

Destination Bristol

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PRESS FACT SHEET – BRISTOL GARDENS

VisitEngland is promoting 2016 as the 'Year of the English Garden'. It will be a celebration of England's magnificent gardens and coincides with the 300th anniversary of the birth of famous English landscape garden designer Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

There are some exceptionally beautiful gardens in Bristol and surrounding areas, from tiny Knot Gardens hidden behind the tall Georgian town houses, to sprawling bloom-filled estates in the rolling countryside. Here are some of our perfect perennial picks.

Ashton Court Estate

This sprawling parkland is just minutes from the centre of Bristol and offers sweeping views across the entire city. The formal gardens beside the beautiful mansion house are a favoured spot. 160 species of rose give off a heady scent around the rose garden, while the Italianate garden is home to unusual carved urns. A number of Bristol's popular outdoor events are held here throughout the year – it has hosted [Bristol International Balloon Fiesta](#) since 1979.

Eat: The Stables Café occupies the mansion house's former stables, but eating outdoors on the café's courtyard benches means you can look across the beautiful gardens as you relax. The menu focuses on organic wholefoods.

Web: bristol.gov.uk/museums-parks-sports-culture/ashton-court-estate

Avon Gorge and Downs wildlife gardens

At one end of the sensational Clifton Suspension Bridge is a display of the nationally scarce and rare plants that grow in the Avon Gorge. Plaques within the gardens explain more about what grows here. The bridge's designer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was even instrumental in saving a special plant himself - Autumn Squill. A lady called Mrs Glennie noticed the plant growing on the site of the bridge and spotted that the construction was going to destroy it. Brunel halted construction and had his workers move it to another site. It is still growing in the gorge to this day.

Web: avongorge.org.uk/visitingus.php

Barley Wood Walled Garden/The Ethicurean restaurant, Wrington

Set in the lush north Somerset countryside, Barley Wood Walled Garden is a lovingly restored Victorian kitchen garden built for Henry Herbert Wills and his family in 1901. Blossoming fruit trees flutter in the spring breeze and the wildlife-friendly plants in the borders are rich with colour in summertime. A walk along the brick path brings visitors to the and there are beautiful views further

along that take in Wrington Vale and the Mendip Hills. Events are regularly held in the garden and orchard, including the popular annual Wassail and summer solstice events.

Eat: Produce grown here often makes its way almost immediately onto the tables of The Ethicurean - an award-winning restaurant beside the garden. The gardens are open to the public every day, all year round (except the walled area on Mondays) and the fruit and veg is available for visitors to buy.

Web: theethicurean.com

BBC Bristol wildlife garden

BBC Bristol is the base for the BBC's Natural History Unit and has produced top shows like *Springwatch*, *Countryfile* and *Gardeners' World*. The plain lawn that once sat at the front of the building has been replaced by a wildlife garden, created in partnership with Avon Wildlife Trust. Small but perfectly formed, this buzzing and colourful roadside oasis is a reminder that nature can be encouraged to thrive even in the heart of the city. The building also has a rooftop garden, which is included on the BBC studios tour.

Web: bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/tours/bristol.

Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire

NEW in 2016 – Grab a glass of Pimm's and watch an outdoor performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (from 17th to 21st July) within the wholly appropriate setting of Berkeley's beautiful gardens. Berkeley Castle has a strong link to Shakespeare - Thomas Berkeley, son and heir of Henry lord Berkeley, married Elizabeth Carey, grand-daughter of Henry lord Hunsdon. Lord Hunsdon was Lord Chamberlain and the patron of the company of actors which included Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to celebrate or even be performed at that marriage which took place in February 1596. (Note: Next year will see events held up and down the country as part of Shakespeare 400 – a year of events held to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death.)

The Berkeley Castle Estate is a traditional rural Estate extending to approximately 6,000 acres in Gloucestershire's Berkeley Vale. The castle has been home to the Berkeley family for 850 years and is surrounded by terraced gardens that specialise in scent - the roses are particularly splendid in June. Rare plants, shrubs and trees can be found here too, as well as an attractive lily pond and the Great Lawn. Within the old walled kitchen garden at Berkeley Castle are the Plant Centre and Butterfly House, where hundreds of butterflies fly freely in a tranquil indoor garden.

Eat: The Yurt restaurant is located within the beautiful walled gardens of the Castle, next to the Butterfly House.

