

**SPLENDID GARDENS OF SOUTHERN ENGLAND AND THE COTSWOLDS**

**April 21 – 28, 2018**

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Highgrove gardens

This year it was fabulous garden-magic that enthralled us throughout Italy's glorious northern Lake District. Next year, April 21 – 28, you are invited to join us as we visit some of the most beautiful and informative garden sites of Southern England and the Cotswolds. The tour will be led by world renowned British garden designer Anthony Archer Wills, a great friend at BBG, who will share his personal and experienced views of exclusive private estates and notable public gardens. Here is just a sampling of what will be in store for you.

**RHS Garden Wisley**, Woking, Surrey. One of four gardens under the ownership of the Royal Horticultural Society, this one since 1903, the 240-acre garden features large carpets of crocus joining glorious displays of magnolias, rhododendrons, fruit blossoms and wisteria - all blooming in spring. In addition to numerous formal and informal ornamental gardens, and a very extensive collection of deciduous and evergreen trees, the conservatory houses 6,000 plants including an orchid collection blooming in April.

**Munstead Wood**, Godalming, Surrey. The idyllic woodland setting belonging to legendary garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, it was one of several collaborations with architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, who designed the house to complement the gardens. Many have been restored, such as the 2000-foot-long main flower border at the foot of the garden wall, as well as beds surrounding the house. Various gardens come into play throughout most of the year, including the Spring Garden in April.

**Petworth Park**, Petworth, West Sussex. Not only home to an extraordinary collection of art, this magnificent 17<sup>th</sup> country house stands as a monument to the evolving taste of one family for over 900 years. The 700-acre parkland gives every impression of a natural landscape. Far from it. The park was transformed in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Lancelot “Capability” Brown, who created a serpentine lake framed by rolling hills, to this day a supreme surviving example. In addition there are Pleasure Grounds, 30 acres designed to inspire a range of emotions, as one meanders by Grecian temples, ancient trees and through thick shrubbery that open up to sweeping views.

**Gravetye Manor**, East Grinstead, West Sussex. This is the former home of the enormously influential Irish landscape designer and garden writer William Robinson. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Robinson’s ideas of making gardens more natural looking, and letting the surrounding landscape flow into them, were revolutionary. Meadows filled with masses of naturalized spring bulbs, mature trees and spring borders still testify to Robinson’s genius. The property is now a one-star Michelin hotel and restaurant, and the gardens, which include a spectacular round hilltop walled kitchen garden, are only accessible to guests.

**Wakehurst Place**, Ardingly, Haywards Heath, West Sussex. The extraordinary mansion, owned by the National Trust and used by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, dates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the garden from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wakehurst Place is the home of the national collections of birch, St. John’s wort, Southern Hemisphere beach and Japanese skimmia. In April and May the woodland floor is transformed into a blue carpet when thousands of native English bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) bloom. The Mansion Pond is at its best in spring when *Magnolia* and *Rhododendron* are in full bloom, while in the Walled Garden tulips, alliums and early perennials steal the show. The Millennium Seed Bank, also housed here, has as its mission to conserve 25% of the world’s plant species by 2020.

**Hever Castle**, Hever, Edenbridge, Kent. Dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was the seat of the Boleyn family and Anne Boleyn’s childhood home. Fast forward to 1903 when Hever Castle was acquired by William Waldorf Astor who added the four-acre Italian Garden to display his collection of statuary and ornaments. It is walled and planted with shrubs and climbing plants, with a sunken garden at its center. The grounds also include a yew maze planted in 1904.

Alongside the Maze is the Tudor Garden laid out in simple rooms surrounded by clipped hedges, as they may have looked at the time of Henry VIII. A water maze, opened in 1999, challenges visitors to remain dry in an attempt to reach the folly in the center. The Chess Garden has topiary chess pieces in golden yew.

**Sissinghurst Castle Garden**, Cranbrook, Kent. A world-famous garden created in the 1930s by Vita Sackville-West, poet and garden writer, and her husband Harold Nicolson, author and diplomat. The garden is laid out as a series of rooms, each with a different character of color or theme. In the process of enjoying the splendor of a room, there is the sudden discovery of a new vista, a discovery that entices the visitor to another part of the garden – the White Garden, the Lime Walk, the Cottage Garden, The Violet Garden, the Formal Gardens.

**Great Dixter**, Northiam, East Sussex. The house, cobbled together in 1910-12 by Sir Edwin Lutyens, combines an existing mid-15<sup>th</sup> century one with a similar structure brought to the site and additions by the architect. The garden is considered one of the finest examples of sophisticated plantsmanship, a tradition created by the late owner Christopher (“Christo”) Lloyd, a popular garden writer and television host. Like the house, the garden follows the Arts and Crafts style, and features topiary, a long border, an orchard and a wild flower meadow. The planting is profuse, yet structured, and annually features many bold experiments of form and color combinations. Head Gardener Fergus Garrett worked closely with Lloyd until Lloyd’s death in 2006. Garrett has introduced a number of innovations into the planting scheme.

**Hidcote Manor Garden**, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire. Considered one of the best-known Arts and Crafts gardens in Britain. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 17<sup>th</sup> century house and grounds became the home of an American, Major Lawrence Johnston, who was to become a widely recognized British horticulturist. He created at Hidcote Manor outdoor spaces with “walls” of box hedges, hornbeam, yew and stone. The rooms, such as the White Garden and Fuchsia Garden, are linked and furnished with topiaries. Some have ponds and fountains, and all are planted with flowers in bedding schemes.

