



Sharing the best in Gardening

Top Gardens for 2015 **From Jim Gardiner, Executive Vice President of the RHS**

Executive Vice President of the RHS Jim Gardiner is leading the search for the RHS' new fifth Garden. Previously Director of Horticulture and Curator of the RHS' flagship garden, RHS Garden Wisley, and recently winner of the International Garden Tourism Award, Jim has worked in horticulture for nearly 50 years, with 25 years spent at the RHS.

Having visited and enjoyed hundreds of gardens in the UK and around the world, here Jim shares his top gardens to visit in 2015, and best Woodland and Formal Gardens. The top ten gardens have been personally selected by Jim for the tremendous breadth of plants on show and how they are displayed.

* Denotes an RHS Partner Garden which RHS members can visit for free during selected periods.

Top 10 Gardens to visit in 2015, a journey from North to South

Logan Botanic Garden, Dumfries and Galloway

Famed for its tender collections, Logan's Walled Garden is a showcase for brilliant blooms and is ablaze with colour throughout the season. Warmed by the Gulf Stream, the climate provides the ideal growing conditions for an amazing collection of southern hemisphere plants in this 15 acre site. The Woodland Garden is a haven for a host of weird and wonderful plants and trees, such as eucalypts and the gunnera bog.

<http://www.rbge.org.uk/the-gardens/logan>

RHS Harlow Carr, North Yorkshire

RHS Harlow Carr covers 68 acres of Yorkshire landscape, dominated by water, stone and woodland. The garden has a wide variety of growing landscapes, from running and still water to woodland and wildflower meadows. Harlow Carr's Alpine Zone is home to a collection of over 2,000 alpiners which compliments the plant collections found in its rock gardens and woodland terraces.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr>

Powis Garden (at Powis Castle), Wales

Dating back 300 years, Powis Garden is often described as one of the greatest surviving examples of Baroque garden design in Britain. The imposing red walls of Powis Castle form a dramatic backdrop to 26 acres of clipped yews, rare and tender plants, Italianate terraces, sophisticated flower borders, informal woodland and fantastical topiary.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/powis-castle/>

*** East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens, Norfolk**

A varied coastal garden of 32 acres with a combination of traditional borders, an exotic garden, desert wash, topiary, a walled garden and Mediterranean garden. The garden is well known for its stunning plant combinations, as well as its vegetable and cutting gardens.

<http://www.e-ruston-oldvicaragegardens.co.uk/pages/view/564/home.htm>

RHS Hyde Hall, Essex

RHS Garden Hyde Hall is situated in one of the driest parts of the UK, with an average rainfall of just 600mm. First developed in 2001, the Dry Garden is one of the best examples of its type in the country, showcasing a range of drought tolerant plants. Also to enjoy on this 360 acre site is the Hilltop Garden with its Rose Garden and herbaceous borders, and its view of the surrounding landscape. Work is currently underway on a new winter garden.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall>

RHS Wisley, Surrey

RHS Garden Wisley holds the largest cultivated plant collection in the world within its 200 acres, with close to 25,000 plant varieties. This flagship of the RHS gardens contains the RHS Wisley Bicentenary Glasshouse, supporting more than 5,000 tender plants, making it the largest collection of cultivated glasshouse plants in the UK. Whatever time of year you will find areas of interest! During spring, the Alpine House and Rock Garden are a treasure house of "jewels" while the Wild Garden and Battleston Hill are filled with a kaleidoscope of woody flower colour. The Rose Garden and Herbaceous borders are awash with summer flower colour and scent while the Jubilee Arboretum is full of autumn foliage colour. Take the winter trail around 7 Acres Lake with flower interest from witch hazels and heathers as well as the more traditional stem and foliage colour. The Fruit Fields at the garden boast over 2,000 trees, including more than 1,300 different fruit cultivars and almost 700 different varieties of apple.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley>

*** Borde Hill, Sussex**

Nestled in 200 acres of English Heritage listed Sussex parkland and woodland, Borde Hill is home to a nationally important collection of rare shrubs, champion trees and exotic plants, as well as distinctive garden features including the Azalea Ring and the Rose & Italian Gardens. It also offers wonderful views across the Sussex Weald and the magnificent Ouse Valley.

<http://www.bordehill.co.uk/>

Great Dixter, Sussex

Managed by the Great Dixter Charitable Trust, this was formerly the garden of Christopher Lloyd, with the house and garden having originally been designed by Edwin Lutyens. It is one of the most dynamic gardens in the country, with a wide variety of interest from topiary, wild flower meadows, the long border and exotic garden, providing a long period of interest throughout the year.

