



## Cottage Gardens

The cottage garden is a distinct style of garden that uses an informal design, traditional materials, dense plantings, and a mixture of ornamental and edible plants. English in origin, the cottage garden depends on grace and charm rather than grandeur and formal structure. Homely and functional gardens connected to working-class cottages go back several centuries, but their reinvention in stylized versions grew in 1870s England, in reaction to the more structured and rigorously maintained English estate gardens that used formal designs and mass plantings of brilliant greenhouse annuals.



The earliest cottage gardens were more practical than their modern descendants — with an emphasis on vegetables and herbs, along with some fruit trees, perhaps a beehive, and even livestock. Flowers were used to fill any spaces in between. Over time, flowers became more dominant. The traditional cottage garden was usually enclosed, perhaps with a rose-bowered gateway. Flowers common to early cottage gardens included hollyhocks, pansies and delphinium, all three essentially 19th-century flowers. Others were the old-fashioned roses that bloomed once a year with rich scents, simple flowers like daisies, and flowering herbs. A well-tended topiary of traditional form, perhaps a cone-shape in tiers, or a conventionalised peacock, would be part of the repertory, to which the leisured creators of "cottage gardens" would add a sun-dial, crazy paving on paths with thyme in the interstices, and a rustic seat, generally missing in the earlier cottage gardens. Over time, even large estate gardens had sections they called "cottage gardens".

Modern-day cottage gardens include countless regional and personal variations of the more traditional English cottage garden, and embrace plant materials, such as ornamental grasses or native plants, that

were never seen in the rural gardens of cottagers. Traditional roses, with their full fragrance and lush foliage, continue to be a cottage garden mainstay — along with modern disease-resistant varieties that keep the traditional attributes. Informal climbing plants, whether traditional or modern hybrids, are also a common cottage garden plant. Self-sowing annuals and freely spreading perennials continue to find a place in the modern cottage garden, just as they did in the traditional cottager's garden.

The cottage garden is designed to appear artless, rather than contrived or pretentious. Instead of artistic curves, or grand geometry, there is an artfully designed irregularity. Borders can go right up to the house, lawns are replaced with tufts of grass or flowers, and beds can be as wide as needed. Instead of the discipline of large scale color schemes, there is the simplicity of harmonious color combinations between neighbouring plants. The overall appearance can be of "a vegetable garden that has been taken over by flowers." The method of planting closely packed plants was supposed to reduce the amount of weeding and watering required, but planted stone pathways or turf paths, and clipped hedges overgrown with wayward vines, are cottage garden features requiring well-timed maintenance.

## Broad guidelines for using plants in cottage gardens [2]

- Dense plantings - using fast-growing annuals and herbaceous perennials will help to create the effect quicker.
- Self-seeding plants - these are used to perpetuate the effect. Use plants such as [Myosotis alpestris](#) (Forget-me-nots), [Eschscholzia californica](#) (Californian poppies), Alyssum [Lobularia maritima](#), [Tropaeolum majus](#) (Nasturtium) and [Viola odorata](#).
- Scented plants - bring fragrance into a garden and stimulates the senses.
- Contrasting foliage plants - provides an avenue to produce focal points and places of interest.
- Lawns are kept to a minimum - this allows maximum use of flowering plants and garden ornaments.
- Climbers - these are used to screen sheds, fences, other bad views, etc.
- The front garden is designed to showcase the plants right to the street.

## Materials [2]

Paths, arbors, and fences use traditional or antique looking materials. Wooden fences and gates, paths covered with locally made bricks or stone, and arbors using natural materials all give a more casual — and less formal — look and feel to a cottage garden. Pots, ornaments, and furniture also use natural looking materials with traditional finishes — everything is chosen to give the impression of an old-fashioned country garden.

- Arches - either metal or wooden, placed over paths and covered with climbing plants.
- Arbours - usually covered with climbers, to cover garden seats.
- Lattice - for screening sheds and fences and for supporting climbers.
- Picket fences - low painted or plain pickets are popularly used as front fences.
- Rustic ornaments - usually old, although reproduction pieces are readily available. Ornaments include stone troughs, cast iron water pumps, wooden casks, farm implements.
- Garden furniture - Simple wooden or metal furniture including garden benches.
- Pots - terracotta is very popular and within every bodies price range. Other pots can be made of granite, sandstone, and other materials.
- Statuary - garden statues are very popular in cottage gardens. The placement of small figures (such as a concrete girl holding a basket) is important to generate a feeling of peacefulness and past times.
- Ornaments - weathervanes and sundials are frequently used in cottage gardens. When it comes to sundials, select one that is appropriate for your district otherwise it may not tell the right time.

