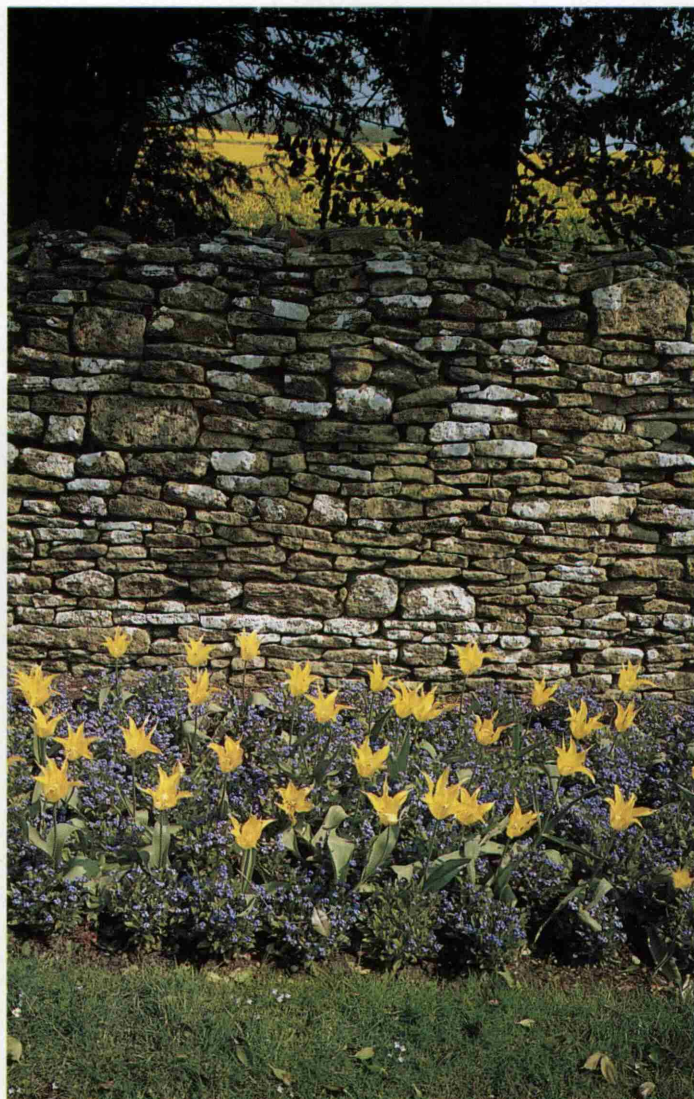




One of the classical urns which serve as eye-stoppers to terminate vistas. It stands amid Bluebell forget-me-nots and China Pink tulips. (Right) The same forget-me-nots, with Golden Duchess tulips that match the oilseed rape flowering in the field beyond

of a dragon, with gold and red plants representing flames from the dragon's tongue. The manor itself has to be interpreted as the dragon's body.

It can be seen from the back drive. Here, a border of shrubs against the outer side of the garden's boundary wall merges into a raised peat bed, with supporting walls of peat blocks. This is a plantsman's response to the challenge of cultivating lime-hating treasures where the native soil is wholeheartedly alkaline. Here grow rhododendrons, lilies, primulas, pieris, callunas and ericas.

Behind a yew hedge at the back of the peat bed is the kitchen garden. Nearby, moisture-loving plants are gathered around an old horse pond beside a barn and stables. A golden weeping willow serves as the scene-setter, counterbalanced by some silver birch.

Varied as these features are, the most intensively cultivated area of the garden is still hidden—a case of leaving the best until last. This lies behind an old stone-built granary and beside the Dower House.

In front of the Dower House an impressive courtyard is paved around raised rock beds set with all manner of rock-garden bulbs and alpins. There is enough room for

plenty of perennials and shrubs, as well as several much larger ones and a standard *Acer palmatum* Corallinum Karasugawa and silver-grey *Pyrus salicifolia*.

An archway from this courtyard leads, quite unassumingly, into a pergola walk. One surprise follows another from then on. At right-angles to the Pergola Walk lies the Rhododendron Walk, in further defiance of the naturally alkaline soil. This passes behind the old granary and is backed on the eastern side by a yew hedge over which tower the pleached tops of an adjacent Lime Walk.

At the end of the Rhododendron Walk a waterfall spills dramatically into a rocky dell. All manner of dependable rock plants are here: saxifrages, mossy phloxes, helianthemums, campanulas, acaenas, iberis, dwarf conifers, small Japanese maples and more ground coverers to smother weeds. Not that there is a weed in sight.

Steps up from this Chelsea Flower Show-style rock garden open into a topiary garden with yew chessmen enclosed within box-edged flowerbeds bright with violas in spring. A pair of aged, blossoming apple trees punctuate a cross *allée* which passes northwards onto the Great Lawn,

and in the opposite direction to a Laburnum Tunnel. Parallel with the topiary chess garden, through an opening in the yew hedge, lies the Long Rose Garden. Beyond it another cross walk links the Great Lawn to the South Beech Walk. Lining this cross axis are silver borders with a stone vase as a centrepiece.

These preface a splendid Mediterranean-style Foliage Garden. Plantsmen pause here, for the boomerang-shaped central bed holds sculptural-stemmed aralias, autumn-berrying herbaceous phytolaccas, crinums, well-chosen festucas, shrubby euphorbias and black-stemmed bamboos. But it is not the rich variety of plants that thrills the senses so much as the juxtaposing of leaf forms, stem patterns and leaf shapes.

Along the perimeter of the garden runs a beech walk underplanted with Rose of Sharon, *Hypericum calycinum*. At right-angles to this, the path that serpentine through the Foliage Garden turns into the ruler-straight route across the entire width of this eastern block of gardens. Here, early last May, massed lily-flowered Golden Duchess tulips exactly matched the yellow field of flowering oilseed rape visible through a *clair-voyée* in the boundary yew hedge. A groundswell