



Pictured above: The Savill Building, Savill Garden, Windsor Pictured below left-right: Stonor Park, Wonder Woods; Playing croquet on the lawn at National Trust's Tyntesfield, Somerset



# GARDENS THROUGH THE SEASONS

The gardens of the Great West Way are beautiful whatever the season, but here are the must-sees throughout the year

Words: Adrienne Wyper

## SPRING SPLENDOURS

### • SAVILL GARDEN

This 35-acre garden in Windsor Great Park's grounds is home to a glorious spring display of award-winning rhododendrons, in the sunken woodland garden. Trumpet-like flowers appear in every shade: pure white, pale cream, lemon, apricot, shocking pink, purple and flaming scarlet – many of them scented.

### • BLENHEIM PALACE

Formal gardens include Water Terraces, an Italian Garden, and the Rose Garden. Gardens manager Hilary Wood says: 'The Secret Garden bursts with fresh life and colour, from narcissus, snowdrops, hellebores and magnolias. Vastly different from the main formal gardens, the tranquillity of this garden, with its winding pathways and waterways, is a lovely place to sit, listen to the birds singing and take time to just relax.'

### • TYNTESFIELD

Cocooned in the Somerset countryside, Tyntesfield is a Victorian Gothic country house and estate. Spring is special: in the naturalistic orchard, apple, pear and plum blossom appears, and tulips brighten urns and beds along the terraces. And in the kitchen garden, says Senior Gardener Marianne Closius, 'a spring highlight for me is the blossom covering the wall-trained fruit.'

### • STONOR PARK

Set in a valley in the Chilterns, described by Lord Gibson, former National Trust Chairman, as: 'Possibly the most beautiful setting for any house in England', there's a lush mix of ponds, fountains and pleasure gardens. Stroll amid neat box hedges, and seek out the hidden Japanese retreat. The estate's arboretum is a treat during spring when the cherry blossom appears. →

From the world famous to the well-kept secrets, here are some gardens along the Great West Way where you won't be able to help but stop and smell the roses!





Pictured left-right: Bowood House and Gardens roses and fountain on The Terrace; Flowers at Bowood; Bowood House, The Courts Gardens, National Trust; Stourhead; and Westonbirt Arboretum



## AUTUMN GLOWS

### • WESTONBIRT ARBORETUM

With 15,000 trees from around the world, including five national collections, autumn is spectacular here. Dendrologist Michal Dvorak says: 'With our world-renowned maples taking centre stage, it's easy to miss lesser-known gems. The smoke bush is a feast of colour, including fiery yellows, reds, peaches and purples. The Persian ironwood is another one not to miss in autumn as its leaves turn crimson and gold.' Don't miss the step-free STIHL Treetop Walkway, and download a fun kids' activity booklet, including creating leaf crowns and hunting acorns.

### • STOURHEAD

In south Wiltshire, Stourhead is one of the Great West Way's most famous gardens. Described as 'a living work of art' when it opened in the 1740s, its classical architecture includes a grotto, a gothic cottage and its own Temple of Apollo. For Alan Power, head gardener, his favourite time of year here is autumn: 'the garden, the architecture, the plants and the trees all perform perfectly together. It's like an encore before the rest for winter.'

### • BRISTOL BOTANIC GARDEN

Fascinating displays tell the story of plants in several zones. The evolution collection boasts species dating back 200 million years. Two medicinal herb gardens – Chinese and Western – display useful plants. On chilly days, take shelter in the tropical zone glasshouse, marvel at giant waterlilies, and admire edible crops such as cocoa, vanilla, sugar cane, banana, pineapple and ginger.

### • THE COURTS GARDEN

Poet-in-residence John Bond (2018-2019) summed up the beauty of the season in this English country style garden, open until the end of October in Melksham: '...death, for once, shows nature at its best, and leaves outdo the flowers by a mile in beauty'. As well as the arboretum, topiary treats include the line of yews called 'the dancing bears' plus peaceful water gardens and unexpected vistas. →



## SUMMER SENSATIONS

### • CLIVEN DEN HOUSE

The gardens of 300-year-old Cliveden House hold as much interest as the house – known for exuberant high-society parties, political scandals and, most recently, its connection to a certain royal wedding. Meander through the six-acre parterre, with its distinctive triangular beds, be uplifted by the fragrant intermingling of flowers and classical statues in the Long Garden and come over all romantic amid 900 roses in the heavenly scented Rose Garden.

