

Be inspired!

Achieving a great garden requires inspiration as well as perspiration, but how do you come up with ideas to suit your space? Fortunately there are places to go that can help achieve that lightbulb moment

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE



Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Coordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio. "My clients and their gardens are very diverse. Ranging from tiny urban courtyards to large rural estates, they offer a wide variety of challenges. There is something to learn and discover on every project."

Once you have assessed the horticultural aspects of your garden, it is time to think about developing the design. Some may find the creative part daunting, so what can you do to help with the process of choosing the style and layout of your garden?

Growing up on Exmoor definitely played a large part in my becoming a garden designer, as the natural landscape has always been my main source of inspiration. Closely followed by art and architecture; Paul Klee's extraordinary use of colour and Ben Nicholson's abstract reliefs never fail to fuel ideas. The innovative work of architects such as Carlo Scarpa and the award-winning Peter Zumthor are both closely linked to the landscape and for me are so inspiring.

So, my advice is to feed the mind with images, ideas and experiences. Begin by collecting pictures of things that appeal to you. Not just garden images, but textiles, furniture, fashion and interiors. This will help you to decide which shapes, colours and materials you like. Edit the images by selecting the ones that really speak to you. Group these together to create a mood board; this should provide you with a good foundation for the concept or style of the garden.

From here you can start to refine your ideas and develop the layout. Sketching over photographs is another really helpful way of exploring design options. Simply place tracing paper over an enlarged image of your garden and draw in features that you would like to incorporate. Be bold and draw several versions until you find an idea that you like.

Books, magazines and the Internet are a great way of sourcing images and information. Pinterest is an online tool that allows you to create a 'virtual scrapbook'. It is a very efficient way of sourcing specific items and garden styles. However, visiting gardens is the best way to do your research. The National Gardens Scheme is an organisation through which people open their gardens, raising money for charity, better known as *The Yellow Book* scheme. Ensure that you visit gardens that are similar in size and location to your own. Make notes and take photographs, recording all aspects of the garden that appeal, and chat with the owners about how they achieved the design.