## Roses

Cottage gardens are always associated with roses: shrub roses, climbing roses, and old garden roses with lush foliage, in contrast to the gangly modern hybrid tea roses. Old cottage garden roses include the [Rosa gallica](#) (Gallica rose), which form dense mounded shrubs 3–4 ft high and wide, with pale pink to purple flowers — with single form to full double form blooms. They are also very fragrant, and

include the ancient Apothecary's rose, whose magenta flowers were preserved solely for their fragrance. Another old fragrant cottage garden rose is the [Rosa x damascena](#), (Damask rose), which is still grown in Europe for use in perfumes. The damasks grow 6 ft or higher, with gently arching canes that help give an informal look to a garden. Even taller are the Alba roses, which are not always white, and which bloom well even in partial shade.

The Provence rose [Rosa centifolia](#) is the full and fat rose made famous by Dutch masters in their 17th century paintings. These very fragrant shrub roses grow 5 ft tall and wide, with a floppy habit that is aided by training on an arch or pillar. The centifolia roses have produced many descendants that are also cottage garden favorites, including the moss rose. Unlike most modern hybrids, the older roses bloom on the previous year's wood, so they aren't pruned back severely each year like the modern varieties. Because they don't bloom continuously, like their modern counterparts, they can share their branches with Clematis vines, which use the branches for support. A rose in the cottage garden is not segregated with other roses, with bare earth or mulch underneath—but is casually blended with other flowers, vines, and groundcover.

With the introduction of China roses [Rosa chinensis](#) late in the 18th century, many hybrids were introduced that had the repeat blooming of the China roses, but maintained the informal old rose shape and flower. These included the Bourbon rose and the Noisette rose, which were added to the rose repertoire of the cottage garden.

## Climbing plants

Many of the old roses had cultivars that grew very long canes, which could be tied to trellises or against walls. These older varieties are called "ramblers", rather than "climbers". Climbing plants in the traditional cottage garden included European honeysuckle ([Lonicera periclymenum](#)) and Traveller's Joy ([Clematis vitalba](#)). The modern cottage garden includes many Clematis hybrids that have the old appeal, with sparse foliage that allows them to grow through roses and trees, and along fences and arbors. There are also many Clematis species used in the modern cottage garden, including [Clematis chinensis](#), and [Clematis flammula](#). Popular honeysuckles for cottage gardens include Japanese honeysuckle ([Lonicera japonica](#)) and [Lonicera caerulea](#).

## Hedging plants

In the traditional cottage garden, hedges served as fences on the perimeter to keep out marauding livestock and for privacy, along with other practical uses. Hawthorn (e.g [Crataegus laevigata](#), [Crataegus douglasii](#)) leaves made a tasty snack or tea, while the flowers were used for making wine. The fast-growing Elderberry ([Sambucus nigra](#)), in addition to creating a hedge, provided berries for food and wine, with the flowers being fried in batter or made into lotions and ointments. The wood had many uses, including toys, pegs, skewers, and fishing poles. Holly was another hedge plant, useful because it quickly spread and self-seeded. Privet ([Ligustrum ovalifolium](#)) was also a convenient and fast growing hedge. Over time, more ornamental and less utilitarian plants became popular cottage garden hedges, including laurels ([Prunus laurocerasus](#), [Prunus lusitanica](#)), lilac ([Syringa vulgaris](#)), snowberry ([Symphoricarpos albus laevigatus](#)), japonica ([Chaenomeles japonica](#)) and others.

