

Batty Langley (1696--1751)

The title of Langley's work, *New Principles of Gardening*, aptly suggests the scope and treatment of its topic. His awareness of the *new* gardening ideas and his dedication to defining the principles that may govern the art join with his determination to offer detailed practical advice. The passage given here, 'Of the Disposition Gardens in general', sketches the methods and ideas that he elaborates in remainder of the volume. He is guided above all by his distaste for 'that abominable Mathematical Regularity and Stiffness' (Plate 68), and is determined patriotically to ensure that his country's very different style comes quickly to rival the Continental ones. Yet his 'noble Idea' of the English garden -- the insistence upon irregularity and variety, upon letting the site shape the form and arrangement of the landscape, upon bringing the countryside into the scope of the garden -- consorts still with some survivals of various French features (such as basins and canals), and his text is interspersed, though they have been deleted here, with lengthy quotations from Rapiin's poem on gardens.

from New Principles of Gardening (1728)

ON this very Point depends the whole Beauty or Ruin of a Garden, AND therefore every Gentleman should be very cautious therein; I must needs confess, that I have often been surprized to see that none of our late and present Authors did ever attempt to furnish Gentlemen with better Plans and Ideas thereof, than what has hitherto been practised.

The End and Design of a good Garden, is to be both profitable and delightful; wherein should be observed, that its Parts should be always presenting new Objects, which is a continual Entertainment to the Eye, and raises a Pleasure of Imagination.

If the Gentlemen of *England* had formerly been better advised in the laying out their Gardens, we might by this Time been at least equal (if not far superior) to any Abroad.

For as we abound in good Soil, fine Grass, and Gravel, which in many Places Abroad is not to be found, and the best of all Sorts of Trees; it therefore appears, that nothing has been wanting but a noble Idea of the Disposition of a Garden. I could instance divers Places in *England*, where Noblemen and Gentlemens Seats are very finely situated, but wretchedly executed, not only in respect to disproportion'd Walks, Trees planted in improper Soils, no Regard had to fine Views, &c. but with that abominable Mathematical Regularity and Stiffness, that nothing that's bad could equal them.

Now these unpleasant forbidding Sort of Gardens, owe their Deformity to the insipid Taste or Interest of some of our Theoretical Engineers, who, in their aspiring Garrets, cultivate all the several Species of Plants, as well as frame Designs for Situations they never saw: Or to some Nursery-Man, who, for his own Interest, advises the Gentleman to such Forms and Trees as will greatest Draught out of his Nursery, without Regard to any Thing more; And oftentimes to a Cox-comb, who takes upon himself to be an excellent Draughtsman, as well as an incomparable Gardener; of which there has been, and are still, too many in *England*, which is witness'd by every unfortunate Garden wherein they come. Now as the Beauty of Gardens in general depends upon an elegant Disposition of all their Parts, which cannot be determined without a perfect Knowledge of its several Ascendings, Descendings, Views, &c. how is it possible that any Person can make a good Design for any Garden, whose Situation they never saw?

To draw a beautiful regular Draught, is not to the Purpose; for altho' it makes a handsome Figure on the Paper, yet it has a quite different Effect when executed on the Ground: Nor is there any Thing more ridiculous, and forbidding, than a Garden which is regular; which, instead of entertaining the Eye with fresh Objects, after you have seen a quarter Part, you only see the very same Part repeated again, without any Variety.

And what still greatly adds to this wretched Method, is, that to execute these stiff regular Designs, they destroy many a noble Oak, and in its Place plant, perhaps, a clumsy-bred Yew, Holley, &c. which, with me, is a Crime of so high a Nature, as not to be pardon'd.

There is nothing adds so much to the Pleasure of a Garden, as those great Beauties of Nature, Hills and *Valleys*, which, by our *regular Coxcombs*, have ever been destroyed, and at a very great Expence also in Levelling.

For, to their great Misfortune, they always deviate from Nature, instead of imitating it.