Web: berkeley-castle.com

Blaise Castle Estate

The 19th Century mansion house is now a museum and is surrounded by 400 acres of parkland. It includes the folly castle, which featured in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, and offers panoramic views from the roof on the days that it opens to visitors. Blaise Community Garden is affectionately known as the Secret Garden, as it is hidden behind the walls of the Blaise Estate. It was established in the 1800s. In June 2013 the Friends of Blaise and Henbury Conservation Society were invited to restore a part of the garden and create Henbury's first community kitchen garden. The gorgeous thatched dairy is beside the garden and adds to the secretive, fairytale feel of the spot.

Web: bristolmuseums.org.uk/blaise-castle-house-museum/

Bowood House and gardens, Wiltshire

This handsome stately home is set among one of 'Capability' Brown's most beautiful parks, which contains a remarkable collection of trees and shrubs. The gardens won the Historic Houses Association/Christie's Garden of the Year Award in 2014 and include gently sloping lawns extending to the calm and twinkling waters of the lake, against a backdrop of chalk downs. Garden highlights include the Cascade, Doric Temple, Terrace Gardens and an adventure playground for children. Visitors can also book a guided tour of the 4-acre private walled garden at the rear of the house. Bowood House and Gardens opens to visitors every day from the end of March to the start of November. The separate woodland garden is open between April and June each year containing strikingly colourful azaleas and rhododendrons.

Eat: At The Treehouse café at the entrance to the gardens you'll get views across the green space and trees. You could also take a classic afternoon tea in The Library of Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort enjoying views out over the woodland, or eat in the two restaurants, the brasserie or spa bar.

Stay: Spend the night within the grounds of the stately home at Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort, which has 43 double bedrooms. Or sample the secluded luxury of Queenwood Lodge, a Georgian manor house on the 18-hole championship golf course with its own gardens and patio, which sleeps up to 8 adults (plus two children on a sofa bed in the study).

Web: bowood.org

Brandon Hill Nature Park

Managed by the Avon Wildlife Trust, Brandon Hill is in the very heart of Bristol just off one of its main independent shopping areas – Park Street. It's a haven for wildlife and wildflowers and the views across the city from the terrace and the top of Cabot Tower are tremendous. The meadow is full of cowslips in spring and ox-eye daisies, yellow rattle and knapweed in summer. Look out for frogs, toads and smooth newts in the pond or for birds like blackcaps and jays flitting between the trees in the woodland.

Web: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/brandon-hill-nature-park

Bristol Cathedral Gardens

NEW in 2015 The Cathedral has recently found fame as a filming location in popular BBC series *Wolf Hall* and a new trail leaflet guides visitors around the locations, matching them to scenes recognisable from the screen.

Inside Bristol Cathedral the vaulted ceilings, exquisite chapels and enticing programme of music are wonderful, but the tranquil and award-winning gardens outdoors beyond the Cloister are heavenly too. Surrounded by colourful, scented blooms and elegant sculptures it's easy to forget you're in the heart of the city.

Eat: The Cathedral Café has a courtyard where visitors can eat in the open-air peace of the gardens.

Web: bristol-cathedral.co.uk

Bristol Zoo Gardens

NEW in 2015. A brand new accommodation experience - The Lodge - opened in October 2015 within Bristol Zoo. It offers the luxury of a secluded safari lodge among the exotic animals. Guests will enjoy exclusive out-of-hours access to the zoo and behind-the-scenes tours and feeding experiences, getting the chance to meet the animals when all the daytime visitors have gone home. A private chef will prepare a delicious four-course dinner served on the balcony in this special setting, then breakfast the next day can be eaten among the resident gorillas.

An exotic oasis in the desirable Clifton district of Bristol, this is the world's fifth oldest zoo (it opened in 1836) and is home to beautifully colourful and scented gardens that are every bit as impressive as the animals and contain one of Bristol's most important collections of plants. There are unusual trees, shrubs and plants from around the world. Visit a buzzing nectar garden, butterfly forest, Lemur Garden and the 'Smarty Plants' area, or wander along long avenues flanked by brightly coloured seasonal borders and relax on the lush green lawns. Open to the public every day except Christmas Day.

Eat: Try The Coral Restaurant, where you can eat within view of the Monkey Jungle.

Web: bristolzoo.org.uk

Floating Ballast Seed Garden

Working with the University of Bristol Botanic Garden and Bristol City Council, centre for contemporary arts Arnolfini has utilised a disused concrete barge on Bristol's Floating Harbour opposite Castle Park and created a permanent Ballast Seed Garden populated with a variety of non-native plants, creating a living history of the city's trade and maritime past. Opportunities to visit the garden by boat are arranged through Arnolfini's event programme.