## Flowers and Herbs

Popular flowers in the traditional cottage garden included florist's flowers which were grown by enthusiasts—such as violets (e.g [Viola odorata](#), [Viola sororia](#)) pinks (e.g [Dianthus caryophyllus](#), [Dianthus barbatus](#)), and primroses ([Primula vulgaris](#))—and those grown with a more practical purpose. For example, the calendula, grown today almost entirely for its bright orange flowers, was primarily valued for eating, for adding color to butter and cheese, for adding smoothness to soups and stews, and for all kinds of healing salves and preparations. Like many old cottage garden annuals and herbs, it freely self-sowed, making it easier to grow and share. Other popular cottage garden annuals included violets (e.g [Viola odorata](#), [Viola sororia](#)), pansies (e.g [Viola x wittrockiana](#), [Viola pedunculata](#)), stocks ([Matthiola incana](#)), and mignonette ([Reseda odorata](#)). Perennials were the largest group of traditional cottage garden flowers—those with a long cottage garden history include hollyhocks ([Alcea rosea](#)),

carnations ([Dianthus caryophyllus](#)), sweet williams ([Dianthus barbatus](#)), marguerites (e.g. [Chrysanthemum coronarium](#), [Dendranthema x grandiflorum](#)), marigolds (e.g. [Calendula officinalis](#), [Tagetes erecta](#)), lilies (e.g. [Lilium lancifolium](#), [Lilium auratum](#)), peonies (e.g. [Paeonia lactiflora](#), [Paeonia officinalis](#)), tulips ([Tulipa gesneriana](#)), crocus ([Colchicum autumnale](#)), daisies ([Bellis perennis](#)), foxglove ([Digitalis purpurea](#)), monkshood ([Aconitum napellus](#)), lavender ([Lavandula angustifolia](#)), campanulas (e.g. [Campanula latifolia](#), [Campanula portenschlagiana](#)), Solomon's seal ([Polygonatum odoratum](#)), evening primrose ([Oenothera biennis](#)), lily-of-the-valley ([Convallaria majalis](#)), primrose ([Primula vulgaris](#)), cowslips ([Primula veris](#)), and many varieties of roses (see roses above).

Today herbs are typically thought of as culinary plants, but in the traditional cottage garden they were considered to be any plant with household uses. Herbs were used for medicine, toiletries, and cleaning products. Scented herbs would be spread on the floor along with rushes to cover odors. Some herbs were used for dying fabrics. Traditional cottage garden herbs included sage ([Salvia officinalis](#)), thyme ([Thymus vulgaris](#)), southernwood ([Artemisia abrotanum](#)), wormwood ([Artemisia absinthum](#)), catmint ([Nepeta cataria](#)), feverfew ([Tanacetum parthenium](#)), lungwort ([Pulmonaria officinalis](#)), soapwort ([Saponaria officinalis](#)), hyssop ([Hyssopus officinalis](#)), sweet woodruff ([Galium odoratum](#)), and lavender ([Lavandula angustifolia](#)).

## Fruits

Fruit in the traditional cottage garden would have included an apple (e.g. [Malus domestica](#)) and a pear (e.g. [Pyrus communis sativa](#)), for cider and perry, gooseberries and raspberries. The modern cottage garden includes many varieties of ornamental fruit and nut trees, such as crabapple ([Malus sylvestris](#)) and hazel ([Corylus avellana](#)), along with non-traditional trees like dogwood (e.g. [Cornus sanguinea](#)).

## More Cottage Garden Plants By Type

### Annuals/Biennials

[Alcea rosea](#) (Hollyhock), [Antirrhinum majus](#) (Snapdragon), [Calendula officinalis](#) (Marigold), [Dianthus barbatus](#) (Sweet William), [Digitalis purpurea](#) (Foxglove), [Helianthus annuus](#) (Sunflower), [Lobularia maritima](#) (Alyssum), [Matthiola incana](#) (Stock), [Nigella damascena](#) [Nigella damascena](#) (Love-in-a-mist), [Oenothera biennis](#) (Evening Primrose), Papaver species & cultivars e.g. [Papaver orientale](#) & [Papaver somniferum](#) (Poppies), Primula macrophylla [Primula macrophylla](#), (Primulas), Tagetes cultivars e.g. [Tagetes patula](#) & [Tagetes erecta](#) (Mariogolds), [Tropaeolum majus](#) (Nasturtium).

