previously back-of-house areas such as kitchens. Now they are taking a more prominent role as our homes become more relaxed and sturdy fabrics are applied to everything from sofa upholstery and drapery to duvet covers and bed skirts."

The versatility of checks allows for the option of a bold pattern in strong statement colours or a subtler design that will provide a textural backdrop and allow other features to stand out. They can be used across multiple schemes, from kitchen splashbacks to an upholstered bench. The key is to consider scale, colourway and whether they are to be paired with plains or other patterns. "From curtains and blinds to antique stools and chairs or gathered within cupboard doors, checks (along with their brother, the stripe) perfectly balance a patterned scheme, often delivering a more masculine contrast to a feminine floral," believes designer Octavia Dickinson. "They are also useful when one needs to keep an eye on costs, due to their simple design. In that respect, they are a great choice for curtains or a bed valance where copious fabric is needed."

Though checks evoke a certain nostalgia, a larger, crisper scale of this repeat strikes a fresh, contemporary air. Generous checks are bolder and can be used as a statement piece within a room, says interior designer Susie Atkinson. "Smaller checks are great as accents and less dominating because they can often be read from afar as a plain."

Square up

This pattern is a great way to add rigour to a scheme, injecting an easy sense of modernity if used unexpectedly. It can bring playful gravitas to the architectural features of a room by lining the inside of a fireplace with checked tiles, framing windows with a wide checked curtain fabric, or adding a check tiled wall above a kitchen counter or around a chimney breast. Checks serve these 'backbone' elements well because they introduce a softly graphic note that can pull a scheme together. "We recently upholstered an octagonal ottoman in a bold check," say Hutley & Hum's Melissa Hutley and Charlie Hum. "It added visual impact and featured all the colours within the scheme, so it was an excellent way of bringing everything back to the centre of the room. Stripes, checks and other patterns can sit together well as long as the colours are in the same tonal family."





ABOVE RIGHT A large-scale neutral check introduces a softly contemporary feel to a period setting in this kitchen scheme by Veere Grenney.

RIGHT This attic bathroom by Octavia Dickinson features a gingham Roman blind in Gigi Poppy by Nicole Fabre with trim by Samuel & Sons to soften hard surfaces. A gathered muslin voile adds privacy.



Of course, checks are also a natural choice for floors and walls. Experimenting with tile placement, such as a diagonal arrangement, introduces a sense of movement and adds a modern touch to a classic motif. "Smaller patterns create a more detailed and intricate design that works well as a feature wall in the bathroom or as a kitchen splashback," says Bert & May's creative director, Lee Thornley. "Alternatively, bold checks in contrasting shades create a feeling of drama and energy and serve as an eye-catching feature."

Floor coverings and wallpapers both create a surprisingly liveable backdrop, with wider, plainer checks on the wall often helping to make a space feel bigger. "We also use them in our checkered jute collection of rugs," says Tate & Darby's Kirsty Darby. "Combining hardwearing jute with a brightly coloured check adds an unusual injection of colour, making practical flooring feel contemporary and fun."

Playing with scale is a great way to contemporise this look, and, recently, super-sized checks have returned to the spotlight. Interior designer Beata Heuman's Jumbo Gingham is a bold but neutral fabric that pays homage to traditional Swedish interiors and looks impactful on a chair or long bench. Salvesen Graham's winning combination of frills and checks, including their Great Check cushions, adds a playful element to bedrooms.



'Checks (along with their brother, the stripe) perfectly balance a patterned scheme, often delivering a more masculine contrast to a feminine floral'

Octavia Dickinson, interior designer

ABOVE In this country sitting room by Sims Hilditch, a large-scale check in an easy-on-the-eye neutral adds definition and interest to the sofa back.

LEFT Tiled plain Brighton Stone and limestone flooring by Bert & May in a simple check arrangement lends soft formality to a rustic bathroom.

"We incorporated the large-scale check into our collection as we love how this works as upholstery or on curtains for a bolder look," says Mary Graham.

There are few no-nos when it comes to checks, but Neptune's Simon Temprell advises avoiding very large-scale checked fabric on upholstery as it can distort the lines of the piece and look clumsy. "In addition, try not to mix checks together unless they have dramatically different scales," he says.

Out of the box

Playing with colourways, edges and angles are all clever ways to revitalise the check. The work of Gambian-born Paboy Bojang is a contemporary take on this classic pattern – his hand-sewn sweet wrapper-coloured checks, including the fringed Patchwork cushion in wine red and rose pink, are inspired by his current asylum in Italy's vibrant Naples and bring a playful, Mediterranean twist to a classic design.



A red-and-white check border, Ernie by Susie Atkinson, adds definition and playful appeal to a bedroom doorway.





An unexpected hit of this pattern keeps the look modern too. As well as scaling up the repeat, choose unusual settings such as all four walls of a cloakroom. Or consider a headboard upholstered in gingham. "I also like to use a check on deep buttoning; it throws it into more abstract design," says Violet & George's Nicky Mudie. "Another option when upholstering is to flip the checks from straight in one area, onto the bias adjacent so the repeats clash for a more dynamic look."

Though classic monochrome never goes out of fashion, brown and white, yellow, pink and green are all elegant options. "We recently used our new Woodman check in Berber Brown in Veere's new London apartment," says Veere Grenney's Natasha Greig. "It's a crisp brown-and-white cotton windowpane check, which we used on his bed and curtains, complemented by chocolate-coloured Alpaca walls. The room is handsome, tailored and cosy."

Chequered patterns can work with more intricate options, as long as there are pause points in the scheme for the eye to rest. Interior designer Sarah Peake recently used yellow and white zellige tiles for a bathroom in a London pied-à-terre to act as a foil for ornate floral floor tiles. "It worked because the two patterns were broken up by a plain white bath, so did not jar," she says.

Checking in

As ever, fashion feeds into the perennial appeal of checks. "I really like the colours and combinations from the 1930s to the 1970s," says La Manufacture Cogolin's Sarah Henry. "Not brown and orange or the space-age colours of the 1950s, but haute-couture fashion hues from the period. There are really interesting greens and pinks and Bordeaux tones that we don't see as much in current design. I find that combining bolder tones – such as yellow and turquoise instead of black and white – can lend a more contemporary look to a traditional check."