<http://www.greatdixter.co.uk/>

RHS Rosemoor, Devon

RHS Garden Rosemoor is one of the UK's best gardens, with its formal garden containing several stunning features including the Hot and Spiral Gardens, Foliage and Plantsmans Garden, and herbaceous borders. The 65 acre garden is home to one of the UK's best collection of roses, with a display of more than 2,000 plants and nearly 200 cultivars, in the Queen Mother's Rose Garden and the Shrub Rose Garden. The Fruit and Vegetable Garden is a contrast to Lady Anne's Garden with its eclectic collection of woody and exotic plants.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor>

*** Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, Dorset**

Established almost 250 years ago, this magnificent 30 acre garden is filled with rare and exotic plants from all over the world, including Mediterranean and Southern Hemisphere plants. The garden is world famous for its camellia groves and magnolias and noted in Dorset for its rhododendron and hydrangea collections and the hillside walk with views of the Jurassic Coast.

<http://abbotsbury-tourism.co.uk/gardens/>

Top 10 Woodland Gardens

* **Holker Hall & Gardens, Cumbria**

The 25 acres of immaculately kept gardens are part woodland and part formal garden, and complimented by the 200 acre 'natural' parkland. Highlights include the spectacular displays of rhododendrons and carpets of bulbs in the spring, unusually large specimens, and the Great Holker Lime, which measures 7.9 metres in girth.

<http://www.holker.co.uk/>

* **Thorp Perrow Arboretum, Yorkshire**

Thorp Perrow is home to the largest and rarest trees and shrubs in England. In the spring on this 100 acre site you can see one of the finest and most extensive plantings of daffodils in the north of England, followed by carpets of bluebells and bold drifts of wild flowers.

<http://www.thorpperrow.com/>

* **Bodnant Garden, Wales**

Spanning some 80 acres, Bodnant Garden offers views across the valley towards the Snowdonia range. The upper gardens around Bodnant Hall consist of the terraced gardens and informal lawns, while the lower portion, known as the 'Dell' is formed by the valley of the River Hiraethlyn and contains the Wild garden. The gardens are home to a wide range of plants from around the world, particularly China, North America, Europe and Japan, which are suited to the Welsh climate and soil, with rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias of particular interest.

<http://www.bodnantgarden.co.uk/>

* **Dorothy Clive Woodland Garden, Staffordshire**

Highlights of this 12 acre woodland garden include the Quarry filled with oak trees sheltering rhododendrons and azaleas, a Laburnam Arch, Edible Woodland containing over 120 things to eat, and a network of paths and walks to explore for lovers of azalea, camellia, daffodils and roses.

<http://dorothyclivegarden.co.uk/the-garden/>

* **Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire**

This historic Victorian landscape and internationally important tree and shrub collection contains around 15,000 labelled trees (around 2,500 different types of tree) from Britain, China, North America, Japan, Chile and other temperate climates. It is best known for its autumn colour interest through its plantings of Japanese Maples. As well as the Arboretum, a visit to the 600 acre site should include ancient Silk Wood, semi-natural woodland which has exotic plantings throughout its landscape.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt>

The Savill and Valley Gardens, Berkshire

The Species Rhododendron Collection, Heather Garden, collections of azaleas, magnolias, cherries, maples, hydrangeas and many other woody plants, as well as large drifts of daffodils can be found in the 250 acres of landscaped Valley Gardens close to Virginia Water. The nearby Savill Garden is best known as a spring garden, yet contains extensive herbaceous borders, a rose garden and many plants of interest for the summer and autumn, making it a garden with year round interest.

<http://www.theroyallandscape.co.uk/gardens-and-landscape/the-valley-gardens/>

Castle Hill Gardens, Devon

This spectacular 50 acre 18th century parkland landscape surrounding Castle Hill is punctuated with statues, follies and temples built by each generation of the homeowners. The 18th century temple, the Holwell Temple, is a spectacular sight on the edge of the

woods. The Woodland Gardens filled with camellias, magnolias, rhododendrons, azaleas, hydrangeas and eucryphias are accompanied by formal terraced lawns, the Millennium Garden and Walled Garden.

<http://www.castlehilldevon.co.uk/>

***(New Partner Garden from 2015) Rhododendron garden, Bowood, Wiltshire**

During the spring months this is a spectacular attraction offering breath-taking vistas of colour and beauty covering over 60 acres. This woodland garden oasis of azaleas, magnolias and rhododendrons is considered to be one of the most exciting gardens of its type in the country and is complimentary to the 100 acre parkland "Capability" Brown landscape surrounding Bowood House.

<http://www.bowood.org/bowood-gardens/rhododendron-walks/>

*** Exbury Gardens, Hampshire**

These 200 acre gardens are world-famous for the Rothschild Collection of rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and rare trees and shrubs – the rhododendron gardens alone host over ten thousand specimens and are a riot of colour in spring. There is also a diverse tree and shrub collection which provides summer and autumn appeal.

