

# REBECCA RECOMMENDS

*Inspirational destinations & properties of excellence*



*That's Rebecca at the center of a box hedge parterre at Bodysgallen Hall in Wales, named one of the "ten best UK hotels with gardens" by The Independent.*

Dear Friends,

I've long loved gardens - despite not inheriting my mum's green fingers - and can certainly appreciate the beauty each spring brings. At home in Wales, mum turned an acre of mountainside into a beautiful garden. My dad, then general manager of The Chester Grosvenor, was so proud that he always included mum's garden in FAM trips.

Whether it's visiting the "secret" Physics Garden in Chelsea, the Botanical Gardens of Kandy in Sri Lanka, The Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall or Monet's Garden in Giverny, I'm in a happy place when surrounded by colorful, fragrant flowering trees and shrubs.

Our clients are just as taken with gorgeous gardens and we've picked their brains for the latest must-sees for your garden gurus. We're looking forward to "A Taste of Cornwall at The Goring" this summer, when The Goring will create an entire experience on the verandah and in the garden.

In this newsletter you'll find [an information-packed webinar on Gardens in France by Decouvertes](#); how to snag Original Travel UK's special tickets to the [Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show Charity Gala Preview](#) in May; the best gardening festivals in Australia and New Zealand; and special tours and lunches coming up at Bodysgallen Hall and Hartwell House.

Private group tours through the famous and influential gardens of Rosemary Verey are available at Barnsley House, named "one of the ten best UK hotels with gardens" by The Independent. It still remains a pilgrimage site for gardening enthusiasts.

With exclusive entrée to gardens throughout France, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, there is something for all tastes here.

Contact us today to celebrate spring in the most beautiful way.

Fondly,

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Rebecca

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*Claude Monet's pond and water lilies in Giverny were the subject of 250 paintings, making his garden one of the most famous in France.*

## Decouvertes' Great French Gardens Webinar

As in so many things, no one does gardens like the French, and our friends at Decouvertes showcased some of their favorites during a recent webinar, which [you can listen to here](#). They range from the magnificent gardens of the Loire Valley, such as the elegant Château de Villandry and Château de Chenonceau, both Renaissance masterpieces, to lesser known and even private gardens. Whatever their garden interests, Decouvertes can arrange a personalized tour fashioned for your group or individual traveler.

Everyone loves the Grasse Rose Festival coming up May 12 - 14, 2017, when the entire city drapes itself in roses to celebrate this important perfume ingredient. The International Garden Festival runs from late April through early November at Domaine de Chaumont-Sur-Loire, where 30 or so artists and landscape artists from all over the world create contemporary gardens on a specific theme.

The quality of the work has turned this into an international event and meeting place for a new generation of landscape architects, designers and ambitious home gardeners. All the installations evolve during the six months they are on display so that they are stunning through all the seasons.



*Exbury Gardens in Hampshire is known for its woodland gardens, Rothschild flower collection and steam railway -- a perfect garden for families.*

## OTUK Has Tickets to Chelsea Flower Show Preview and Arranges Special Garden Tours

Successful in their bid for these ultra-exclusive tickets, [Original Travel UK](#) can arrange a place at the Chelsea Flower Show Charity Gala Preview coming up May 22, 2017. A select number of guests are allowed to attend the two-hour preview event. Each ticket includes champagne, canapés, live music and the opportunity to view the show gardens -- minus the crowds.

Gardens expert Caroline Charnock has the full scoop and we can put you in touch with her. She also crafts immaculate itineraries for discerning groups, providing special access to hidden gems. Your garden lovers will appreciate Somerset and Dorset with their lovely private gardens that are a bit off the beaten path. OTUK can arrange a specialist driver/guide for a jaunt to a private home in Wiltshire, with access to enchanting gardens designed by [Geoffrey Jellicoe](#), one of the 20th century's leading landscape architects.

Then it's on to Athelhampton House & Gardens, a superb example of a 19th-century Italianate garden, and the glorious sandstone manor of Mapperton House, home to the Earl and Countess of Sandwich. Be sure to ask about a specialist pre-opening visit to the formal Edwardian garden designed by Sir Edwards Lutyens. As always, Original Travel UK is on the lookout for the latest and most intriguing of English garden destinations, putting your garden enthusiasts in good hands.



Spring is declared in Cornwall when the great magnolia trees bloom, sooner than anywhere else in England.

### The Nare Tells "Cornwall's Spring Story"

Did you know that spring routinely arrives early in Cornwall, much sooner than in the rest of England? That is "[Cornwall's Spring Story](#)" and the idea to promote it was hatched by Toby Ashworth, owner of [The Nare](#), in partnership with the Great Gardens of Cornwall. It marks the moment that Cornish magnolias bloom each year, pronouncing the arrival of spring -- usually around mid-March but this year on February 28th, due to a mild winter.

