

RETURNING *to* EDEN

From England to Antigua,
the winners of our **SIXTH ANNUAL
GARDEN AWARDS** channel nature's
restorative beauty into havens for
daydreaming and discovery.

VERANDA
*World's Most
Beautiful*
GARDENS
—
2025

A grand sycamore and David
Watkinson's *Sycamore Seed*
kinetic sculpture overlook
the misty landscape of the
Arun Valley, near England's
southern coast.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIANNE MAJERUS.

PRODUCED BY GRACE HAYNES WALL • WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE HUNT

VERANDA 87

THE JUDGES



BUNNY WILLIAMS

“When I looked at Colm Joseph Gardens’ design (p. 90), I thought, ‘Wow, I grow all these plants, but the way he put them together looks so modern,’” says interior designer Bunny Williams. “This garden has different moods, different feelings.”



PETER LYDEN

“Acres Wild (right) created a romantic atmosphere, with a feeling of relaxation and welcome,” says Peter Lyden, president of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art. “The beautiful old stone wall and garden shed lend humility.”



METHODOLOGY

VERANDA editors chose the top 20 entries for blind judging by Williams and Lyden. Information and submission guidelines for the 2026 awards are at veranda.com/most-beautiful-gardens-2026.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A bed of viburnums, lilacs, hardy geraniums, and lavender. • Brick-and-flint walls create terraces within the landscape. • White Iceberg roses flank garden stairs.



A Symphony of Pastels

In shades of foliage and sky, an English country garden is designed to bloom in every season.

CREATING A GARDEN THAT APPEARS “simple, relaxed, and timeless” is rarely simple, but Debbie Roberts rose to the occasion when Acres Wild, the landscape and garden firm she co-owns with Ian Smith, was tasked with transforming a hillside estate overlooking the Arun Valley, near England’s southern coast. The West Sussex-based garden designer cultivated simplicity thanks in part to a restrained palette, with flowers and grasses in hues limited to soft blues, mauves, creams, limes, and whites “to be in harmony with the colors of the surrounding landscape and sky,” she says. Hardscape materials—including wide brick-and-flint walls delineating terraces on the east and south sides of the refurbished house (also of old brick and flint) and

tumbled limestone paving—feel at home here. To wit: The end of its undulating lane meets the ancient flint park walls of Arundel Castle.

Hedges of yew, low lines of lavender, and rounded tufts of catmint leading to the entryway offer a serene welcome, while ornamental grasses echo the sashaying textures of the surrounding fields, just as mounded evergreens suggest the clumps of trees in the wider countryside beyond. A glorious old sycamore was retained in the redesign, with a kinetic sculpture by

David Watkinson giving the sycamore seed its own whimsical shout-out. “This is a garden for all seasons,” says Roberts, noting the choreographed year-round succession of blooms with spring bulbs, white Iceberg roses, geraniums, anemones, and hydrangeas. “It sits lightly on the ground.”

West Sussex,
England
• • •
DESIGN BY
ACRES WILD

A Secret Rose Garden

Landscape designer Miria Harris reimagines a former London garage as a flower-filled sanctuary.

ROSES UPON ROSES TUMBLE FROM beds, scale weathered brick walls, and cascade from a 14th-century French font, where they “overflow like water,” says landscape designer Miria Harris. She transformed this historic Spitalfields home’s former garage into a courtyard haven for her clients, one of whom was seriously ill. “It’s absolutely jam-packed—there are climbers, ramblers, and [ground cover] roses, all having this playful dance with herbaceous perennials. It’s like a secret garden that’s been left to wild abandon but has the spirit of someone in it.”

Who or what that spirit might be is part of the mythmaking that inspires Harris. “The garden is a starting point for imagination. It’s a place to invent different scenarios,” she says, pointing to the pathways leading from a central oval to nowhere, or everywhere. A trio of espalier pear trees “appears as if they’ve always been there,” Harris adds,

summoning the spirit of fruit-ripening rooms that lined nearby Spitalfields Market centuries ago. A gnarled mulberry tree nods to the Huguenot silk weavers who settled nearby. “Your head starts going in different places. A garden sparks the imaginative, the romantic,” Harris says. The wall dividing the productive garden from the ornamental garden “suggests, perhaps, the ruins of something that once stood here. I’m leaving these sensual teases,” she says.

But it’s the roses, fragrant and unruly, that take center stage. “I love partnering roses with fennel. It’s like a soft, fluffy embrace that buffers the rose’s thorns,” Harris says. She planted salvias, jasmine, and other scented flowers, too, but they’re supporting actors. “White Pet, Boscobel, Smarty, American Pillar, Generous Gardener—I may love the rose names as much as the blossoms,” she admits. “Especially for a garden designed for storytelling and mythmaking.”

London
• • •
DESIGN BY
MIRIA HARRIS



White Smarty roses spill from the font, mingling with other roses, salvias, Oriental poppies, geraniums, and Mexican daisies. Espalier pear trees climb the “ruined” wall. INSET, FROM TOP: A gate leads from the productive garden to the ornamental garden. • Constance Spry roses.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) MARIANNE MAJERUS (2), COURTESY OF ACRES WILD.



A Wild Twist on Tradition

With water-wise design and native plantings, a redesigned 1800s walled garden welcomes the surrounding woodlands inside.