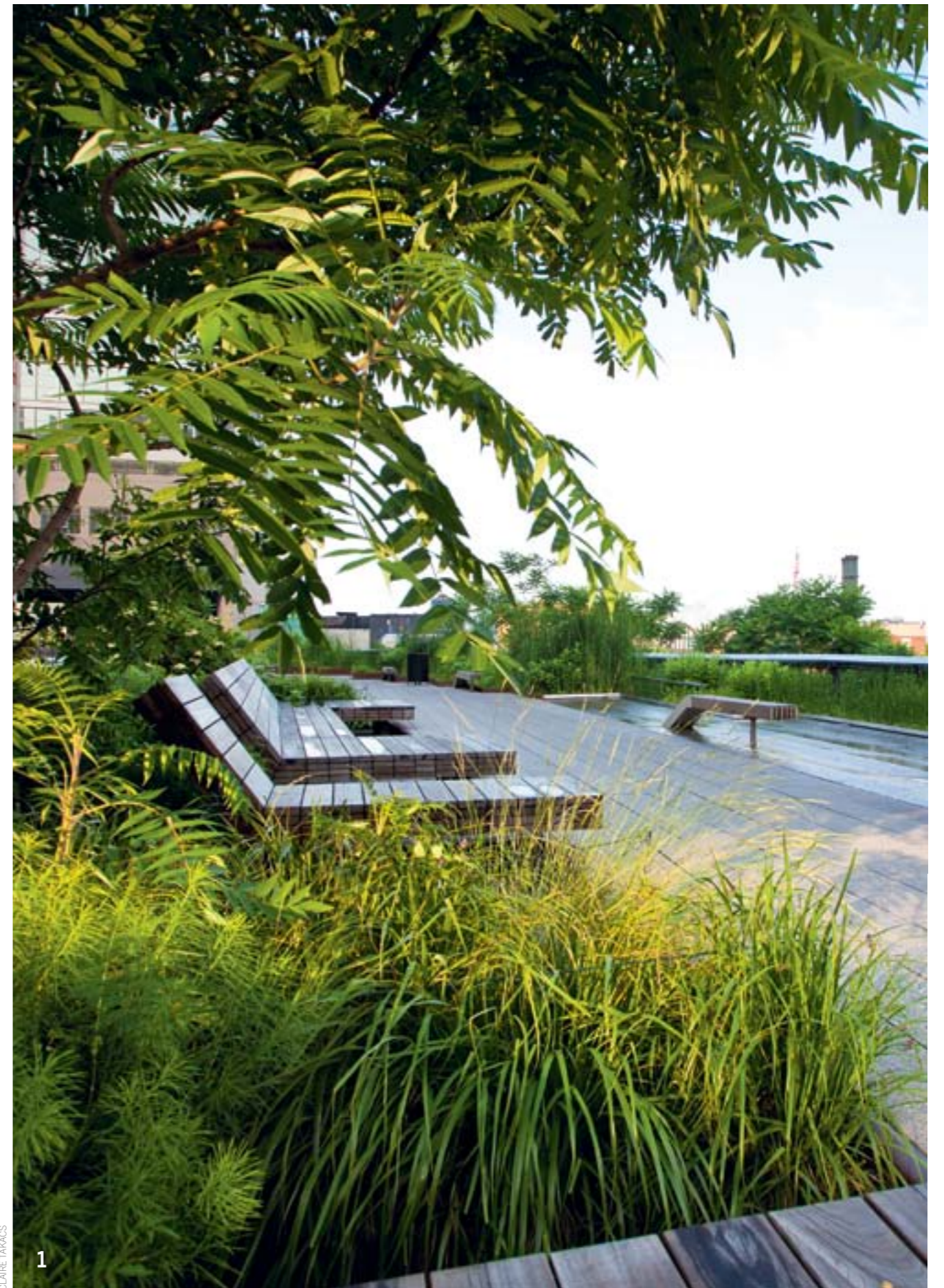
Show sources

RHS flower shows such as Chelsea and Hampton Court Palace are great places to discover landscape materials, plants, furniture, containers and more. The show gardens can provide inspiration for the design and layout. If you don't necessarily like the overall design there might be elements such as paving, water features or walling that appeal. Most gardens will hand out leaflets listing all their suppliers, which is helpful for sourcing plants and products. □

NEXT MONTH Linking house and garden

1 Park visits

The most visited public park in Manhattan is the High Line. Making the time to visit parks and gardens will really help to fuel ideas. You can discover innovative design, planting, hard landscaping materials and even furniture.



CLAIRE TAKACS

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2 Innovative ideas

Garden shows are always jam-packed with interesting ideas. Anoushka Feiler's Gold Medal-winning garden at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show last year also won Best in Show. These Portland stone steps included an inlay strip of coloured concrete, printed with words that related to the garden's theme.



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3 Planting combinations

Matthew Childs' poignant design 'Light at the end of the Tunnel' won best conceptual garden last year at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. The inspiration for this section of planting was the 'colour of the clouds', with *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Chiffon', *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' and *Gypsophila paniculata* 'Bristol Fairy'.



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4 Materials choice

This inspirational show garden designed by Paul Dracott demonstrates how wonderfully versatile wood can be. Paul has used it to create surface detail that forms a central spiral, as well as the irregular edging for beds and an unusual linear structure that gave the garden its name – 'Exoskeleton'.



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5 The bigger picture

Exmoor in Somerset was where I spent my childhood; the beauty and wildness of the landscape left a lasting impression upon me. As you begin to formulate ideas for your own garden, consider the places that are special to you and try to capture that feeling.



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6 Site specific

Visiting gardens that share the same location and climate is beneficial, especially when you are trying to find inspiration for the planting. The garden of the late artist Derek Jarman, which is located on a bleak stretch of beach at Dungeness in Kent, is full of original ideas.

7 Learn from the experts

The RHS gardens are the perfect settings for gathering design inspiration and learning about plants. This sweeping garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith surrounds the glasshouse at Wisley; the curvaceous borders demonstrate the value of late-season performers.

8 Ideas to steal

There are invariably ideas to take away from any garden visit. On one of my many trips to the Eden Project in Cornwall, I spotted this charming wall where various materials and sculptural elements have been added, creating a sense of fun and an element of surprise.

Books for further reading

- *The Book of Garden Plans* General Editor Andrew Wilson. Mitchell Beazley, £25.
- *The Book of Plans for Small Gardens*. General Editor Andrew Wilson. Mitchell Beazley, £25.
- *The RHS Encyclopedia of Garden Design*. Editor in Chief Chris Young. Dorling Kindersley, £25.

Shows

- Chaumont Garden Festival – annual event just outside Paris – www.domaine-chaumont.fr
- All the RHS shows – www.rhs.org.uk

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