Six champion *Magnolia campbellii* in six different Great Gardens of Cornwall are closely monitored to record the date the magnolias come into full bloom. When all six of the trees have flowered with a count of at least 50 blooms on each, Cornwall declares that spring has arrived in England. See [how the six champion magnolia trees were monitored](#) to mark the arrival of spring this year.



The walled garden at Middlethorpe Hall is a gorgeous blend of flowers, shrubs, fruits and vegetables, all lovingly planted by retiring Head Gardener David Barker.

### Barker Hands Over the Garden Tools at Middlethorpe Hall

[Gardener David Barker](#), who has been with the hotel since it became a National Trust Historic Hotels property 35 years ago. This spring, Barker hands over the garden tools to new Head Gardener Andrew Leighton, who has worked alongside David for many years. David will remain as a part-time gardener.

David created the White, Spring and Pond Gardens at the property and restored and replanted its famous walled garden which produces a beautiful display of flowering shrubs and plants, along with vegetables and fruit, including apples, pears, plums, peaches and greengages, all of which are used in the hotel kitchens by Head Chef Ashley Binder. Guests are encouraged to wander into the gardens and see what will be served up for dinner in the evening.

David's passion for organic gardening and wildlife can be seen with the recent addition of bee hives and the production of the Middlethorpe Honey. His interest in orchids has led to an entire greenhouse dedicated to the plants. The gardens have been awarded 'Yorkshire in Bloom' awards over many years, achieving Gold for seven years in a row since 2009.

David's Royal Horticulture Society garden tours have proven very popular, and on June 21st, Head Gardener Andrew Leighton will focus the tour and lecture on the magnificent roses. There are also [several wonderful gardens to tour in the area](#) during a stay.



*Brought to Barnsley House in 1962, The Temple is an example of how Rosemary Verey took inspiration from large public gardens and adapted those ideas for a smaller space.*

## Rosemary Verey's Famous Gardens at Barnsley House

[Barnsley House](#) is that quintessential English retreat - a fully staffed country house set in extensive landscaped gardens, with 18 large and luxurious bedrooms from which to choose, as well as modern amenities like a spa and private cinema. Guests indulge at [The Potager](#) restaurant, which overlooks the gardens and serves seasonal garden crops and local produce in addition to daily home-baked bread and crumbly shortbread biscuits.

It is perhaps [most famous for its gardens](#), originally created by [Rosemary Verey](#), the renowned garden designer, lecturer and garden writer who also designed the famous New York Botanical Gardens and gardens for Prince Charles, Sir Elton John and Princess Michael of Kent. At Barnsley House, she adapted her large public garden ideas for the smaller space and inspired a generation of young country gardeners to follow in her horticultural footsteps. One of her innovations was the ornamental kitchen garden.

There is so much to know about Barnsley House Gardens that it offers private garden tours by Head Gardener Richard Gatenby for groups of 10 to 40 guests.



*The Floriade Canberra is Australia's biggest spring festival and very family-friendly. Photo: Floriade Canberra.*

## Southern Crossings' Tips on the Best Gardening Festivals and Destinations in Australia and New Zealand

[Southern Crossings](#) is our entrée into some of the southern hemisphere's most gorgeous gardens, from bottlebrush to banksia, roses to rhodies, waterlilies to wattle. They're all on full display in Australia, including formal English-style gardens, exquisite Australian natives, edible gardens and festivals of bloom.

Green thumbs will adore the Aboriginal-led heritage tour of the spectacular, waterside Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, showcasing traditional bush tucker and the medicinal use of various plants. Glimpse the Wollemi Pine, discovered in 1994 and thought to have survived since the Jurassic period.

Consider a trip during one of the country's colorful festivals, such as Floriade in Canberra (September 16-October 16, 2017), and the Tulip Time Festival in Bowral (September 12-24, 2017). From chef-led kitchen garden tours combined with foraging and hands-on cooking classes, to visits to award-winning private gardens, Southern Crossings reveals a kaleidoscope of colors Down Under.

On New Zealand's North Island, the area around Taranaki is home to some of the country's best public and private gardens, including Pukeiti in New Plymouth, and incredible rhododendron gardens surrounded by native rain forests.

Visit during the Taranaki Fringe Garden Festival (October 27-November 5, 2017) for entrance into the homes of the region's finest garden gurus. Don't miss Hamilton Gardens, 21 delightfully themed gardens, from a Sung Dynasty Chinese scholar's garden to an Italian renaissance garden.