Sometimes all that is needed is a small touch, whether using a tartan or checked wallpaper on the back of bookshelves, or as Bennison's Louise Laycock suggests, introducing checks on the back of dining chairs to add interest in an unexpected place, or to edge a pair of curtains. "I like to work with warm colourways such as pink, coral, yellow and ochre," she says. "Everything looks better with a warm backdrop." Simple and honest, yet eye-catching and informal, this is a pattern with enduring appeal. ■

ABOVE LEFT In this softly neutral living room scheme, Neptune's Matilda armchair upholstered in Fermoie's Cove results in undulating linear checks for a modern take on a classic design.

LEFT A crisp blue and white shower curtain in Pauline Check Casement by Schumacher adds a timeless feel to this traditional country bathroom.

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CHECK IT OUT

Often thought of as a cosy winter print, these check patterns have a lighter aesthetic that brings a softer and genteel mood to interiors

1 Saybrook check wallpaper by Anna French, £120 a roll, Jane Clayton **2** Ceramic checked vase, £15; Gingham tablecloth, £25; Gingham cutlery, £38 (set of 16), and all other accessories, Marks & Spencer **3** The Rattan Walpole mirror, £4,200, Soane Britain **4** Gingham Ruffle boudoir cushion, £40, French Bedroom **5** Rattan headboard, £800 (super king), Birdie Fortescue **6** Chequers Court marble tiles with a bevelled edge, £128.37 a square metre, Fired Earth **7** Gustav Chequer bedside table, £1,850, Trove by Studio Duggan **8** Dresser Check organic cotton fabric, £85 a metre, Tori Murphy **9** Kinver deep buttoned bench footstool, customer's own material, try Kintyre check fabric by Ian Mankin for similar, from £499, The Footstool Workshop **10** Rose gingham lampshade, from £84 (extra small), Hum London **11** Sandford chair, £2,850 (plus eight metres of fabric required, shown here in Cove by Fermoie), David Seyfried **12** Deca rug, from £1,595, Roger Oates Design **13** Luxury Check pure wool throw, £105, Soak & Sleep **14** Jacques tableware, £POA, Katharine Pooley ■

FEATURE SUZANNA LE GROVE

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ABOVE & RIGHT Westland London reattached the original veneers, reinstated broken mouldings, then cleaned and revived the polish to remove extensive water damage to bring this Queen Anne walnut cabinet-on-chest back to life.

FAR RIGHT Dating to around the turn of the 19th century, this French armchair from Home Barn has been given a deconstructed look. The front legs are original and the back legs are new.



AGE-OLD DEBATE

When should an antique be repaired, restored or updated? Industry experts outline the case for and against making changes to well-loved pieces

Unique, interesting and full of character, antiques undoubtedly add much to a decorating scheme, and are a sustainable choice, too: often superior in materials and craftsmanship to modern furnishings, they are the ultimate in 'recycling'. However, as is the nature with items that are, by definition, more than 100 years old, not every piece is in perfect, original condition. It is wise to question when it may be appropriate to restore an antique, or even to alter it for modern use and aesthetics, and when it is preferable (or even advisable) to leave it untouched. Quality, functionality and aesthetics are all considerations.

CHOOSING TO ALTER AN ANTIQUE

Before any kind of repair, restoration or alteration, it is essential to understand the age and provenance of the piece itself, its intended function and its value. Examples of valid work could include repairing joints, replacing missing parts, or refinishing surfaces that would only deteriorate further over time. It is always advisable to consult an expert before commissioning alterations.

Customise – while preserving authenticity

Interior designer Susie Atkinson, of Studio Atkinson, has a Unique Finds collection of customised antiques, comprising



ABOVE This Edwardian four-poster bed has been given a new lease of life by designer Octavia Dickinson, with old screws replaced, new caps on the posts, and the headboard upholstered. The fabric elements are all new and a bespoke mattress, with cut-out corners, was made to fit.



RIGHT A newly upholstered antique tub chair, with fresh paintwork to match, from Unique Finds by Studio Atkinson.



vintage and antique pieces that have been restored and updated for modern use. "Our goal is to enhance the functionality and aesthetic while maintaining a harmonious balance with the piece's original shape and function," she says. "We always try to avoid over-restoration or inappropriate alteration in order to preserve the inherent value of an antique. We're intentional in our customisations, ensuring they complement rather than overshadow the intrinsic character of the originals. While some pieces call for vibrant and exciting additions such as a checked upholstery, others call for a simple paint job or new wood stain."

Consider aesthetics and longevity

For interior designer Octavia Dickinson, an antique would need restoring or repairing if it cannot function as it should or if a break, mark or other problem interferes with its aesthetics and, therefore, its integrity. "The latter is subjective, so while we advise clients, they do have the final say," she says, adding: "If we are buying for ourselves or for our collection, then we take the simple rule of what would look best and be in the best interest of the longevity of the piece. We try to always be sympathetic to pieces, as what we like about them is their age and their history, and often the marks are all part of this."

Reversible repairs

Furniture antiques dealer Lennox Cato advises that the principle of conservation is that any repairs or alterations should be reversible. While the value of an antique may depend on how much of it remains in its original state, Cato says that there are times when it is definitely acceptable to carry out alterations. "An 18th- century work table can be more saleable by taking out the work bag hanging below," he says. "Remove the basket, keep the slide and replace it with leather or fabric, and it works very well as a side table." Replacing upholstery is another good example. "It's always okay to do this," he says. "The exception being very old, original needlepoint, in which case have it cleaned and conserved so that it's fit for purpose. New upholstery can be in modern fabrics, colours and patterns, but you do have to be sympathetic to the frame, and reupholster to the original form." Within these parameters, he says: "Be brave, don't be precious, and do what makes you happy."

MINIMISING ANTIQUE ALTERATIONS

Some experts advocate the bare minimum of repairs or even, if a damaged piece is purely decorative and its condition is not likely to deteriorate further, leaving it as it is in order to enjoy its unique appearance.