### Bulbs

Alstroemeria cultivars e.g. [Alstroemeria aurea](#) (Peruvian Lily), [Convallaria majalis](#) (Lily of the Valley), Crocosmia species e.g. [Crocosmia aurea](#) (Montbretia), [Crocus sativus](#) (Saffron Crocus), Cyrtanthus species e.g. [Cyrtanthus breviflorus](#) (Ifafa Lily), , Freesia species & cultivars (Freesias), [Galanthus nivalis](#) (Snowdrops), Gladiolus species & cultivars e.g. [Gladiolus permeabilis edulis](#) & [Gladiolus dalenii](#), Hyacinthus e.g. [Hyacinthus orientalis](#) (Hyacinths), Iris species & cultivars (e.g. [Iris germanica](#)), Leucojum species e.g. [Leucojum aestivum](#) (Snowflakes), Lilium species and cultivars (e.g. [Lilium lancifolium](#), [Lilium auratum](#)) (Lilies), Narcissus species & cultivars e.g. [Narcissus pseudonarcissus](#) (Daffodils & Jonquils) Muscari [Liriope muscari](#) & [Muscari neglectum](#) (Grape Hyacinth), Proiphys cunninghamii (Brisbane Lily), Ranunculus hybrids & species e.g. [Ranunculus bulbosus](#) & [Ranunculus ficaria](#) (Buttercups), [Scilla scilloides](#), [Hyacinthoides nonscripta](#) (Bluebells), Sprekelia f ormosissima (Jacobean Lily), [Tritonia crocata](#) (Blazing Star), [Tulbaghia violacea](#) (Garlic Flower), Watsonia cultivars (Watsonia), Zantedeschia cultivars [Zantedeschia aethiopica](#) (Arum/Calla Lily), Zephyranthes candida [Zephyranthes atamasca](#) (Storm Lily).

## Herbaceous Perennials

[Acanthus mollis](#) (Oyster Plant), [Achillea millefolium](#) (Yarrow), Agapanthus cultivars e.g. [Agapanthus africanus](#) (Agapanthus), Anemone coronaria & A. spp. e.g. [Anemone flaccida](#) (Windflower), [Aquilegia vulgaris](#) (Columbine or Granny's Bonnet), Begonia semperflorens (Bedding Begonia), Brachyscome multifida (Brachyscome Daisy), Canna indica [Canna indica](#) (Canna Lillies), Clivia miniata (Kaffir Lily), Dianthus species & cultivars (e.g. [Dianthus caryophyllus](#), [Dianthus barbatus](#)) (Carnations & Pinks), [Erysimum cheiri](#) (Wallflower), [Hemerocallis fulva](#), [Hemerocallis middendorffii](#), [Hemerocallis middendorffii esculenta](#) (Day lilies), Hedychium gardnerianum (Ginger Lily) & Hedychium coronarium [Hedychium coronarium](#) (Butterfly Ginger), Helleborus species (such as [Helleborus niger](#), [Helleborus viridis](#)), Hydrangea species & cultivars e.g. [Hydrangea serrata amagiana](#) & [Hydrangea anomala](#), Hymenocallis species (Spider Lily), Iberis species & cultivars [Iberis umbellata](#) (Candytufts), Impatiens e.g. [Impatiens noli-tangere](#) (Balsam) & [Impatiens capensis](#), Phlox (perennial types) e.g. [Phlox paniculata](#), [Salvia sclarea](#) (Clary Sage).

## Herbs

[Allium sativum](#) (Garlic) [Allium schoenoprasum](#) (Chives), [Anethum graveolens](#) (Dill), [Angelica archangelica](#) (Angelica), [Borago officinalis](#) (Borage), [Carum carvi](#) (Caraway), [Cichorium intybus](#) (Chicory), [Coriandrum sativum](#) (Coriander), [Echinacea purpurea](#) (Echinacea), [Foeniculum vulgare](#) (Fennel), [Hyssopus officinalis](#) (Hyssop), [Melissa officinalis](#) (Lemon Balm), [Mentha x piperita officinalis](#) (Peppermint), [Monarda didyma](#) (Bergamot), [Nepeta cataria](#) (Catnip), [Ocimum basilicum](#) (Basil), [Origanum majorana](#) (Marjoram), [Origanum vulgare](#) (Oregano), [Petroselinum crispum](#) (Parsley), [Ruta graveolens](#) (Rue), [Salvia officinalis](#) (Common Sage), [Satureja hortensis](#) & [Satureja montana](#) (Savories), [Thymus vulgaris](#) (Thyme).

