



Information Sheets

Victorian Gardens and Gardening

The growth of gardening:

The Victorian age, the age of industrial revolution and squalid city slums, was also the age of a popular explosion of interest in that most British of occupations, gardening. And not just as a private pastime. For the first time, a concerted effort was made by authorities to provide extensive public gardens. There was a reason for this benevolent behavior by the well-to-do. They believed that gardens would decrease drunkenness and improve the manners of the lower classes. Intellectuals and the upper classes also encouraged gardening as means of decreasing social unrest.

Kew.

In 1840 the Royal Botanical Gardens at [Kew](#) passed from crown control to the government, which meant a transfer from enthusiastic amateurs to professional gardeners. Kew was opened to the public in 1841, over royal opposition (the queen was fond of exercising there). In 1848 the striking Palm House was built, a result of improved glass and iron manufacturing techniques. The Palm House is a gigantic greenhouse 363 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 60 feet high. As a sidenote, Joseph Hooker, director of Kew from 1865-85, is credited with popularizing the ubiquitous rhododendron in Britain.

Bedding out.

The expanding British Empire opened up far-flung corners of the globe to avid gardeners, and a sort of collector-mania spread throughout Britain. Avid botanists combed the globe for new and exotic plants to bring home. One of the results of this frenzy of collecting was another craze, bedding out plants. The concept of bedding plants was Aztec in origin, but in the hands of Victorian enthusiasts it became a British passion. The bedding out craze, together with improved greenhouse design, resulted in a fashion for massed beds of vibrantly coloured plants laid out in intricate mosaic patterns.

The parsonage garden:

Inevitably, this passion for exotic plants created a reaction in favour of traditional British plants and garden forms, particularly the parsonage, or vicarage garden. Strangely, the number of parsons who have had a strong influence on British garden history is quite high. The vicarage garden was a

showpiece of 1-3 acres, planted, not with colourful exotics, but with a homogenous mix of traditional plants, such as wisteria.

Robinson, Jekyll, and the natural style:

The most influential gardener of late Victorian times was William Robinson, author of *The English Flower Garden*, perhaps the most influential work in British garden history. Robinson, and later Gertrude Jekyll, emphasized a natural look, with creepers and ramblers, hardy shrubs, roses underplanted, herbaceous plants and bulbs. Two later examples of this natural style can be seen at [Hidcote](#) and [Sissinghurst](#).

London garden squares.:

Another Victorian garden phenomenon was the London square. London squares were developed by 19th century property developers. Here, the houses backed onto a green space where children could play in full view of the houses. The squares were the focal point for a communal social life. This green-space garden was run by a resident's committee, funded by subscriptions from all the householders. As years went by and pollution increased, only the hardiest plants could survive, particularly the plane tree, which "took over" many of these squares. Examples of these London squares exist at Bloomsbury, Belgravia, Pimlico, Brompton, Kensington, Notting Hill, and Cadogan Place.

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow”

