

English Gardens

Gardening has been around for centuries – an old –fashioned pleasure and also a survival skill. As Master Gardeners our task is to “make recommendations, disseminate scientific information approved by the University of California” to others also interested in gardening. Yet, every garden is different and our likes and dislikes are probably as varied and unique as our individual personality, philosophy, heritage, and experiences.

Some of us prefer symmetry and organization. Others allow plants “that are making a go of it” to simply grow – whenever and wherever they want. I call my style “random”. My plants are still arranged by sun and water needs.

Roman gardens were planted on the grounds of villas and palaces after the conquest of Brittan during the 1st century AD. These gardens featured low box hedges and gravel walkways. Statues, urns and seating areas were incorporated into the garden. Mediterranean plants and native species were mixed together.

Medieval gardens in England during the Middle Ages were often small enclosed areas featuring kitchen and herb plants, especially within the courtyards of monasteries and on castle grounds.

Tudor gardens were enclosed by walls or hedges. These gardens mirrored the Italian influence of harmony and proportion. Statues, sundials and intricate patterns were introduced using low hedges such as the “knot: pattern.

Stuart gardens took the patterned garden to a grander scale. French gardens were now the rage, formal flower beds, rectangular hedges, large walking paths. Paths were lined with trees.

Georgian gardens were informal park-like settings. Trees were planted in clusters and ponds were now circular lakes giving a more natural look. Cattle and sheep were used to “mow” the grass right up to the house.

Victorian gardens brought back flowerbeds and color. Greenhouses were the rage and could house citrus trees from China. Public gardens and green spaces were introduced.

For gardening information, go to: cecolusa.ucanr.edu