

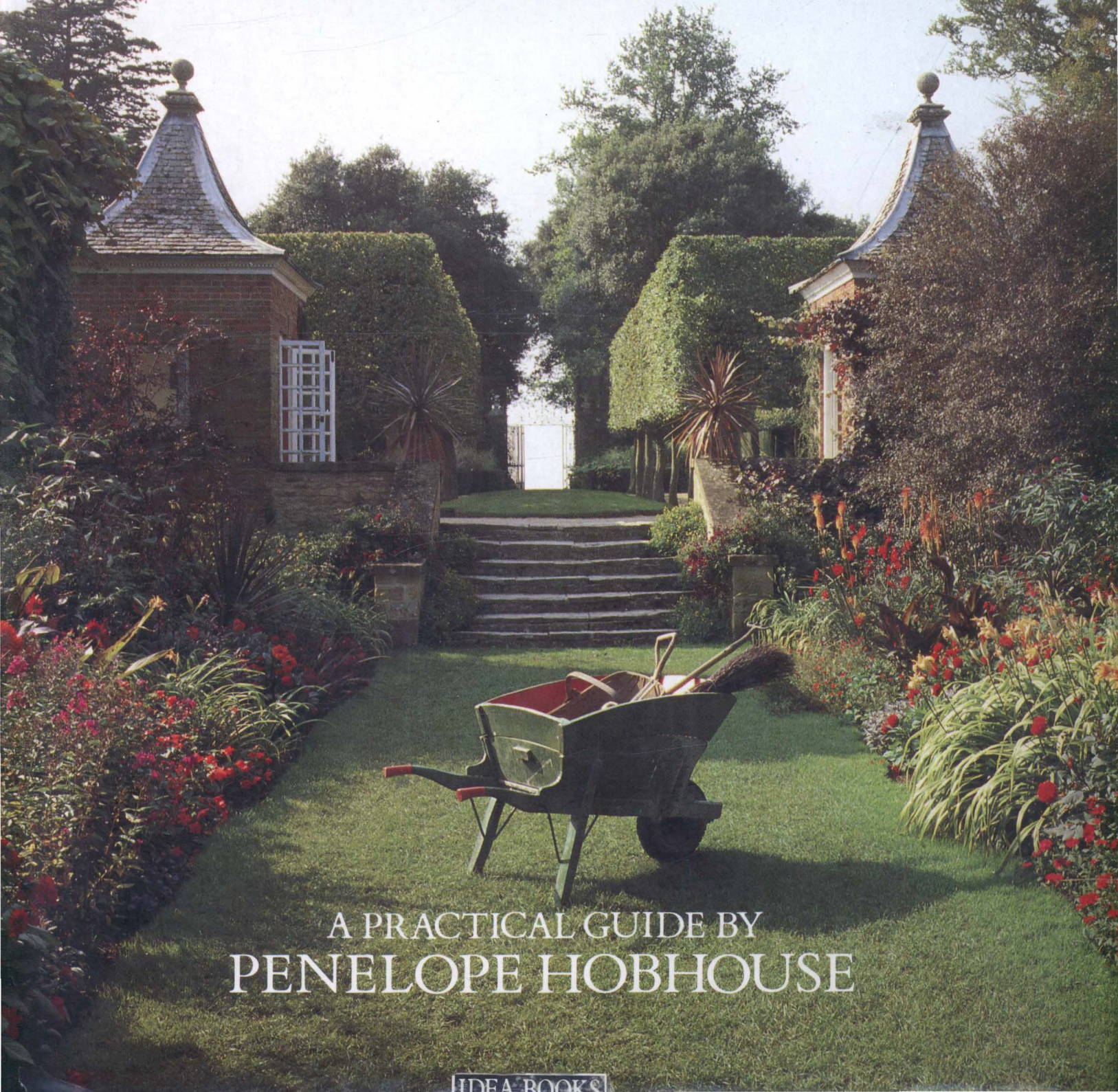


THE NATIONAL TRUST

A BOOK OF

GARDENING

IDEAS  METHODS  DESIGNS



A PRACTICAL GUIDE BY
PENELOPE HOBHOUSE

As the ever-increasing numbers of visitors to National Trust gardens have discovered for themselves, the variety of garden types under the Trust's care and the wide experience of their gardeners provide the best possible sources of inspiration for every amateur gardener, whether beginner or expert. Until now, however, apart from direct observation or through occasional consultation with individual gardeners, there has been no convenient way by which gardeners could draw on this unique body of knowledge about garden planning, planting and maintenance and apply it to their own circumstances.

