

A Garden to Visit

SOMERSET: Tintinhull House



The odd thing about Tintinhull House garden is that it manages to appear much bigger than it actually is.

It's a fairly flat site of little more than 2 acres but by creating a series of thresholds and divisions through the space, the effect is to slow down the journey around the garden, increasing the amount of time you actually think you've spent there, so that it feels like a large scale garden.

Each threshold heralds a shift in mood and theme. There's a white garden, a pool garden, a kitchen garden – each benefiting from hedging and screening that allows you to pool your attention in each particular space.

This self-containment belies an assured approach to designing the garden and is quite an inspiration for design ideas on creating mystery and interest in flat gardens.



This garden reminded me of the philosophy behind the Chinese stroll gardens, the desire to create an experience of the garden unfolding gradually, nothing revealed all at once, in order to draw you deeper and deeper into it - in a similar way to the Chinese scroll paintings that you unroll, scene by scene.

The single theme borders (of Iris, Rose, white-flowering shrubs in the white garden) give each garden space a strong unifying theme and creates a sequence of quite pure, distinct and focused experiences throughout the garden journey.

This garden also rehabilitated my equivocation about pink! Here, there is ample evidence of how well it works with lemony-yellows, greys and pale blues.

It's a garden to go round twice – the first time responding to the different themes; the second time to admire how the garden's original designer, Phyllis Reiss (and later renovations by Penelope Hobhouse), thought about making a modest size garden appear so much grander and bigger than it is. These pictures are from a visit made in May.



Directions: Tintinhull,
near Yeovil, Somerset
BA22 8PZ 01935 823289
www.nationaltrust.org.uk