### • BOWOOD HOUSE

Fashionable 18th-century gardener 'Capability' Brown worked his magic on 100 acres of parkland here, widely hailed as his best-preserved masterpiece. Sit by the mile-long lake, admire sweeping lawns from the terrace and learn more about the designer on a summer tour with head gardener David Glass. Other highlights include an arboretum, woodland gardens and Lord and Lady Lansdowne's secret walled garden – swathed in early summer with fragrant lavender, honeysuckle and peonies.

### • BERKELEY CASTLE

Henry II gave the Castle to the Berkeley family in 1153. Below the gatehouse is a bowling green, where Queen Elizabeth I is believed to have played. In the terraced gardens the focus is on fragrance, and June's roses are a delight. Seize the rare opportunity to walk among free-flying butterflies in the Tropical Butterfly House.

### • HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Beside the Thames, at Henry VIII's residence, the Royal Horticultural Society's Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival (5-11 July 2021) is the world's largest annual horticultural show. This year's design themes include Scandinavian and sustainable.

Make time for the rose marquee, where the rose of the year is revealed. The setting for the Festival is a product of the Palace's rich history – the Baroque-style Great Fountain Garden, The Maze, and Royal Kitchen Garden with its heritage vegetables.







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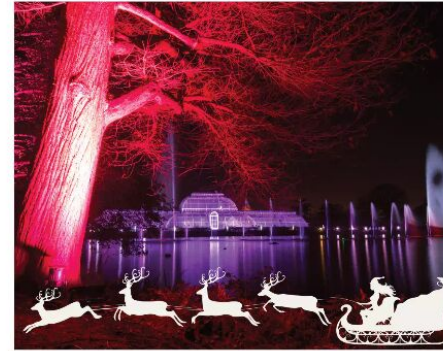
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## WINTER WONDERS

### • ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW

See the stunning gardens in a whole new light with Christmas at Kew, a show-stopping annual trail of festive light installations. More than a million tiny bulbs and flickering flames light up the night, as rainbow reflections shimmer on the water and trees are drenched in dazzling hues. Along the route try festive hot food and treats such as spiced winter warmers and hot chocolate.

### • MONTACUTE HOUSE

One of very few Elizabethan gardens retaining the compartmentalised design of the period, each with a distinct feel, from the East Court's stone balustrades and foliage planting, to yews and views in the North Garden, and wide-open spaces on the Cedar Lawn.

### • PRIOR PARK LANDSCAPE GARDEN

At this elegant 18th-century landscape garden south of Bath, designed by Capability Brown, the Palladian bridge and waterway are a focal point. In winter the bare branches reveal views that aren't visible at other times of year, but greenery still abounds, with glossy laurels and evergreen shrubs, succeeded by drifts of delicate snowdrops.

### • WADDESDON MANOR

In winter the grounds are transformed by dazzling colour and light displays, bathing trees and manor alike in beautiful hues. Wrap up warm and follow the trail, wending its way past imaginative illuminated installations. ❄️

Pictured left-right: Christmas at Kew, and The Hidden Gardens of Bath



## YOU MIGHT ALSO ENJOY

### THE NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME

› There are hundreds of private gardens to explore on the Great West Way not usually open to the public, hosting special open days, thanks to The National Garden Scheme. Visit unique gardens during special open days and as a paying visitor you will also be contributing to charity. Simply go to their website ([ngs.org.uk](http://ngs.org.uk)) and search for your perfect garden - pre-booking is essential. Fancy having it all to yourself? Following the coronavirus pandemic a number of gardens are offering private visits. One of the safest, most comfortable and most enjoyable places for a family get-together, or meet up with friends.

### THE HIDDEN GARDENS OF BATH

› Behind the honey-coloured stone facades of Bath's houses and hotels lie beautiful private gardens, rarely seen. With The Hidden Gardens of Bath guided tours, you can explore these hidden gems meeting their creative, passionate and hard-working owners before then sitting down to enjoy a quintessentially English afternoon tea!

Find out more about all the gardens on the Great West Way and and inspiration from Head Gardeners from our website:

→ [greatwestway.co.uk/discover-our-way/gardens](http://greatwestway.co.uk/discover-our-way/gardens)

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