In this totally practical guide, Penelope Hobhouse – herself a National Trust gardening tenant – has brought together the ideas and techniques that have justly won the Trust's gardens their widespread acclaim and she presents them in a style accessible to all.

As well as conducting her own extensive research, the author has interviewed many Trust gardeners and experts in specialist areas of gardening, several of whom contribute detailed first-hand information on their subjects. Valuable guidance is provided on every aspect of gardening, from an examination of garden structure to advice on borders and beds, themes such as rose and herb gardens and orchards, and garden features including ponds, garden ornaments, containers and furniture. Colour in the garden, the relationship between the house and garden, lawn culture, the choice of tools and machinery, woodlands and wild gardens are all dealt with, and relatively labour-intensive and low-maintenance styles and techniques are compared.

Over 170 colour photographs show both 'work in progress' and finished results, while a range of diagrams and plans offer explanation of techniques and garden layouts, together with detailed planting plans. Maps pinpoint all the principal National Trust gardens in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, while a comprehensive directory provides an at-a-glance checklist of their notable features.

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Structural Planting

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Using plants or objects to suggest to the eye a division, as well as using an actual physical barrier such as a wall, fence or the continuous planting of a hedge, is an effective way of establishing the architectural structure of a garden design. Upright shapes in lines or geometrical arrangements will emphasize a ground pattern and give a third dimension to the two-dimensional garden plan. As well as being architectural features, these divisions provide seclusion, shade and an opportunity to display plants in various different ways.

The diverse subjects that constitute a garden's structure will overlap and interrelate as topics of discussion, just as the physical elements overlap and work together in the garden. Here, for convenience, they are grouped as a series of broad themes. Perhaps the most functional barriers and divisions, walls and walled enclosures, are one special case, to be considered separately later on; and hedges – barriers of living plants – are another. The training or pleaching of rows of trees to make avenues, alleys and so on, and constructions such as pergolas, form a different sort of three-dimensional element in the garden. When the effect of some of these techniques is not so much to form physical garden divisions as to become pattern and ornament for its own sake, it becomes the subject of the discussion 'Planting in Patterns'.

Among the growing structural elements in the garden framework are hedges. Like walls and fences, they can mark a continuous boundary around the garden perimeter, or can divide up the space within the garden into a series of compartments. An inner hedge that appears to be a division might act as a screen, either hiding some unsightly object or area, or by first concealing a landscape view or garden feature from the visitor, introducing it as a surprise later.

An avenue is not necessarily the great landscape feature that the word is inclined to evoke. In design terms it is a series of ornamental objects – not always trees or even plants – placed at regular intervals on either side of a directional path. Size and actual spacing distances will determine the effect of linear perspective: occasionally, to increase or diminish the apparent distance, the elements are deliberately set nearer or farther apart. The scale can be proportionate to the situation. The dictionary defines an avenue as a passage or path of entrance or exit, particularly

the chief approach to a country house, usually bordered by trees – hence any broad roadway marked by objects at regular intervals. It is a dramatic device using rhythmic repetition in perspective to enhance the grandeur of the approach, or to pace the view towards a focal point.

Pleached trees suggest a continuous row and garden division but usually allow a clear view below boscage. In the Middle Ages pleaching was used as a device to create shady and secluded garden walks before it became a useful feature of garden design. By regularly cutting back new growth of specially trained trees, dense young foliage makes a solid impenetrable shape, at a deliberately chosen height. An alley is usually of pleached trees trained to meet overhead and quite distinct from the French *allée*, which is a ride or walk cut through massed trees where the sides are clipped up to a considerable height. An alley (or tunnel) is very similar to a pergola, where a double row of strong supports with cross bars provides a frame for climbing plants which are carefully trained and tied to it.

Trellage or trellis work, where a patterned open frame of light wood gives the appearance of a substantial division, is another structural device, and provides a frame on which to grow ornamental plants as well as being highly decorative in itself.

Many National Trust gardens contain some or all of these architectural features. Some of them will have been introduced by previous owners for comfort and use and to display plants as well as because they were fashionable at the time the garden was being made; others will have been devised as design techniques to emphasize dimension and define space. In some properties where the Trust has developed or restored a garden style appropriate to the date or historical connections of the house, new features have been introduced much more recently.

Hedges

Hedges, which are a continuous line of planting, can make solid boundaries to protect the garden area from outsiders, and give a feeling of security to the garden owner who wishes to stress his separateness from the outside world. Equally, hedges of different heights partition the garden into inner compartments which can contain separate seasonal or planting themes.

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