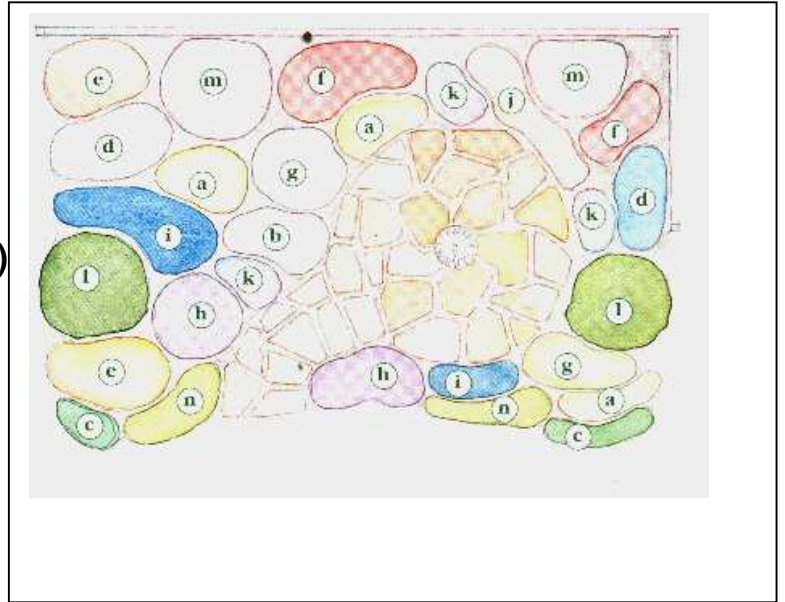
Whether you want a Victorian or Cottage Garden, you simply have to conjure up in your mind a mixture of bright flowers, herbs and maybe a few vegetables packed in to a small space. Then you will be able to see and smell the garden from where you are. Even if these garden seem to be an array of unruly plants tumbling over each other. The true cottage gardens have strong elements of formality. These are often small rectangular plots, they have direct and functional paths, sturdy hedges or fences and vegetables grown in straight rows. However the two ideas – the romantic impression of abundant flowers versus the reality of practical order, can in fact be a very successful design solution for today's small lots and urban living. With today's modern cultivars of roses, trees, shrubs and perennials the gardener can have a more disease resistant, low maintenance garden that has all the beauty of the old-fashioned cottage gardens. The aim is a sense of intimacy, enclosure and pleasant nostalgia, with plants and artificial structures working in harmony. By adding a bench in the garden where it will catch the afternoon sun or placing a rusty metal obelisk in the middle of the flowerbed for a vine to grow up, you will be well on your way to transforming your garden into a *Victorian or Cottage Garden!*

Cottage Garden Design

This little corner garden has everything you will need to have that cottage garden look, making a nice sitting area to enjoy your summer days.

Plant List:

- A – *Achillea* (Yarrow)
- B – *Campanula* (Bellflower)
- C – *Convallaria* (Lily-of-the-valley)
- D – *Delphinium* (Delphinium)
- E – *Digitalis* (Foxglove)
- F – *Filipendula* (Queen of the prairie)
- G – *Gypsophila* (Baby's breath)
- H – *Lavandula* (Lavender)
- I – *Linum* (Flax)
- J – *Monarda* (Bee balm)
- K – *Nigella* (Love-in-a-mist)
- L – *Rosa gallica* (Rose)
- M – *Rosa Climbing* (Rose)
- N – *Viola* (Pansy)



How to Create a Shakespeare Garden

*“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.”
-Romeo and Juliet, act 2, scene 2*

Prepare the garden soil in the area that you wish to construct your garden, this way you will be sure to have aromatic herbs and beautiful and bountiful flowers.

Staking Off the Design:

Using a measuring tape, strings, and stakes, mark off the garden design as per the diagram. The centre circle is 8 feet, with the 2 overlapping circles on the ends are each 4 feet in diameter, all of which will fit inside a garden plot of 30X40 feet.

Laying the Brick:

You can go to the work of mortaring the brick in place or you can simply cut out some recycled carpet. Lay the carpet face down on the ground and cut to follow the curves of the pathways, the carpet will make a layer that will prevent weeds from getting established.

Installing Ornamentation:

At the garden centre you can place a sundial, birdbath or statue on a cement plinth. This will give the garden some height and a focal point which will draw your eye into the garden.

Planting:

First you will want to plant boxwood or some low growing plant that will form a low formal hedge around the entire garden. Then the centre circles can be planted with herbs. Cottage garden perennials will fill the 4 outer gardens, with climbing roses on the arbor at either end of the garden. To add an English touch to the garden it is very nice if all the plants are labeled with metal or copper tags.

Some plant suggestions:

- Plenty of tulips (*Tulipa*)
- *Fritillaria imperialis*
- *Narcissus*
- A riot of Poppies (*Papaver*)
- Dianthus
- Ranunculus
- Viola
- Rosa (first of the season)
- Iris
- Digitalis
- Thymus
- Lonicera
- Primula
- Lavendula
- Rosmarinus
- Fennel
- Menthe
- Sage