A turning point in English gardening

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) was one of the greatest British landscape architects and garden designers whose ideas and influences are still felt today.

When she was 18, Gertrude enrolled in the South Kensington School of Art in London, where she was deeply influenced by the major British landscape painters and developed an unfailing sense of colour effects.

Significant was her friendship with the Irish gardener W. Robinson, whose innovative gardening theories she agreed with. This new approach to gardening rejected the standard Victorian designs in favour of more informal planting and the use of hardy plants, rather than seasonal beddings, thus giving a picturesque and natural appearance.

Not only were plants appreciated for their beauty, but they were combined in form, colour and effects. Instead of the usual tropical plants grown in greenhouses, she advocated less formal-looking patterns of hardy perennials, shrubs, climbers and native plants as well as dense plantings of colour-themed perennials and groundcovers that exposed no bare soil. This talented painter, photographer, designer, musician, composer, garden writer, botanist and craftswoman spent most of her life in Surrey, England, and later moved to Munstead Wood, where she established one of her most famous gardens, breeding many new plants. True to her principles, she ensured the house and garden features were built from the local stone, with simple sand paths between the borders.

Here, Miss Jekyll developed her ideas on colour-graded planting, where each colour group was balanced by dots of the relevant complementary colour and stabilised by groups of grey and white.

During her long career, she created plans and designs for around 300 gardens in Britain, France and the US, some of which have been faithfully restored, wholly or partly, and can be visited.

to advocate: *propugnare*
bedding: *pianta da aiuola*
dot: *macchiolina*
to enroll: *iscriversi*
faithfully: *fedelmente*
groundcover: *tappezzante*
unfailing: *infallibile*



Munstead wood shrub rose

Typical cottage garden

Gertrude Jekyll

\Walter Jekyll, Gertrude's brother, was a good friend of R. L. Stevenson, the author of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, who is thought to have "borrowed" their family name for his book.

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1 Match the items on the left with the definitions on the right.

1.	To agree with	☐	**a.**	Open to view.
2.	Bare	☐	**b.**	Introducing something new.
3.	Craftswoman	☐	**c.**	To have the same opinion.
4.	Feature	☐	**d.**	Artisan.
5.	Hardy	☐	**e.**	Woody plant smaller than a tree.
6.	Innovative	☐	**f.**	To bring back to a former condition.
7.	Native	☐	**g.**	Originating in a certain place.
8.	Reject	☐	**h.**	Able to withstand the winter in the open air.
9.	To restore	☐	**i.**	Characteristic.
10.	Shrub	☐	**j.**	Refuse.



Shrubs

2 Decide if the statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

		T	F
1.	Gertrude Jekyll was a person with many skills and interests.	☐	☐
2.	She has had a great influence on garden design until now.	☐	☐
3.	The teachings of the major British landscape painters were meaningless to her.	☐	☐
4.	She did not share W. Robinson's gardening practices.	☐	☐
5.	Seasonal beddings were common in Victorian-style gardens.	☐	☐
6.	Form, colour and effects are significant elements of Jekyll's gardens.	☐	☐
7.	She lived mainly abroad.	☐	☐
8.	All gardens she created are open to visitors.	☐	☐

3 PAIR WORK Surf the Net to find more information about planning a cottage garden. Then, in turn, play the role of a nursery gardener and a customer asking for suggestions on the arrangement of his garden.

If needed, follow these hints:

- Indicate the location of the garden, sun exposition, soil composition.
- Highlight the importance of creating harmony in the arrangement.
- State your preference for specific varieties, and chromatic effects, if any.
- Specify if you are interested in hedges, paths, medicinal/aromatic herbs, or what plants you would avoid.



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