In the south, Christchurch has earned the nickname, "the Garden City", with good reason. Visit the Riverside Arboretum and the Botanic Gardens, with expert guides happy to unveil dozens of private and public gardens.



*In the tropical gardens of the Yucatán, Maya healers use medicinal plants to promote health.*

## Maya Magic in the Gardens of Mexico

The fruit trees and medicinal plants of the Yucatán Peninsula offer myriad benefits and remedies for life's ailments. Join [Catherwood Travels](#) for an exploration of these Maya miracles. Through the Haciendas del Mundo Maya Foundation, Catherwood continues to support the native species in its community - guests are encouraged to participate and help with the project, if interested.

Explore the Botanical Gardens, created for the rescue and conservation of more than 283 plant species from different uses: medicinal, ornamental and aromatic species. Meet a traditional Maya *curandero* (healer), who will share how plants are enough to control many health issues.

Participate with local families, or an entire community, to create backyard orchards that will produce locally marketed vegetables. Or simply explore the gorgeous gardens of one of the [Private Haciendas](#), where birders can glimpse some of the peninsula's 445 bird species -- more than anywhere else in Mexico.



*Great Fosters is a significant garden in its own right, and can serve as a base for exploration of magnificent gardens nearby.*

Great Fosters' 50 stunning acres of [parkland and formal gardens](#) have been declared “a far cry from the predictable blandness of most hotel gardens,” by Country Living. The knot garden, bordered by manicured hedges and topiary, is designed to reflect the intricate beauty of a Persian rug, and at its heart is The Drake sundial -- thought to have been a gift from Sir Francis Drake in 1585. And don't miss the Saxon moat!

One can embark on an immersive UK garden tour from Great Fosters as it is convenient to [Royal Horticultural Society Garden Wisley](#), one of the world's great gardens and a source of horticultural inspiration; [The Savill Garden](#), a 1930s-era ornamental garden and part of Windsor Great Park; and [The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew](#), London's largest UNESCO World Heritage site. It is one of the world's most recognized botanic gardens, with historic glasshouses, unique landscapes, vistas and iconic architecture from every stage of its history.



*The Torridon's heritage breed farm and two-acre kitchen garden provides meat, fruit and vegetables for its three AA Rosette restaurant.*

## The Torridon's Year-Round Working Garden & Farm

Embracing the farm-to-table dining concept, [The Torridon](#) is particularly proud of its two-acre year-round fruit and vegetable garden in the Scottish Highlands. Chef David Barnett, who oversees the hotel's [three AA Rosette restaurant](#), harvests its superb crop of apples, blackberries, raspberries, potatoes, fresh greens and more as ingredients for his daily four-course menu.

Complementing the fresh produce is the abundance of meats from Torridon Farm, where the staff rears Highland cattle, chickens and Tamworth pigs. Menus may include whisky parfaits with fresh raspberries, corn-fed chicken with fresh asparagus or home-bred pork with sauerkraut, shallot and juniper. Rest assured the inspired dishes will be fresh, local and delicious.



*Hartwell House not only has its own parks and gardens, it is near other major gardens open to tours.*

### Hartwell House's Royal Horticultural Society Luncheons

The Royal Horticultural Society and [Hartwell House](#) will be hosting two special luncheons and garden tour events on June 14 & 28, 2017. Property manager Richard Jones will guide guests through Hartwell House's recent plantings and restoration, as well as on a historical journey to rediscover the lost flower garden of Lady Elizabeth Lee, an enigma to garden historians for many years. Morning coffee and biscuits will be served on arrival, followed by a two-course luncheon with wine and coffee after the tour. On August 11, Richard Jones will take guests on a guided tour of the many plants, shrubs and trees that are in bloom in the late summer. The event includes a four-course luncheon and wine.

Other gardens of interest near Hartwell House include [Stowe Landscape Gardens](#), with its masterful display of classical statues and temples considered one of the finest landscape gardens in Europe. [Waddesdon Manor](#), a Renaissance-style château built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, boasts a picture-perfect Victorian garden with a parterre, seasonal displays, fountains, statuary and even an aviary.



*Robert Owen has been at Bodysgallen Hall for over 30 years, transforming an overgrown wilderness into award-winning gardens.*

### Spring Tours with Bodysgallen Hall's Head Gardener



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weekly tours provide insight into the seasonal work and ongoing restoration that continues in the gardens.

Each tour includes coffee in the Drawing Room and a culminating two-course luncheon in the South Dining Room. The programs coming up are: Fruit Trees in Flower & Estate Bees Busy on the Blossom (April 21) Shrubs in Flower and Time to Sow (May 26) and Rose Display and Early Summer Flowers (June 16).

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