There are many other Absurdities I could mention, which those *wretched Creatures* have, and are daily guilty of: But as the preceding are sufficient arm worthy Gentlemen against such Mortals, I shall at present forbear, and instead thereof, proceed to General Directions for laying out Gardens in a more grand and delightful Manner than has been done before. But observe,

That the several Parts of a beautiful Rural Garden, are *Walks, Slopes, Borders, Open Plains, Plain Parterres, Avenues, Groves, Wildernesses, Labyrinths, Fruit-Gardens, Flower-Gardens, Vineyards, Hop-Gardens, Nurseries, Coppiced Quarters, Green Openings*, like Meadows: Small Inclosures of *Corn, Cones of Ever-Greens, of Flowering-Shrubs, of Fruit-Trees, of Forest-Trees*, and mix'd together: *Mounts, Terraces, Winding Valleys, Dales, Purling Streams, Basons, Canals, Fountains, Cascades, Grotto's, Rocks, Ruins, Serpentine Meanders, Rude Coppies, Hay-Stacks, Wood-Piles, Rabbit and Hare-Warrens, Cold Baths, Aviaries, Cabinets, Statues, Obelisks, Manazeries, Pheasant and Partridge-Grounds, Orangeries, Melon-Grounds, Kitchen-Gardens, Physick or Herb-Garden, Orchard, Bowling-Green, Dials, Precipices, Amphitheatres, &c.*

General DIRECTIONS, &c.

I. THAT the grand Front of a Building lie open upon an elegant Lawn or Plain of Grass, adorn'd with beautiful Statues, (*of which hereafter in their Place,*) terminated on its Sides with open Groves.

II. That grand Avenues be planted from such large open Plains, with a Breadth proportionable to the Building, as well as to its Length of View

III. That Views in Gardens be as extensive as possible.

IV. That such Walks, whose Views cannot be extended, terminate in Woods, Forests, mishapen Rocks, strange Precipices, Mountains, old Ruins, grand Buildings, &c.

V. That no regular Ever-Greens, &c. be planted in any Part of an open Plain or Parterre.

VI. That no Borders be made, or Scroll-Work cut, in any such Lawn or plain Parterre; for the Grandeur of those beautiful Carpets consists in their native Plainness.

VII. That all Gardens be grand, beautiful, and natural.

VIII. That shady Walks be planted from the End-Views of a House, and terminate in those open Groves that enclose the Sides of the plain Parterre, that thereby you may enter into immediate Shade, as soon as out of the House, without being heated by the scorching Rays of the Sun.

IX. That all the Trees of your shady Walks and Groves be planted with Sweet-Brier, White Jessemine, and Honey-Suckles, environ'd at Bottom with a small Circle of Dwarf-Stock, Candy-Turf, and Pinks.

X. That all those Parts which are out of View from the House, be form'd into Wildernesses, Labyrinths, &c.

XI. That Hills and Dales, of easy Ascents, be made by Art, where Nature has not perform'd that Work before.

XII. That Earths cast out of Foundations, &c. be carried to such Places for raising of Mounts, from which, fine Views may be seen.

XIII. That the Slopes of Mounts, &c. be laid with a moderate Reclination, and planted with all Sorts of Ever-Greens in a promiscuous Manner, so as to grow all in a Thicket; which has a prodigious fine Effect.

In this very Manner are planted two beautiful Mounts in the Gardens of the Honourable Sir *Fisher Trench at Low-Layton in Essex.*

XIV. That the Walks leading up the Slope of a Mount, have their Breadth contracted at the Top, full one half Part; and if that contracted Part be enclosed on the Sides with a Hedge whose Leaves are of a light Green, 'twill seemingly add a great Addition to the Length of the Walk, when view'd from the other End.

XV. That all Walks whose Lengths are short, and lead away from any Point of View, be made narrower at their further Ends than at the hither Part; for by the Inclination of their Sides, they appear to be of a much greater Length than they really are; and the further End of every long Walk, Avenue, &c. appears to be much narrower than that End where you stand.

And the Reason is, that notwithstanding the Sides of such Walks are parallel to each other, yet as the Breadth of the further End is seen under a lesser Angle, than the Breadth of that Part where you stand, it will therefore appear as if contracted, altho' the Sides are actually parallel; for equal Objects always appear under equal Angles, Q.E.D.