**Lower Hopton Farm**, Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire. Here we will meet plantswoman Veronica Cross, who at her four-acre garden has over 100 varieties of magnolias, and possibly the largest collection of rare plants including snowdrops, hellebores, trilliums and trees (and weeds, she adds with a laugh) in the UK. Her particular passion, though, is peonies collected from around the world, some with lineages dating back to ancient China and Russia, others that are recognized as hybrids of our time. The garden is magical in its complexity containing ponds and many ‘rooms’ of different character linked by pathways, steps, allees and arches entwined with unusual climbers and vines. Remarkably, the whole garden is planted and maintained by Veronica herself with a helper only one day per week!

**The Laskett Gardens**, Much Birch, Herefordshire. Continuing to evolve since they were started in 1974, the gardens are the creation of Sir Roy Strong, former director of the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and his late wife, Julia Trevelyan Oman, a theatrical set designer. The gardens are considered the largest private formal gardens created in England since 1945. In the process, the couple transformed a four-acre field beside their home into formal gardens that include the Elizabeth Tudor Avenue, Die Fledermaus Walk, Silver Jubilee Garden, Serpentine Walk, Hilliard Garden and Pierpont Morgan Rose Garden, each commemorating an aspect of the owners lives together. (Sir Roy had wished to leave The Laskett Gardens to the National Trust, but was turned down. He has left instructions that the gardens be destroyed once he dies.)

**Highgrove**, Tetbury, Gloucestershire. Highgrove is the 900-acre family residence of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall. Charles is an advocate of environmental principles and these are reflected in the estate's gardens, including a wild garden, a formal garden and a walled garden. Organic farming was introduced in 1985, and in 1996 full organic status of the whole estate was completed. Individual features are the Carpet Garden, Southern Hemisphere Garden, the Autumn Walk, Sundial Garden and a Woodland Garden. Sir Roy Strong among others helped design the gardens.

**Hauser & Wirth Somerset**, Durslade Farm, Bruton, Somerset. This is a pioneering world-class gallery and multi-purpose arts center that also features a landscaped garden designed by renowned landscape architect Piet Oudolf. It includes a 1.5-acre perennial meadow.] THIS MAY NOT BE ADVISABLE TO VISIT... JAMES HITCHMOUGH HAS INDICATED THIS WOULD ME MORE OF A SUMMER/FALL GARDEN.

**Westwell Manor**, Burford, Oxfordshire. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Cotswold stone house is surrounded by a seven-acre garden that unfolds in a maze of paths and hidden spaces, removed from the outside world by hedges and stone walls. It features herbaceous borders, water rills flowing through a lime walk, a knot garden, an orchard brimming with narcissus in April, a potager, topiary and an allee of white-stemmed birch leading to a moonlight garden. It is a landscape designed by its late owner, Althea Gibson, without, as she said, any long views.

**A three-night stay at the beautiful Amberely Castle in West Sussex, which boasts a garden designed by Anthony Archer-Wills.**

**A four-night stay at the Mac Donald Bear Hotel in Woodstock**

## **About our guide Anthony Archer-Wills:**

Anthony Archer-Wills is among the world's foremost authorities on Water Gardening responsible for developing many of the techniques now frequently used in the construction of ponds and waterfalls.

Having survived the rigors of an English Boarding School education, Anthony's initial interests revolved around machinery and engineering. However, his passion was with water and being brought up with sailing craft and the magic of springs, pools and lakes he launched his own Pond and Waterfall construction business in the mid 1960's together with an aquatic plant nursery. After completing several large rock and water projects for Wild Animal Safari Parks, the construction company was sufficiently established for Anthony to launch into teaching. Subsequently he was invited by the Agricultural Training Board and British Association of Landscape Industries to train companies in all aspect of design and construction and aquatic plant management. Anthony went on to lecture at Kew gardens, New York Botanic Garden, Chelsea Physic Garden, The Royal Horticultural Society and universities and training facilities both in Europe and the USA.

Besides taking part in several radio and television programs including Animal Planet's 'The Pool Master', Anthony has written 'The Water Gardener' which is still considered the definitive work and used in many colleges, also, 'Water Power' and 'Designing Water Gardens' together with various magazine articles. Anthony has designed numerous Lakes, Swimming Ponds, Streams, Waterfalls and Grottos and Bio filtration systems together with adjacent landscaping, boardwalks and other related features.

His work has been extensive in Europe, Asia, North and South America, the Caribbean Islands and the West Indies. Anthony has had the privilege of working for major corporate organizations, the nobility, celebrities and numerous discerning landowners in the private sector.

In 2008 Watershapes awarded Anthony the Joseph McClosky prize for outstanding achievement in the art and craft of Water Gardening, also, Anthony was honored to receive the APLD Award of Distinction for 2013.

**Please contact Classical Excursions for further details or to register for the tour.**  
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**[lani@classicalexursions.com](mailto:lani@classicalexursions.com) Tour price \$3950.00 per person based on double occupancy, a single supplement applies. Participation requires a \$500 per person tax deductible donation to the Berkshire Botanical Garden.**