Retaining silhouette and patina

Interior designer Tamsin Saunders of Home & Found tries to leave old furniture just as it is whenever possible. "I love the patina," she says. "The worn arm of a chair, the lustre of antique

LEFT In a scheme by VSP Interiors, a claw-foot bath has been re-enamelled and the original paintwork on the outside preserved to complement the hand-painted, chinoiserie wall.

RIGHT In this project by Kitesgrove, an early 20th-century mahogany wing armchair was reupholstered in blue linen and worn velvet, and a jacquard on the deconstructed back.

'Be brave, don't be precious, and do what makes you happy'





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velvet, the natural fade of vintage fabric worn by resting bodies or wriggling bottoms over the years. I love the unique silhouette of an old chair or sofa, the unusual shape and warm tones of its legs, and the patina and detail of its brass castors." When reupholstering is necessary, Saunders uses traditional techniques and antique textiles where possible, perhaps combining them with new fabrics that have gentle textures such as velvet, cord and linen, and hand-block prints in natural tones. "I try to ensure each piece retains its quiet beauty," she concludes.

When a piece cannot otherwise be used

Altering an antique in order to continue its life may be the only alternative to throwing it away. Interior designer Pippa Paton advocates three options. "If a piece has been damaged over time with surface marks, such as watermarks, stains and so on, then it might be worth stripping back and refinishing it as if new, to give it its next lease of life. However, if the piece has developed a beautiful patina over time but has functional damage such as a broken drawer or leg, then it may need to be repaired in order to function properly – but without affecting the patina which has built up over time. The third possibility is where a piece is of relatively low value or is of little use, but can be upcycled to repurpose it for use as something different today."

The restorer's approach

There are two approaches to restoration, explains Laura Dadswell, director of Westland London. "We believe that antiques should be used and loved, so ensuring that they are functional is key to what we do. The first approach is to make what we would call an 'honest' repair to a piece of furniture. This entails leaving any repair distinguishable to show the history of the piece. The other approach, which we would use for fine furniture, is to repair using traditional techniques and matching materials, so any repairs or refinished areas should, where possible, go unnoticed." Generally, Dadswell advocates a minimal approach. "I fundamentally believe that if you set about altering an antique piece just to suit your taste, or an interior, then perhaps you should look at an altogether different object. You risk stripping away the essence, the patina, that made that object special." ■

'If you set about altering an antique piece to suit an interior, perhaps you should look at an altogether different object'





ABOVE In the home of interior designer Tamsin Saunders, this Napoleon III armchair has been given a contemporary twist in Marthe Armitage's hand-block printed Chestnut fabric.
RIGHT This Scottish laburnum-wood worktable from Lennox Cato has been converted into a case for holding jewellery.

RESOURCES FOR BUYING, ALTERING AND RESTORING ANTIQUES

- A J Brett, one of London's leading restorers of antique furniture. *ajbrett.co.uk*
- BADA, the British Antique Dealers' Association: the leading trade association for the fine art, design and antiques community. *bada.org*
- BAFRA, the British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association: a nationwide organisation of craftspeople committed to upholding the highest standards in furniture restoration and conservation. *bafra.org.uk*
- The Collector Antiques, family-run specialist in art and furniture restoration for private individuals, art collectors, insurance companies and others across the North of England and the UK. *thecollectorantiques.com*
- LAPADA, the UK's largest association of art and antiques dealers. *lapada.org*
- Lennox Cato, one of the country's leading antiques establishments. *lennoxcato.com*
- Temple Studios, high-quality furniture conservation and restoration services for institutions, museums, historic houses and private clients. *temple-studios.co.uk*
- Westland London, dealer in fine and prestigious architectural and decorative antiques, with a specialist team of restorers who employ traditional craft skills. *westlandlondon.com*

FEATURE KATHERINE SORRELL PHOTOGRAPHS (HOME BARN) © MARK COCKSEDGE; (KITESGROVE) © MARK BOLTON PHOTOGRAPHY; (LENNOX CATO) © KAREN BENGALL PHOTOGRAPHY



Homage *at home*

Seek fresh planting inspiration from some of England's most revered gardens

Rejuvenate home gardens with tried and tested ideas gleaned from the nation's leading horticultural destinations. Showcasing distinct and pioneering approaches to planting and landscape design, visiting these gardens will not only soothe and entertain with their floral displays, but also inspire and inform. Whether searching for new ways to reimagine a secluded home terrace, border or parterre, these remarkable gardens – and their respective head gardeners – provide an invaluable insight and expert advice.



Companion planting encourages healthy, organic crops in the kitchen garden at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxfordshire.





The Forecourt Borders at Cliveden

Epitomising the grandeur and elegance of a bygone age, the gardens at Cliveden always impress. Once home to the Astor family, today managed by the National Trust, the sheer scale of opulence and drama are still evident in the majestic Forecourt Borders. Densely planted with hardworking perennials and backed with imposing brick walls, these deep borders overflow with floral colour from April right through to late autumn.

The design – by the late, great horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas – was split into two, with one side of the border devoted to soft, cool colours and the other to stronger, hot hues. Many of the same plants are still available and can be combined at home for similar effect. "If softer colours are what you are after, try garden catmint, *Hylotelephium spectabile*, cranesbill 'Johnson's Blue' with globe thistle 'Taplow Blue' giving height and structure," explains Cliveden head gardener Anthony Mason. "For hotter, stronger colours try *Helenium* 'Indianersommer', *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer', *Achillea filipendulina* 'Gold Plate', mixed with the tall frothy flowers of greater sea kale." Support top-heavy blooms with interwoven lengths of coppiced hazel and extend the tapestry of foliage up the walls with several glossy evergreen Magnolia grandiflora.

Cliveden, Cliveden Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire, SL1 8NS
Open daily apart from 24–25 December 2024.
nationaltrust.org.uk

ABOVE LEFT Spires of penstemon and salvias echo Cliveden's gothic-inspired Dovecote.
LEFT The dark red foliage of dahlias intensifies the carefully curated hot-toned perennials.



Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons occupies a 15th-century manor house tucked away in rural Oxfordshire.

The Kitchen Garden at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons

Chef Raymond Blanc's luxury countryside hotel Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, and among its 11 beautiful gardens lie the ultimate kitchen garden and an extensive heritage orchard which not only raise produce for the hotel's two Michelin star restaurant but effortlessly blend beauty and substance. Head gardener Annemarie Owens explains: "Working closely with Raymond Blanc and his brigade of chefs over the last four decades, we now grow over 250 different vegetables and varieties, trialling and taste testing each year to find the very best."