XVI. That the Walks of a Wilderness be never narrower than ten Feet, or wider than twenty five Feet.

XVII. That the Walks of a Wilderness be so placed, as to respect the best Views of the Country.

XVIII. That the Intersections of Walks be adorn'd with Statues, large open Plains, Groves, Cones of Fruit, of Ever-Greens, of Flowering Shrubs, of Forest Trees, Basons, Fountains, Sun-Dials, and Obelisks . . .

XIX. That in those serpentine Meanders, be placed at proper Distances, large Openings, which you surprizingly come to; and in the first are entertain'd with a pretty Fruit-Garden, or Paradise-Stocks, with a curious Fountain; from which you are insensibly led through the pleasant Meanders of a shady delightful Plantation; first, into an open Plain environ'd with lofty Pines, in whose Center is a pleasant Fountain, adorn'd with *Neptune* and his Tritons, &c. secondly, into a Flower-Garden, enrich'd with the most fragrant Flowers and beautiful Statues; and from thence through small Inclosures of Corn, open Plains, or small Meadows, Hop-Gardens, Orangeries, Melon-Grounds, Vineyards, Orchards, Nurseries, Physick-Gardens, Warrens, Paddocks of Deer, Sheep, Cows, &c. with the rural Enrichments of Hay-Stacks, Wood-Piles, &c....

These agreeable surprizing Entertainments in the pleasant Passage thro' a Wilderness, must, without doubt, create new Pleasures at every Turn: And more especially when the Whole is so happily situated, as to be bless'd with small Rivulets and purling Streams of clear Water, which generally admit of the Canals, Fountains, Cascades, &c. which are the very Life of a delightful rural Garden ...

And to add to the Pleasure of these delightful Meanders, I advise that the Hedge-Rows of the Walks be intermix'd with Cherries, Plumbs, Apples, Pears, Bruzel Apricots, Figs, Gooseberries, Currants, Rasberries, &c. and the Borders planted with Strawberries, Violets, &c.

The most beautiful Forest-Trees for Hedges, are the *English Elm*, the *Dutch Elm*, the *Lime-Tree*, and *Hornbeam*: And altho' I have advis'd the Mixing of these Hedges of Forest-Trees with the aforesaid Fruits, yet you must not forget a Place for those pleasant and delightful Flowering-Shrubs, the *White Jessemine*, *Honey-Suckle*, and *Sweet-Brier*.

XX. Observe, at proper Distances, to place publick and private Cabinets, which should (always) be encompass'd with a Hedge of Ever-Greens, and Flowering-Shrubs next behind them, before the Forest-Trees that Standards.

XXI. Such Walks as must terminate within the Garden, are best finish'd with Mounts, Aviaries, Grotto's, Cascades, Rocks, Ruins, Niches, or Amphitheatres of Ever-Greens, variously mix'd, with circular Hedges, ascending behind one another, which renders a very graceful Appearance . . .

XXII. Obelisks of Trellip-Work cover'd with Passion-Flowers, Grapes, Honey-Suckles, and *White Jessemine*, are beautiful Ornaments in the Center of an open Plain, Flower-Garden, &c.

XXIII. In the Planting of a Wilderness, be careful of making an equal Disposition of the several Kinds of Trees, and that you mix therewith the several Sorts of Ever-Greens; for they not only add a very great Beauty thereunto, by their different Leaves and Colours, in the Summer; but are a great Grace to a Garden in the Winter, when others have stood the Strip of their Leaves.

XXIV. Canals, Fish-Ponds, &c. are most beautiful when environ'd with a Walk of stately Pines, and terminate at each End with a fine Grove of Forest-Trees, or Ever-Greens.

Or, if an extensive Canal terminate at one End in an elegant Piece of Architecture, with a Grove on each Side thereof, and the other end in a Wood, Grove, &c. 'twill have a noble and grand Aspect.

XXV. Groves of Standard Ever-Greens, as Yew, Holly, Box, and Bay-Trees are very pleasant, especially when a delightful Fountain is plac'd in their Center.

XXVI. All Grass-Walks should be laid with the same Curvature as Gravel-Walks, and particularly in wet and cold Lands; for, by their being made flat or level from Side to Side, they soon settle into Holes in the Middle, by often walking on, and therein retain Wet, &c. which a circular surfaced Walk resists. The Proportion for the Heights of the Crown, or middle Part ,of any Grass or Gravel-Walk, is as five is to one, that is, if the Walk be five Foot in Breadth, the Height of the Middle, above the Level of the Sides, must be one Inch; if ten Foot, two Inches; fifteen Foot, three Inches, &c.