## Shrubs

[Artemisia absinthum](#), A. abrotanum [Artemisia abrotanum](#), Azalea & Rhododendrons e.g. [Rhododendron luteum](#) & [Rhododendron molle](#) & [Rhododendron arboreum](#) (all cultivars), Buddleia davidii [Buddleia davidii](#) (Butterfly Bush), Camellia e.g. [Camellia sinensis](#) & [Camellia japonica](#) (all cultivars), Cistus species & cultivars e.g. [Cistus creticus](#) (Rock Roses), Convolvulus cneorum (Silver bush), Argyranthemum frutescens (Marguerite Daisy) & [Argyranthemum foeniculaceum](#), Erica cultivars e.g. [Erica cerinthoides](#) & [Calluna vulgaris](#) (Heathers & Heaths), Euryops pectinatus, [Fuchsia species](#) & cultivars, Hebe species & cultivars e.g. [Hebe dieffenbachii](#) & [Hebe speciosa](#) (Veronicas), [Heliotropium arborescens](#) (Cherry Pie), [Lavandula angustifolia](#) (English Lavender), [Leptospermum liversidgei](#), Myrtus communis [Myrtus communis](#) (Sweet Myrtle), Phlomis fruticosa [Phlomis fruticosa](#) (Jerusalem Sage), Rosa species & cultivars (Roses), [Rosmarinus officinalis](#) (Rosemary), [Syringa vulgaris](#) cultivars (Lilac), Viburnum tinus [Viburnum tinus](#) (Laurustinus),

### Food Plants

[Actinidia deliciosa](#) (Kiwifruit), [Citrus limon](#) (Lemon), [Cydonia oblonga](#) (Quince), [Diospyros kaki](#) (Persimmon), [Eriobotrya japonica](#) (Loquat), Eugenia brasiliensis (Grumichama), Feijoa sellowiana (Feijoa), Ficus carica [Ficus carica](#) (Fig), [Fragaria x ananassa](#) (Strawberries), [Malus domestica](#) (Apples), [Mespilus germanica](#) (Medlar), [Morus alba](#) & [Morus nigra](#) (White & Black Mulberries), [Olea europaea](#) (Olive), [Passiflora edulis](#) (Passionfruit), Prunus amygdalus (Almonds), [Prunus armeniaca](#) (Apricots), [Prunus avium](#) (Cherries), [Prunus domestica](#) (European Plum), [Prunus persica](#) (Peach & Nectarine), [Prunus salicina](#) (Japanese plum), [Punica granatum](#) (Pomegranate), [Psidium cattleianum](#) (Strawberry Guava), [Pyrus communis](#) (Pear), Pyrus pyrifolia [Pyrus pyrifolia](#) (Sand Pear), Ribes species & cultivars [Ribes nigrum](#) (Blackcurrant), [Ribes glandulosum](#) (White Currant), [Ribes rubrum](#) (Red Currant), [Ribes uva-crispa](#) (Gooseberry), Rubus species & cultivars ([Rubus idaeus](#) (Raspberries), [Rubus fruticosus](#) (Blackberries), [Rubus flagellaris](#) (Dewberries), [Vitis vinifera](#) (Grapes)

## Climbers

Clematis vitalba [Clematis vitalba](#) & C. montana cultivars, Jasminum species such as [Jasminum officinale](#), [Jasminum nudiflorum](#), [Jasminum humile](#), [Lathyrus odoratus](#) (Flowering Pea), European honeysuckle ([Lonicera periclymenum](#)) Pandorea jasminoides & P. pandorana (Wonga Wongo Vine), Phaseolus vigna (Snail Vine), Pyrostegia venusta (Orange Creeper Vine), Pelargonium peltatum cultivars [Pelargonium peltatum](#) (Ivy-leaved Geraniums), , Rosa - climbing types (Climbing Roses) Tecomanthe hillii, Thunbergia species

### References

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[1] [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

[2] [www.acsgarden.com](http://www.acsgarden.com)

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