One noticeable feature throughout the gardens is the sight of colourful blooms alongside crops. Easy to do and quickly yielding results, it is an attractive and practical approach well worth exploring at home. "Edible flowers are grown for colour, taste and texture for our cuisine, but also attract pollinators and feed our bees," Owens says. "Located in our orchard, they pollinate the fruit trees and provide honey." Favourite varieties include forget-me-nots, violas, pansies, cornflowers, dahlias, nasturtium and sunflowers.

> ***'Edible flowers are grown for colour, taste and texture for our cuisine, but also attract pollinators and feed our bees. Located in our orchard, they pollinate the fruit trees and provide honey'***

Other memorable features of the potager include sweeping woven willow fencing, sections of feature paving and sculptural log piles all adding distinctive texture, form and movement. "Together with a whole world of art and sculpture, this perfectly integrated ecosystem is the living magic of Le Manoir," Owens says.

Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Church Rd, Great Milton, Oxford OX44 7PD
Garden tours daily for guests, plus gardening courses and charity open days.
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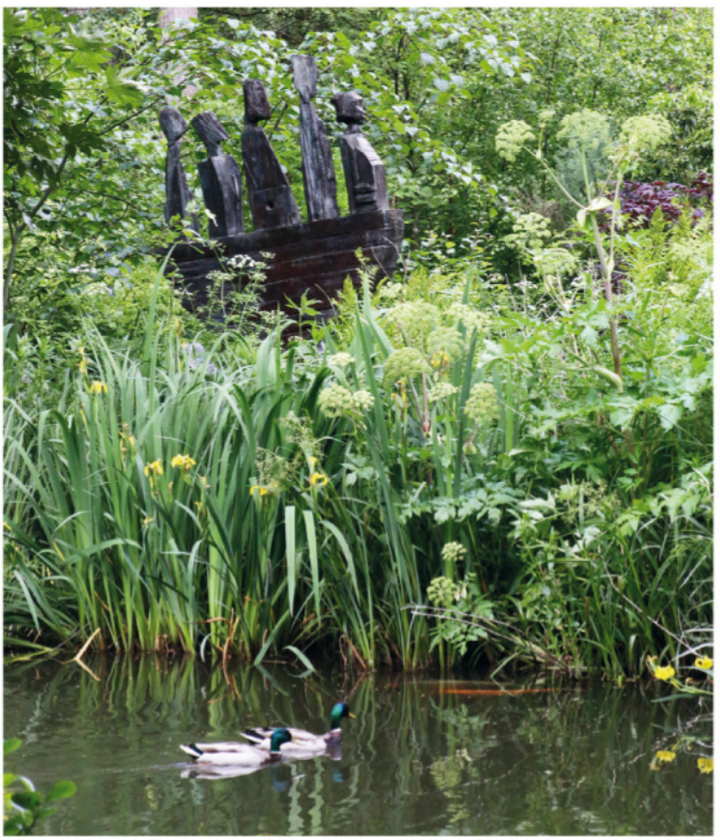









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The White Garden at Hidcote

Deeply rooted in the Arts and Crafts tradition, Hidcote is the personal project of plantsman Major Lawrence Johnston. Created from 1907 to 1938, designs ranged from natural areas of planting to intimate yet distinct garden rooms. One of the most evocative is The White Garden, where serene and delicate blooms shine out against the clipped foliage of box and yew. Lottie Allen, head gardener at Hidcote, now managed by the National Trust, explains: "Photographs and texts suggest that Johnston chose a select palette of plants in small garden rooms to create a 'wow' moment in the year." As a result, The White Garden has recently been replanted with *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album' and *Phlox paniculata* var. *alba*, softened by low growing *Anaphalis triplinervis* 'Sommerschnee' and *Geranium nodosum* 'Silverwood'.

'Selecting plants to flower together is easier than ever because most plants are in flower when they are sold'

Revitalise a border or garden 'room' to create a mid-summer showstopper by using a combination of plants that flower at the same time. Allen says, "The simultaneous display creates a striking moment and embodies the creator's planting ethos, leaving the topiary and hedging to provide interest for the rest of the year. Selecting plants to flower together is easier than ever because most plants are in flower when they are sold."

Hidcote, Hidcote Bartrim, near Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, GL55 6LR
Open daily until 1 November 2024; weekends only from 2 November to 31 December 2024.
nationaltrust.org.uk



Yew hedges and box topiary provide a sculptural foil for seasonal blooms in The White Garden at Hidcote Manor Gardens in Gloucestershire.



RIGHT Old fashioned roses and perennials fill The White Garden at Hidcote Manor Gardens with perfume and charm.

'It uses a very simple formula to create a really striking garden. Formal hedging and topiary are used against dreamy, soft plantings to create beautiful contrasts'

The Walled Garden at Scampston Hall

A masterpiece of present-day garden design by renowned Dutch plantsman Piet Oudolf, who has breathed new life into it in his beguiling, naturalistic style, the 18th-century Walled Garden at Scampston Hall inspires all year round. "It uses a very simple formula to create a really striking garden," says head gardener Andy Karavics. "Formal hedging and topiary are used against dreamy, soft plantings to create beautiful contrasts."

Emulate this design approach at home by following a few simple rules. "The plantings don't contain a huge variety but a few that work exceptionally well together. These include *Molinia caerulea* 'Poul Peterson', spires of *Salvia nemerosa* 'Amethyst', *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walkers Low', and starry *Astrantia major* 'Claret' interspersed with *Aster divaricatus*. These few plants are planted in number to create drifts that are in proportion to the area."

Oudolf's plant selection also relies on location as well as aesthetics, Karavics explains: "All the plantings are broken down into habitats, for example, woodland planting, woodland's edge, open prairie etc. By grouping plants that all require the same conditions, they have the same physical characteristics, sit well together and are easier to look after." ■



ABOVE Piet Oudolf's design of the 18th-century Walled Garden at Scampston Hall boasts bold design and naturalistic planting. Here circular cut flower borders are encased by low box hedges.
LEFT Crisp blocks of soft planting lend the garden a formal feel.