Web: arnolfini.org.uk/whatson

The Georgian House Museum garden

New for 2016 the garden at the rear of The Georgian House Museum will be open to the public for the first time. The garden has only ever previously been open for very special occasions but will now be open to the general public. The Georgian House Museum is an 18th century, six storey townhouse just off Bristol's famous independent shopping area, Park Street. The house has been restored and decorated to its original glory, and is the perfect way to step back in time and imagine what life was like in this affluent area of the city hundreds of years ago. It is open four days a week from 1 April to 31 December.

Web: visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/the-georgian-house-museum-p26101

Kings Weston Estate

This parkland was laid out in the mid- to late-18th Century. Famous landscape designer Lancelot 'Capability' Brown is said to have visited here several times in 1777 and suggested general alterations to the areas surrounding the house. The park contains the Grade I listed privately-owned Kings Weston House. There are extensive views across the River Avon and Bristol Channel towards Wales, as well as historic buildings, woodland and garden features. It is open to the public at all times.

Web: bristol.gov.uk/museums-parks-sports-culture/kings-weston-estate

National Trust Dyrham Park

This late 17th-century mansion, garden and deer park is managed by the National Trust. There are breathtaking views towards the Severn Valley and Welsh mountains, plus a herd of almost 200

fallow deer can be seen roaming freely among the 270 acres of ancient parkland. Visitors can get closer to these majestic creatures as part of the winter deer feed between 1st December and 31st March. The elegant and romantic West Garden is very popular and boasts year-round colour from the colourful planted borders, wildflower orchard, mature trees and the peaceful Upper and Lower Pools. The garden is open to visitors most of the year and there are daily tours that vary depending upon the season.

Eat: The Courtyard Tearoom is a great spot for a cream tea or slice of cake and there is lots of outdoor seating in the tea garden.

Web: nationaltrust.org.uk/dyrham-park

National Trust Tyntesfield

Hardly changed since 1900, the characterful gardens at the National Trust's Tyntesfield Estate are just 7 miles from Bristol and offer long views across the rolling parkland and Yeo Valley. Romantic gazebos in the rose garden, a pristine croquet lawn and the produce-rich kitchen garden are wonderful to roam around. In summer, more than 10,000 plants in the beds are a colourful contrast to the spectacular Victorian Gothic Revival house above. In 2015 the estate was used as a filming location for popular BBC programme *Sherlock*.

Eat: Cow Barn Kitchen utilises produce from the estate's kitchen garden, whilst the Pavilion Café offers an unrivalled country view to accompany your afternoon tea.

Stay: Book a stay at *Chaplain's House*, a picturesque mid-Victorian lodge built in the 1890s, *Chaplain's Lodge*, once home to the family's butler, or *Summerhouse Cottage*, a mid-19th century estate cottage (Grade II listed) which is perfect for a romantic getaway.

Web: nationaltrust.org.uk/tyntesfield/things-to-see-and-do/gardens/

Red Lodge

The Red Lodge is an historic Elizabethan house tucked away near to the buzz of Bristol's busy shopping areas of Park Street and the Christmas Steps. One of the Lodge's finest features is the little walled garden. In the centre, is a box-edged 'knot', an intricate design which copies one of the plasterwork ceilings in the house. The surrounding borders are filled with plants which would have been found in English gardens before 1630. The garden is at its best in late May/June when the roses are in bloom. Red Lodge is open to the public four days a week from 1 April to 31 December.

Web: bristolmuseums.org.uk/red-lodge-museum

Thatchers Cider Orchard, Sandford

The West Country is renowned for its love of cider and visitors can take a walk on The Strawberry Line on the edge of the Mendip Hills right through some of the Thatchers cider orchards at Myrtle Farm. The trees are blushing with pretty apple blossom in spring and rosy with ripening Katy apples in late summer and autumn. The orchard margins have been planted with colourful wildflowers to help pollinating insects.

Web: www.thatcherscider.co.uk

The University of Bristol Botanic Garden

Special events in 2016 include the Easter Sculpture Festival from Friday 25th March to Monday 28 March and the Bee and Pollination Festival on Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th September.

The University of Bristol Botanic Garden is filled with a huge diversity of plants, including many exotic species set in inspirational displays against the backdrop of a striking Victorian house. The 1.77 hectare garden has been designed to tell stories about plant evolution and is home to four core plant collections: Evolution, Mediterranean Climate Regions, Local Flora & Rare Native Plants and Useful Plants. It is set in a wonderful location close to the Downs. The garden is open for visitors year-round, but closed on weekends during the winter months.

Eat: Teas on the Terrace are available from Easter 2016. They take place in a beautiful spot on the terrace of the Victorian country house, overlooking the garden and pond.