<http://www.exbury.co.uk/website/>

*** Caerhays Castle, Cornwall**

At more than 120 acres in size, Caerhays is a spectacular spring garden whose origin can be traced back to J C Williams, who supported the plant collecting endeavours of George Forrest and Ernest Wilson, whose work widened our knowledge of the plants of south west China. Caerhays boasts many of those early introductions of rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias and a host of genera including maples and oaks.

<http://www.caerhays.co.uk/>

Top 10 Formal Gardens

*** Crathes Castle, Aberdeenshire**

The walled garden at Crathes Castle has been continually evolving for nearly 400 years. The diverse gardens are home to a wide variety of unusual plants which offer a kaleidoscope of colours and scents throughout the year. They include stunning herbaceous borders and fine lawns, historic Yew hedges and Glasshouses.

<http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/Crathes-Castle-Garden-and-Estate/>

*** Arley Hall, Cheshire**

The garden's best known feature is its Herbaceous Border which was probably the first border of its kind planted in England. The garden's distinctive areas include eight acres of formal gardens, excellent rose garden and Italian garden, unique Quercus Ilex Columns, Pleached Lime Avenue, the furlong and woodland walks.

<http://www.arleyhallandgardens.com/>

Chatsworth, Derbyshire

Having evolved over more than 450 years, the 105 acre Chatsworth garden is home to a Maze, the Rockery and the Rose, Cottage and Kitchen Gardens, as well as over five miles of walks with rare trees, shrubs, streams and ponds to discover. Famous waterworks include the 300 year old Cascade, the Squirting Willow Tree Fountain and the impressive gravity-fed Emperor Fountain.

<http://www.chatsworth.org/>

*** Wollerton Old Hall Garden, Shropshire**

This formal four acre garden consists of three north-south and three east-west vistas, which, with the hedges, walls and paths have created a number of separate gardens, each with its own style and ethos. The range of plants is wide resulting in significant collections of clematis, salvias, phlox and roses.

<http://wollertonoldhallgarden.com/>

*** Aberglasney House & Gardens, Wales**

Aberglasney's unique Yew Tunnel is thought to have been planted during the 18th century. Once the trees had grown tall they were bent over to form an extended arch. The trunks have now spread and branches fused, so that it is hard to count how many separate trees commingle. The most legendary feature in the 10 acre gardens is the Cloister Garden, surrounded by vast arcaded stone structures and containing a collection of warm temperate and sub-tropical plants including orchids, palms, magnolias and cycads.

<http://www.aberglasney.org/>

Helmingham Hall, Suffolk

This beautiful 400 acre park with red deer is accompanied by a classic parterre and a stunning walled kitchen garden. Exquisite herbaceous borders and beds of vegetables are interspersed by tunnels of sweet peas, runner beans and gourds. On the other side lies a herd and knot garden behind which is a rose garden of unsurpassable beauty.

<http://www.helmingham.com/>

*** Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire**

This late 19th century garden was created by the Rothschilds, champions of a flamboyant, high Victorian style of gardening, seen most famously on the Parterre at the South Front of the House. Today, nearly 19,000 plants make up the bedding display. There is also a recently restored Aviary Garden and rose garden, as well as a working aviary.

<http://www.waddesdon.org.uk/>

Hatfield House, Hertfordshire

Home to 42 acres of gardens, highlights include the sundial garden and fountains, and the famous knot garden adjoining the Tudor Old Palace where Elizabeth I spent much of her childhood. The woodland garden is at its best in spring with masses of naturalised daffodils and bluebells and the East Garden is home to elegant parterres, topiary and rare plants.

<http://www.hatfield-house.co.uk/content.asp?id=3&The-Gardens>

Chelsea Physic Garden, London

Chelsea Physic Garden is home to a unique living collection of around 5,000 different edible, useful, medicinal and historical plants. It has the largest outdoor fruiting olive tree in Britain and the world's most northerly outdoor grapefruit tree. From pomegranates to ginkgos, mulberries to eucalyptus, this four acre garden is home to over 100 different types of tree, many of which are rare in Britain. The glasshouses hold a collection of tropical and sub-tropical species, complemented by a Victorian Cool Fernery. Founded in 1673, the Physic Garden is the oldest botanic garden in London.

<http://chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk/>

*** West Dean Gardens, Sussex**

The 90 acres of gardens and arboretum at West Dean are a showcase of horticultural variety and quality that can inspire any gardener. The award-winning gardens include many interesting architectural delights and unique features, including a 300-foot Edwardian Pergola designed by Harold Peto, 16 restored Victorian glasshouses, a walled garden, a kitchen garden, orchards, ornamental gardens, spring, wild and woodland gardens and sunken gardens, and a beautiful parkland walk with views over the South Downs.

<http://www.westdean.org.uk/garden/home.aspx>