The Walled Garden, Scampston Hall, Malton, Yorkshire, YO17 8NG
Open daily from 27 March to 3 November 2024
scampston.co.uk

FEATURE JILL MORGAN **PHOTOGRAPHS** (LE MANOIR AUX QUAT'SAISONS) © MARK LORD AND © PAUL WILKINSON; (CLIVEDEN FOURCOURT BORDERS) © NATIONAL TRUST/HUGH MOTHERSOLE; (CLIVEDEN HOT BORDERS) © NATIONAL TRUST/DANIEL DEAN; (HIDCOTE) © NATIONAL TRUST/NICK MEERS; (SCAMPSTON) © VAL CORBETT


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NATURAL SELECTION

Whether to choose stone or wood flooring can be a conundrum. Here we look at the advantages of each and considerations to take into account before buying



Natural stone and wood are the mainstays of classic flooring in an English home – except for upstairs, where carpet or sisal tend to take over. Stone brings a sense of texture and beauty to any scheme and is generally easy to look after. Wood, meanwhile, adds warmth and has that extra dimension in that it can be dressed up and down by playing around with plank widths or using parquet. Alongside the aesthetics of each type of flooring, it is important to consider functionality, such as whether people will be walking over the surface with bare feet or the practicalities of keeping either clean. Therefore, it is helpful to consider the options room by room.

HALLWAYS AND RECEPTION ROOMS

The joy of stone is that it is perfectly suited to high traffic areas, says Rebecca Cherrington, head of projects at Lapicida. Dark-stone floors bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary but tastes are currently for warmer tones such as soft almond, beige and Cotswold-type stones.

Parquet-style panelled flooring inspired by a 17th-century French design that marries a classic aesthetic with the practicality of engineered wood. *Sandringham Royal Oak hard-wax oiled panels, £250 a square metre, Woodpecker*

ABOVE RIGHT Large flags of stone flooring look smart as well as being practical for kitchens and utility rooms. *Dijon tumbled limestone, from £38 a square metre, Floors of Stone; kitchen by deVOL*



Make a statement in tones that work well in high-traffic areas. *Bergamo and Zuber tumbled limestone, £110 a square metre, Ca'Pietra*

"With modern sealants, maintenance is now very straightforward," Cherrington explains. "Just watch out for using any harsh chemicals or steam cleaners as natural stone is porous and these will damage the sealer and therefore the stone."

Thanks to product development and innovation over the years, engineered wood floors are a match for stone when it comes to comparing durability. "The multi-layered structure ensures stability and minimal response to nature," says Sevda Cifci of Havwoods. Interior designer Laura Stephens favours using aged oak parquet for hallways and sitting rooms. "It has tumbled edges, many different tones and a very lived-in imperfect look," she says. "In fact, it gets better with imperfections after withstanding dogs, buggies and football boots. Aesthetically, it lets the space do the talking, helps with acoustics and gives warmth and interest to the scheme."

THIS IMAGE Match the tones of internal and external tiles to blur the boundaries. *Blandford limestone, £147 a square metre, Artisans of Devizes*
BELOW Versatile mid-toned parquet. *Salcombe Oak parquet, £57.12 a square metre, The Wood Flooring Co*

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR AREAS

In conservatories with solid roofs, garden room extensions and boot rooms, wood flooring is a great choice, says Vanessa Garrett, founder and director of Broadleaf Timber. Naturally welcoming, it changes the atmosphere and acoustics in rooms such as these with typically few soft furnishings and feels comfortable underfoot whether heated or not. She recommends opting for a vintage-style parquet or distressed plank, which is more relaxed and rustic in style. Avoid very pale or darker floors – both will show the dirt. "We always suggest a mat well is dropped into the floor in front of any exterior door so that it's always in place to catch dirt and protect the floor finish," she adds.

Interior designer Kate Guinness recommends going for mixed-width planks when specifying a wooden floor that runs from the main entertaining rooms to a garden room. "I would also go for a band-sawn finish which means it's not completely smooth. It's more forgiving with scratches from outdoor shoes and pets whose claws aren't especially kind to perfectly smooth wood floors."

Garrett adds that in heavily glazed rooms, it is best to steer clear of wood floors as these will move when they experience temperatures outside of what are considered to be the 16–25° normal living conditions. Stone may be a better option in this instance. "Don't forget to specify a slip resistant finish for any bathrooms or wet rooms with stone floors," says interior designer Georgie Wykeham.









ABOVE Silver-grey fossil shells add a subtle distinction to this Portuguese limestone flooring. *Shellstone brushed limestone, £94.75 a square metre, Mandarin Stone*

RIGHT A characterful bathroom by Hám Interiors with a blue stone floor echoing the veins in the marble.

BELOW Hardwood oak grown from certified British woodlands with rustic appeal and suitable for underfloor heating. *Heritage oak wood flooring, £POA, Coppice & Crown*

CHARACTERISTICS OF STONE & WOOD

When deciding the best type of flooring for a room scheme, it can be helpful to consider and contrast the main benefits of each material

STONE

- **Practical:** Stone is waterproof, hard-wearing and easy to clean (making it ideal for who suffer from allergies)
- **Durable:** Natural stone – when well-sealed and cared for – will last a lifetime
- **Seamless:** Stone is the perfect choice to create a seamless finish between indoors and outdoors
- **Conductor**: Stone is a good conductor of heat and is ideal for underfloor heating systems (conversely, it stays cool when outside temperatures rise)

WOOD

- **Character:** The differences in grain, texture and colour in wood add instant character to rooms
- **Practical:** Wood can provide both sound and heat insulation
- **Aesthetics:** With so many types of wood and differences in the size of planks or blocks, there is plenty of choice, from rustic to formal
- **Warm:** Wood can be naturally warm underfoot all year round as well as being suitable for underfloor heating too



Ivory, amber and oatmeal tones bring warmth to this country kitchen. *Tumbled limestone, from £38 a square metre, Floors of Stone*

STAIN RESISTANT AND WATERPROOF

Timber floors in a kitchen are not for the faint-hearted or the obsessive hygienist, believes Bruce Hodgson, founder and creative director of Artichoke. "If you use solid timber, then you should expect the boards to expand and contract across the seasons, which inevitably leads to dirt getting trapped. When using engineered boards, be sure to specify a robust-wearing layer of 6mm." He adds that heavy foot traffic in front of counters and sinks needs to be replenished with oil.