Web: bristol.ac.uk/botanic-garden/the-garden

Westonbirt Arboretum

NEW in spring 2016: The brand new Treetop Walkway will open in spring. Following a serpentine route through the trees 13.5 metres above the ground in places, the Treetop Walkway will give visitors a taste of the dark intimacy and soaring views that can come from weaving in and out of the tree canopy. It will also provide a fun and hands-on way for visitors to learn more about trees.

The national tree collection, managed by the Forestry Commission, sits on the edge of the market town of Tetbury in the Cotswolds around 25 miles from Bristol city centre. The Acer Glade in the Old Arboretum is renowned as one of the best spots in the country for autumn leaf colour, full of blazing ambers, golds and reds (October is usually the best month). There is a riot of spring colour at Westonbirt too, when the rhododendrons, magnolias and azaleas come into bloom and a sea of bluebells covers the forest floor in Silk Wood (spring colour from March to May).

Eat: Westonbirt Restaurant is housed in a wooden lodge that suits the surroundings perfectly. Or take a seat in the wild outdoors at the Westonbirt Café.

Web: forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt

Wild Place Project

As well as discovering exotic animals like lemurs, meerkats, giraffes and grey wolves, visitors to Wild Place can see 'Stop the Spread' - an award-winning RHS Chelsea Flower show-garden created by landscape designer Jo Thompson and commissioned by The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera). It includes an attractive sunken garden of herbaceous plants, woodland trees and shade-loving plants, which is dramatically contrasted with a symbolic avenue of bare and lifeless trees and an island holding a single seedling in a black pool.

The Sanctuary Garden boasts ornamental and edible plants, and is so-called as it housed air raid shelters during World War II and would have been an area of sanctuary for local families in war-torn Britain. It now provides sanctuary to plants in need of conservation.

Eat: The herbs grown in the Sanctuary garden are used by the chefs in the on-site Courtyard Café, where visitors.

Web: wildplace.org.uk

Yeo Valley Organic Garden and Garden Café, Blagdon

One of the few ornamental gardens in Britain to be certified as organic by the Soil Association, this seasonal patchwork of ornamental and edible planting areas is regularly open to the public. Tours, courses and events also take place here.

Eat: A highlight is the Garden Café, with an outdoor terrace for eating in the beautiful blooming surroundings or a snug woodburner indoors to toast your toes by on cold days. It is located in the stunning North Somerset countryside around 15 miles from central Bristol.

Web: yeovalley.co.uk/the-valley/places/place/our-organic-gardens

Places to stay with glorious gardens

NEW for 2015 **The Avon Gorge Hotel** occupies one of the finest locations in Bristol, within the desirable Clifton district perched on the edge of the dramatic Avon Gorge. The hotel refurbished and relaunched two grand garden suites in summer 2015. The President Suite and King Suite share a tranquil landscaped garden with a grassy lawn and its own terrace that overlooks the beautiful Avon Gorge. The President Suite comprises a master bedroom with an en suite bathroom featuring a luxurious, sunken bath and a separate walk-in shower. The children's bedroom has bright, homely décor sleeping up to two children. The suite leads into a stylish, comfortable lounge with windows and access onto the garden, with a sofa bed providing the option for two more children to stay. The adjacent King Suite offers spacious accommodation for up to four people, complete with its own separate games room and children's 'chill-out' area. There is a large lounge and fireplace with lots of space and comfortable surroundings for guests to relax and enjoy the garden views. The luxury master bedroom features a super king size bed, en suite bathroom with sunken bath and dual washbasins, and floor to ceiling windows that open out onto the garden. theavongorge.com

The award-winning **Fern Cottage** B&B in the village of Pucklechurch is just 15 minutes by road from Bristol, offers panoramic countryside views and is renowned for its magnificent breakfast using home-grown, homemade and local, organic produce. Guests arriving at 4pm are offered a complimentary home-made cream tea on arrival and there's nowhere better to enjoy it in the spring and summer months than the garden terrace or the lazy comfort of the swinging seat. There's the luxury of a hot tub in the garden for guests to use between March and October.

ferncottagebedandbreakfast.co.uk

Bristol garden facts

During Bristol European Green Capital 2015, Incredible Edible Bristol, Grow Bristol and Bee The Change collaborated to create a trail of gardens and food growing spaces all the way from Platform 3 at Bristol Temple Meads station to Millennium Square on the Harbourside. It aims to inspire and educate as well as providing free food for people and pollinators. View the [Urban Food Growing Trail](#).

The Soil Association celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2016 and has its headquarters in Bristol.

The University of Bristol Botanic Garden was the first new University botanic garden to be created in the United Kingdom for nearly forty years. It opened in a new location off Durdham Down in 2005, which means it has just celebrated its 10th anniversary in this new spot.