XXVII. The Proportion that the Base of a Slope ought to have to its Perpendicular, is as three to one, that is, if the perpendicular Height be ten Feet, its Base must be thirty Feet; and the like of all others.

XXVIII. Distant Hills in Parks, &c. are beautiful Objects, when planted with little Woods; as also are Valleys, when intermix'd with Water, and large Plains; and a rude Coppice in the Middle of a fine Meadow, is a delightful Object.

XXIX. Little Walks by purling Streams in Meadows, and through Corn-Fields, Thickets, &c. are delightful Entertainments.

XXX. Open Lawns should be always in Proportion to the Grandeur of the Building; and the Breadth of Avenues to the Fronts of Edifices, and their own Length also.

The entire Breadth of every Avenue should be divided into five equal Parts : Of which, the Middle, or grand Walk, must be three Fifths; and the Side, or Counter-Walks on each Side one Fifth each. But let the Length of Avenues fall as it will, you must always observe, that the grand Walk be never narrower than the Front of the Building.

The most beautiful and grand Figures for fine large open Lawns, are the Triangle, Semicircle, Geometrical Square, Circle or Elipsis, as the Figures A, B, C, D, E.

XXXI. The Circle, Elipsis, Octagon, and mix'd Figures composed of Geometrical Squares, Parallelograms, and Arches of Circles, makes very beautiful Figures for Water, as may be seen in the several Parts of the Designs at the End hereof. But of them all, the Circle is the most grand and beautiful ...

XXXII. In the Planting of Groves, you must observe a regular Irregularity; not planting them according to the common Method like an Orchard, with their Trees in straight Lines ranging every Way, but in a rural Manner, as if they had receiv'd their Situation from Nature itself.

XXXIII. Plant in and about your several Groves, and other Parts of your Garden, good Store of Black-Cherry and other Trees that produce Food for Birds, which will not a little add to the Pleasure thereof...

XXXIV. Where water is easy to be had, always introduce a Basin or Fountain in every Flower and Fruit-Garden, Grove, and other pleasing Ornaments, in the several private Parts of your rural Garden ...

XXXV. The several Kinds of Forest-Trees make beautiful Groves, as also doth many Ever-Greens, or both mix'd together; but none more beautiful than that noble Tree the *Pine* ...

XXXVI. In the Disposition of the several Parts of Gardens in general, always observe that a perfect Shade be continued throughout, in such a Manner as to pass from one Quarter to another, &c. without being obliged at any Time to pass thro' the scorching Rays of the Sun ...

XXXVII. There is nothing adds so much to the Beauty and Grandeur of Gardens, as fine Statues; and nothing more disagreeable, than when wrongly plac'd; as *Neptune* on a Terrace-Walk, Mount, &c. or *Pan*, the God of Sheep in a large Basin, Canal, or Fountain. But to prevent such Absurdities, take the following Directions.

For open Lawns and large Centers:

Mars, God of Battle, with the Goddess *Fame*; *Jupiter*, God of Thunder, with *Venus*, the Goddess of Love and Beauty; and the Graces *Aglaio*, *Thalia* and *Euphrosyne*; *Apollo*, God of Wisdom, with the nine Muses, *Cleio*, *Melpomene*, *Thalia*, *Euterpe*, *Terpsicoce*, *Erato*, *Calliope*, *Urania*, and *Polymnia*; *Minerva* and *Pallas*, Goddesses of Wisdom, with the seven Liberal Sciences; the three Destinies, *Clotho*, *Lachesis*, and *Atropos*; *Demegorgon* and *Tellus* Gods of the Earth; *Priapus*, the Garden-God; *Bellona*, Goddess of War; *Pytho*, Goddess of Eloquence; *Vesta*, Goddess of Chastity; *Voluptia*, Goddess of Pleasure; *Atlas*, King of *Mauritania*, a famous Astronomer; *Tysias*, the Inventer of Rhetorick; and *Hercules*, God of Labour.