"For kitchens, limestone tiles continue to be a popular choice," explains Ellie Morton, flooring expert at Floors of Stone. "Free-length formats offer a more traditional appearance," she adds. "Terracotta tiles are also a popular choice. Rustic in style, they are very forgiving when it comes to day-to-day wear."

The great thing about stone in an area that will get wet is that it is not going to move, says Tom Cox, co-founder of Hám Interiors. "And it lasts forever. The negative is that it is cold, but we get around that by always laying underfloor heating." Note that both electric and piped underfloor heating work beneath stone, but only piped is suitable for engineered hardwood boards, according to architect Stephen Fletcher. "Electric is cheap to install but more expensive to operate – ideal for smaller spaces like bathrooms."

Wood flooring can be used in a bathroom if the maintenance advice is followed, says Morton. "Invest in effective extractor fans to ensure there is good ventilation." To clean it, use a soft brush (or the soft nozzle of the vacuum) for sweeping away dust or dirt and then apply a specific wood cleaner that is non-aggressive, pH neutral and rinse-free. These are formulated to remove dirt and stains from waxed and oiled wood flooring without damaging their finish.







SITTING ROOMS & BEDROOMS

When considering warmth underfoot in a sitting room, it is easy to dismiss a natural stone floor, yet, as an excellent conductor, it is ideally suited to underfloor heating. But factor in the depth of the stone as the thicker it is, the harder the heating will have to work. "We think there's nothing more comforting underfoot than the undulations and texture of a natural stone floor," says Kristen Georghiades, co-founder of Rose + George. "Its imperfect aesthetic is part of the appeal, meaning you won't run around vacuuming as they camouflage day-to-day life." Original worn flags are rarely surpassed in their feel of times gone by, adds Henriette von Stockhausen of VSP Interiors. "So, if you're lucky enough to have them in a sitting room, treasure them."

In a bedroom, wood is a good choice. "As wood is naturally warm underfoot, it makes a great alternative to carpet in a bedroom. It's easy to clean and less prone to stains," says Sevda Cifci of Havwoods. "The construction of engineered wood means that most engineered flooring is suitable to use over underfloor heating, whereas solid wood flooring cannot as the wood will naturally expand and contract with changes in temperature."

Another advantage of having hardwood floors in a bedroom is that dust mites, one of the biggest causes of allergies in the UK, cannot survive on them. "On top of that, it's possible to add an acoustic underlay beneath engineered floors meaning they can improve acoustics and make the bedroom quieter," adds the team from The Natural Wood Floor Company. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT A darker parquet adds vintage style to a scheme. *Versailles parquet, from £150 a panel, Trunk*; Studio Peake chose more contemporary wood floor overlaid with a rug by Vanderhurd for this bedroom scheme; Engineered-wood flooring made of European Oak looks at home in a period sitting room. *Hartland herringbone flooring, £105.95 a square metre, Havwoods*

FEATURE ARABELLA YOUENS **PHOTOGRAPHS** (HAM INTERIORS) © ALEXANDER JAMES; (STUDIO PEAKE) © ALEXANDER JAMES; (CA'PIETRA) © ANNA STATHAKI; (HAVWOODS) © GIORGIA DI TRIA





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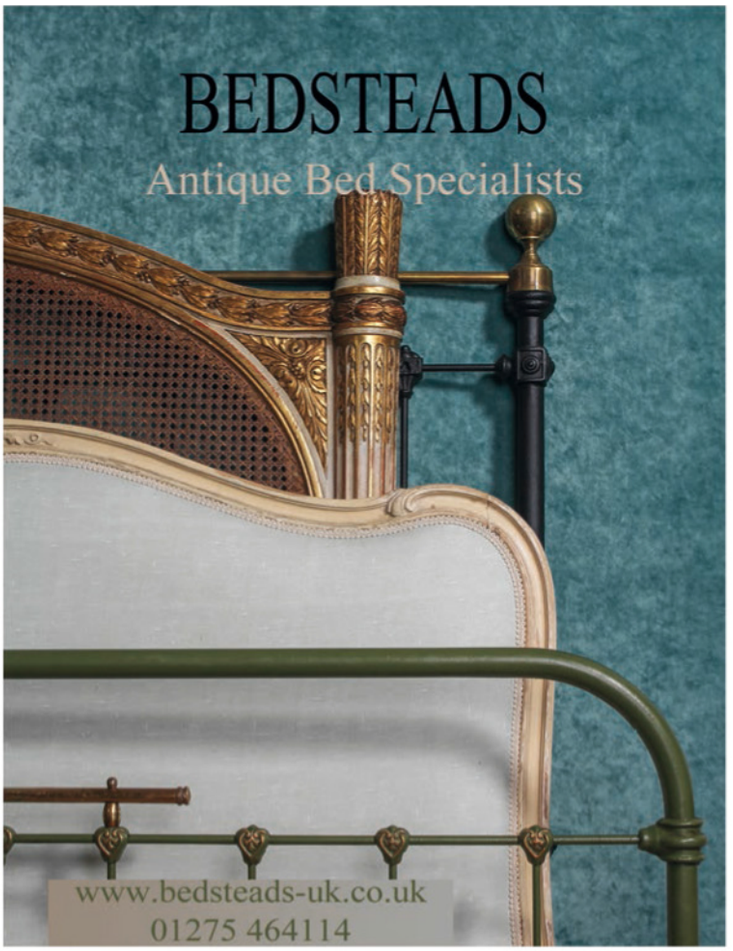





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LIVING THE SEASON

Inspiration for seasonal pastimes and making the most of life at home starts here

FRAGRANT ELDERFLOWER CAKE

A stylish teatime treat that makes the most of these sweet-scented, delicate flowers, ready to pick from late May

Serves 8–10

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CAKE
4 eggs
100g icing sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 pinch salt
100g self-raising flour
2 tbsp cornflour
Elderflowers, for decoration only

FOR THE ICING
500ml milk
2 tbsp caster sugar
1 sachet vanilla custard powder
150g white chocolate
250g softened butter
2 tbsp icing sugar
3 tbsp elderflower syrup

METHOD

- Preheat oven to 180°C/gas 4. Line a deep 7-inch springform tin with baking paper; grease the sides.
- Separate the eggs. Beat the yolks with the icing sugar and vanilla until creamy. Beat the whites with the salt until stiff, fold into the yolk mixture. Sift in the flour and cornflour and fold in. Pour into the tin.
- Bake for 30 minutes until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cool briefly, remove from the tin and cool on a rack. Split the cake horizontally into four layers.
- Make a custard using the milk, sugar and custard powder according to the pack instructions; cool.
- Melt the chocolate. Mix the butter and icing sugar until creamy, fold in the chocolate. Mix in the custard, a spoonful at a time, then the syrup. Chill until spreadable.
- Use two thirds of the icing to sandwich the cake layers together. Spread a thick layer of icing on the top and a thin layer around the edge. Chill for at least two hours. Decorate with elderflowers. Serve.



FEATURE SUZANNA LE GROVE **RECIPE** STOCKFOOD **PHOTOGRAPH** © STOCKFOOD / HENDEY GOUGH, MAGDALENA

What to do in MAY

Make May the month for styling with flowers, for updating a table with pretty patterns, harvesting the first of the salad crop and freshening laundry in the warm spring breeze

DISPLAY *flowers*

There is nothing more beautiful than a garden full of English floral favourites that flourish when stems are cut and the plant is encouraged to produce more. It provides the perfect excuse to enjoy flowers indoors, too. Embrace the joys of the season and create stunning arrangements that will add a fresh, glamorous touch to any room by topping up existing floral skills or learning new ones with a flower styling course. Join expert florist and floral stylist Graeme Corbett of Bloom & Burn for a workshop at his studio in the idyllic Kent countryside using seasonal flowers such as *Rosa* 'For Your Eyes Only', *Phlox drummondii* 'Cherry Caramel' and *Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Electric Blue' from his own cutting garden and local suppliers. Classes are run on a one-to-one basis tailored to suit individual needs such as weddings, parties or beginners, or as group sessions to learn how to arrange flowers from the garden. An online video course is also available to purchase. ▶

Floral design courses: one-to-one half-day, £285, and full-day, £525; group classes, £115 for 2½ hours, bloomandburnflowers.com





FIVE-SPICE BEEF

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp light olive oil
450g minced beef
1 tbsp cornflour
2 tsp Chinese five-spice powder
4 tbsp boiling water
3 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp honey
1 tbsp tomato ketchup
1 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
2 tbsp rice vinegar
200g French beans, cut into 3cm lengths
2 garlic cloves, crushed or finely grated
4cm piece of ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
1 chilli, preferably red, deseeded (optional) and finely sliced
4 spring onions, lightly trimmed and finely sliced, using all the green
sesame seeds, for sprinkling
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE

rice or noodles
greens (optional)
firm lettuce leaves such as Little Gem (optional)

This is such a quick and easy dish and really versatile with various leftovers. It is one of those dishes where people do not have to sit at a table if it is served as suggested, which is mixed with rice and spooned into a lettuce leaf. A great one for guests too, who can make up the little lettuce cups themselves.

METHOD

- Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Season the beef and add it to the pan, breaking it up with a wooden spoon so it is in an even layer. Fry for 5 minutes before turning over so it is crispy all over.
- In the meantime, make up the sauce in a jug. Start by dissolving the cornflour and Chinese five spice in the boiling water, then, when smooth, stir in the soy sauce, honey, ketchup, chilli sauce and vinegar.
- When the beef is ready, add the beans and, after a couple of minutes, throw in the garlic, ginger and chilli and let these cook for a few minutes, stirring constantly or shaking the pan. Pour over the sauce and bring to a good simmer. Cook for 5 minutes, or until the sauce coats the contents of the pan. Sprinkle over some sesame seeds.
- Serve with rice or noodles and some greens, if desired. Personally, I like to mix the beef with some rice and spoon into lettuce leaves.

HARVEST *lettuce*

This staple salad crop with its gentle taste should be ready to pick and really does signal that the warmer months are on their way. Use the leaves as edible platters and transform into a supper dish full of fresh flavours.



FURTHER READING
Every Last Bite by Rosie Sykes (*Quadrille*, £18.99), photography by Patricia Niven



CREATE *a floral tablescape*

Tableware decorated with pretty flower motifs in pastel shades will introduce a welcome note of late spring/early summer in an instant, whether for a leisurely weekend breakfast, an indulgent afternoon tea in a sunny spot in the garden or a sophisticated evening dinner party. Use in its entirety for formal dining or to add notes of pattern and colour and a relaxed cheery note to an all-white dinner service. Opt for elegant pieces in delicate porcelain decorated with enchanting motifs of flowers, birds and butterflies, and, for the finishing touch, pair with a luxurious linen tablecloth and set of napkins in co-ordinating shades.

Porcelaine de Chine side plates, £44 (set of four); Porcelaine de Chine teacups and saucers, £28 (set of two); Linen Lario tablecloth in Cloud, £95; Linen Lario placemats in Alabaster, £56 (set of four), all Designers Guild

DRY WASHING *outdoors*

May welcomes a fresh but warm breeze, making it the perfect time to peg the laundry on the line and let it dry naturally. It is also an opportune moment to tackle the linen cupboard as part of a spring-cleaning schedule, replacing any worn items and refreshing the rest with a good wash and dry on the line. Fresh air has a wonderful way of making cottons and linens smell so lovely and feel that little bit extra special. It also has the ability to make them almost crease-free once dry, and, of course, there is something quite soothing about the orderly method of pegging each piece in a row. Line drying is much less harmful to textiles than the tumble dryer and recommended whenever possible, as is washing them at a lower temperature of 30° and with a non-biological detergent to be more environmentally friendly. Once items are dry, give any that need it a gentle press with the iron before folding neatly and storing away.