For Woods and Groves:

Ceres and *Flora*; *Sylvanus*, God, and *Feronia*, Goddess of the Woods; *Actaeon*, a Hunter, whom *Diana* turn'd into a Hart, and was devoured by his own Dogs; *Eccho*, a Virgin rejected of her Lover, pined away in the Woods for Sorrow, where her Voice still remains, answering the Outcries of every Complaint, &c. *Philomela*, a young Maid ravish'd by *Tereus*, who afterwards imprison'd her, and cut out her Tongue; which cruel Action *Progne*, Sister to *Philomela* and Wife to *Tereus*, reveng'd, by killing her own Son *Itis*, whom she had by *Tereus*, and mincing his Flesh, dress'd up a Dish thereof, which she gave her Husband *Tereus* to eat, (unknown to him,) instead of Meat. *Philomela* was afterwards transformed into a Nightingale, and *Itis* into a Pheasant; and lastly, Nuppaee Fairies of the Woods.

For Canals, Basons, and Fish-Ponds:

Neptune, *Palemon*, *Paniscus*, and *Oceanus*, Gods, and *Dione*, *Melicerta*, *Thetis*, and *Marica*, Goddesses of the Sea; *Salacia* Goddess of Water; *Naiades* Fairies of the Water; and the Syrens *Parthenope*, *Lygia*, and *Leusia*. Niches to be adorn'd with *Dii minores*.

For Fruit-Gardens and Orchards:

Pomona Goddess of Fruit, and the three *Hesperides*, *Eagle*, *Aretusa*, and *Hesperetusa*, who were three Sisters that had an Orchard of golden Apples kept by a Dragon, which *Hercules* slew when he took them away.

For Flower-Gardens:

Flora and *Cloris*, Goddesses of Flowers; and also *Venus*, *Diana*, *Daphne*, and *Runcina* the Goddess of Weeding.

For the Vineyard:

Bacchus God of Wine.

For Mounts, high Terrace-Walks, &c.

AEolus, God of the Winds and *Orcedes* Fairies of the Mountains.

For Valleys:

The Goddess *Vallonta*.

For private Cabinets in a Wilderness or Grove:

Harpocrates God, and *Agerona* Goddess of Silence, *Mercury* God of Eloquence.

For small Paddocks of Sheep, &'c. in a Wilderness:

Morpheus and *Pan* Gods of Sheep; *Pates* the Shepherds Goddess; *Bubona* the Goddess of Oxen; and *Nillo* a famous Glutton, who used himself to carry a Calf every Morning, until it became a large Bull, at which Time he slew it with his Fist, and eat him all in one Day.

For small Enclosures of Wheat, Barley, &c. in a Wilderness:

Robigus a God who preserved Corn from being blasted; *Segesta* a Goddess of the Corn, and *Tutelina* a Goddess, who had the Tuition of Corn in the Fields.

For Ambuscadoes near Rivers, Paddocks, or Meadows:

For those near a Canal or River, *Ulysses*, who first invented the Shooting of Birds; and for those near a Paddock, wherein Sheep, &c. are kept. *Cacus* slaying by *Hercules*. For *Cacus* being a Shepherd, and a notorious Thief of great Strength and Policy, stole several Sheep and Oxen from *Hercules*, who perceiving his Loss, lay in Ambush, and took *Cacus* in the Fact, for which, with his Club, he knock'd out his Brains.

Lastly, for Places of Banquetting:

The God *Comus*.

Where Bees are kept in Hives:

The God *Aristeus*.

These general Directions, with the preceding deliver'd in the Cultivation of the several Kinds of Fruits and Forest-Trees, Ever-Greens, and Flowering-Shrubs, join'd with the most useful Observations on the several Designs hereunto annex'd, is fully sufficient for any Person whatsoever, to design, lay out, and plant Gardens in general, in a more grand and beautiful Manner than has been done before.

*And blest is he, who tir'd with his Affairs,
Far from all Noise, all vain Applause, prepares
To go, and underneath some silent Shade,
Which neither Cares nor anxious Thoughts invade,
Does for a while, himself alone possess,
Changing the Town for rural Happiness.
He, when the Sun's hot Steeds to th' Ocean haste,
E'er sable Night the World has overcast,
May from the Hills, the Fields below descry,
At once diverting both his Mind and Eye.*