Strawberries, Blossom, and Stamford Stripe tea towels, £21 (set of two); Spring Chicken, and Tulips tea towels, £11.50 each; Langham Arched Stool, £65, all Sophie Allport ■

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE PHOTOGRAPH (RECIPE) © PATRICIA NIVEN

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Potted WISDOM

Gardening expert Sarah Raven shares her tips on how to master the art of growing beautiful flowers in pots for year-round colour and interest

PHOTOGRAPHY JONATHAN BUCKLEY



At Sarah Raven's Perch Hill garden in East Sussex, The Oast Garden at its spring peak with tulips a go go in lots of pots and repurposed water troughs. Tulips in containers are a key player in achieving an abundant look and feel in the garden.







Carefully choosing which plants to grow is the enjoyable starting point of any good pot design. We have various rules of thumb at Perch Hill that we keep in mind as we put together the planting schemes for our pots.

The first thing we think about is the flowering period of each plant. If it's a mix of flower colour that we're aiming for, we need to make sure the plants perform at the same time. There is no point planting sweet peas to climb up a frame above a clump of dahlias: the sweet peas will be looking ropey by the time the dahlias hit their stride. Instead of sweet peas, you'll need a late-season tender perennial climber such as thunbergia, ipomoea or rhodochiton. These, each combined with dahlias, create a series of pairings we use successfully here all the time.

This consideration of timing is important with spring bulbs, too. If you're designing great colour combinations, then you need to make sure the bulbs are all in flower concurrently, so checking each plant's peak flowering moment is key.

Occasionally, particularly in spring, we deliberately do the opposite: we choose bulb varieties that flower one after another, performing in succession to give us a long-flowering season.

It's also important to know that what you're planting together is compatible in a pot, in that one doesn't behave like a thug and push out the others.

The most crucial design point is colour. Colour has always been key in the garden here, with calm colours as important as



'The first thing we think about is the flowering period of each plant. If it's a mix of flower colour that we're aiming for, we need to make sure the plants perform at the same time'

the strong oranges, scarlets and crimsons. I love colour and firmly believe that all hues and tones can be beautiful depending on how they're combined.

The same goes for the forms and habits of the plants you combine. The larger the pots become, the more important it is to think about how the plants mix together, with elements for contrast so that the pots are not just a low mound with nothing to draw the eye. Instead, you could include a plant that naturally

ABOVE A multitude of pots with dahlias, pelargoniums, salvias and tender perennial climbers all filling the pots in the Dutch Yard.
OPPOSITE Sarah moves a pot of *Erigeron karvinskianus* to her outdoor eating table – it makes a low-maintenance table centre pot for summer.



'The most crucial design point for me is colour. Colour has always been key in the garden here, with calm colours as important as the strong oranges, scarlets and crimsons'

grows up, another down and something airy in between.

When it comes to colour, the key is to avoid the liquorice all-sorts look, with yellow, pink, white, blue, black and orange all thrown in together resulting in pots competing with each other. That's too busy and easily ends up looking a mess. A bit of rigour here helps with decision-making and, ultimately, pot-design success.

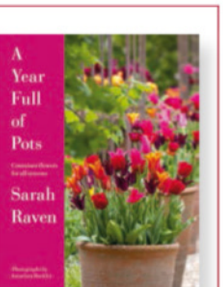
Using colour swatches from a paint shop is useful. I also find coloured candles or skeins of wool excellent as they give you a flower-like density of colour. Have a play with the colours until you work out which combinations are right for you.

The colours you choose will be led by personal preference and the feel you're after, but the position of the pots should influence your choices too. The backdrop, the setting, the things already planted in the location, as well as what makes up the ground and walls, all have an impact on how the colours will be seen. ■

ABOVE Traditional dolly tubs filled with tulips in spring.

FURTHER READING

A Year Full of Pots by Sarah Raven is published by Bloomsbury Publishing and is available to order for £27 from *bloomsbury.com/uk*



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My English Garden

Lucy Vail, award-winning florist and youngest-ever designer of the Royal Entrance at RHS Chelsea Flower Show, lives with husband, Archie, and their baby, Alfie, in London



What kind of English home do you have?
We live in a three bedroom flat in Clapham Old town, with a beautiful courtyard garden. It's a lovely part of London to live in. We moved here in October last year when Alfie was born.

How did you design your own garden?
We wanted to make the most of the space we had so we worked with garden designer Tabi Jackson Gee. We added mirrors to open the space up and climbers growing up the old brick wall. There is also a beautiful archway full of roses and clematis as you walk into the garden and I have lots of terracotta pots by my back door, filled with plants left over from jobs. It's my safe haven before I start the working day.

Do your surroundings inspire your work?
I am extremely lucky to work closely with my mother, Amanda, who runs Floriston, a beautiful flower farm in Suffolk (*left*) which is full of inspiration. I also work with other growers, depending on where the project takes place. Last year we did a three-day wedding at Villa d'Este in Italy so found local growers to supply for that. We work hard and fast but it's thrilling.

'Seeing the late Queen drive through and admire the archway was truly the proudest moment'

Has your family home Floriston Farm inspired your aesthetic and how?
Growing up at Floriston, surrounded by such beautiful gardens, definitely influenced my style. I believe that floral designs should be as organic as possible, and am known for drawing inspiration from the natural world and 'bringing the outside in'. My father has always been green-fingered and put a lot of time and effort into designing the gardens at Floriston to look as natural as possible. My favourite places are the cow parsley meadow and the oxeye daisy field. The bearded irises that pop up in June are something to behold too!

What have been your most exciting projects and why?
Last year for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show we designed the main entrance and the year before that we designed the Royal Entrance, which was a real 'pinch me' moment. Our designs celebrated the Platinum Jubilee and seeing the late Queen drive through and admire the archway was truly the proudest moment of my career.

How would you describe your floristry style today?
It's really important to me that every design looks organic and flowers are not suffocated or too tightly compacted. By grouping colours and textures together, each variety gets its moment to shine. Our designs are curated but natural.

What should no English garden and home be without?
Climbing roses and clematis and wigwams of sweetpeas, which are surprisingly easy to make but always impress. Inside, our flat is packed with house plants and potted seasonal bulbs in my Matilda Goad shell planter. ■

lucyvailfloristry.com

FEATURE KATE FREUD PORTRAIT © ALEXANDRA SHAMIS PHOTOGRAPH © MIMI CONNOLLY



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