I'M PLAYING WITH THE CONCEPTS OF enclosure and openness," says landscape designer Colm Joseph. He was charged with transforming a 7,100-square-foot blank canvas—a subdivided plot on the grounds of an 1800s Victorian walled garden within a country estate in East Suffolk—into a modern, naturalistic landscape that both suits the historic setting and offers a contemporary contrast. "Walled gardens were originally created to enclose and protect the interior space from outside elements, but here we wanted to connect it to the wider landscape beyond." Central to his plan: reimagining the property's old redbrick wall as a sculptural feature, leaving it unadorned and an object of beauty rather than a barrier.

The modern, greenhouse-like home on the plot gave Joseph lee-way to play with various garden

styles like Arts and Crafts, he says, which celebrates natural materials and intimate yet abundant garden rooms. Soft ornamental grasses are punctuated by beech hedges pruned as cylindrical topiary. The gravel garden's pathway winds through blooming perennials and grasses to the wildflower meadow and the kitchen garden. Nestled within the plantings, the dining terrace is shaded by a crabapple tree, "echoing back to the estate's original orchard," Joseph says. Dwarf pines in the gravel garden reference the surrounding woodlands, while the front garden's reed-like grasses nod to the nearby River Alde estuary—"again, evoking that connection," Joseph says. "It's all about a harmonious linking of tradition and heritage, like the topiary you'd expect to find in an English country estate, with more modern, minimalist designs."

**East Suffolk,
England**
♦ ♦ ♦
DESIGN BY **COLM
JOSEPH GARDENS**

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD BLOOM.



Birch trees, dwarf mugo pines, and drought-tolerant wildflowers in the gravel garden. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP:** European beech topiaries rise from Karl Foerster grass. • The existing redbrick wall now acts as a sculptural feature. • The dining terrace's clay pavers echo the wall's masonry.

An Untamed Idyll

On Antigua, an oceanfront estate embraces local limestone, drought-tolerant trees, and coastal grasses for a sweeping naturalistic landscape—rooftop garden included.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT SAM Fuller grew up on Antigua; she knows the hilly, sandy terrain and the challenges of a dry, salt-air climate. While studying landscape design in England, she learned the Latin names for European trees—“names that were all new to me,” she says. But she kept a clear and fond memory of Antigua’s own native flora, even if she didn’t learn their proper nomenclature. When a project pulled Fuller back to her island home, she tapped into the wild landscapes of her childhood to create a free-spirited, windswept garden connecting a 1950s-era main house to a new subterranean guest cottage, tucked in the hillside. “All the original houses in this development were built so that they’d be invisible to neighbors, an intention I kept with the guest cottage,” she explains. “When walking from the main house, you see a roof garden without realizing it’s a roof.”

Antigua

♦ ♦ ♦

DESIGN BY
SAM FULLER
LANDSCAPE

A sunken courtyard adjacent to the green roof features bougainvillea- and mandevilla-bedecked walls made of native coral limestone, while limestone boulders unearthed during the cottage’s construction punctuate pathways and create focal points. Native grasses have been left unmown, and drought-tolerant Texas sage, silver button trees, and sea grape add height without blocking views. “Most landscaping on Antigua is limited to planting hibiscus or shipping a container of tropicals from Florida,” Fuller says. “The homeowner wanted our design to complement the existing environment. You don’t typically see naturalistic landscapes here. I wanted to showcase something different in the Caribbean.” Fuller sourced materials locally as much as possible, using Antigua-propagated species when she couldn’t find native. “Bromeliads do great here—the tree frogs love them,” she says. “At night, it’s like the Caribbean is shouting at you.”

A guest cottage blends into the dry coastal woodland with a rooftop garden planted with agave, silver buttonwood, Texas sage, aloe vera, and fountain grass; it offers views of the main house (below left) and the Atlantic. **INSET:** Bougainvillea climbs the sunken courtyard’s coral limestone walls.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NGOC MINH NGO





A Meditative Garden Oasis

Beneath a canopy of maples, laurels, and oaks, a meandering hilltop escape offers leafy rooms for contemplation over the San Francisco Bay.

PAUL WISEMAN, AS HIS SURNAME SUGGESTS, WISELY takes the long view. Patience is his planting guide, time his pruning technique. “This garden has been 25 years in the making,” says Wiseman, who has collaborated with local landscape designers Stephen Suzman and Howard Formby, and with landscape architect Todd Cole, throughout the evolution of his Belvedere Island home in California’s San Francisco Bay. In the late 1800s, the small island became a popular summer retreat where San Franciscans would ferry over “not to cool down, but to warm up. It’s the first place to get sun when the Bay Area fog breaks,” says Wiseman, an interior designer and devoted gardener, who loves that the property is enveloped by nature.

One hikes up the winding, foliage-laden paths to reach his hilltop home. “I’m a spiritual person, and nature is very important to me,” says Wiseman, who reworked the existing overgrown French

**Belvedere Island,
California**
♦ ♦ ♦
DESIGN BY
PAUL WISEMAN

Provincial-style gardens, infusing them with California authenticity and transforming the pathways into a lush meditation walk. Benches and centuries-old Balinese pots, herb gardens, and vistas invite pausing along the way. Tasmanian tree ferns, ivy, and agave give a “*Jurassic Park* feel,” he says, while drought-tolerant succulents poking through cracked concrete pavers have been left as is “to let the age show.”

Thanks to a quarter century of pruning maples, laurels, and oaks, Wiseman now enjoys a leaf-framed oculus peering out to Angel Island, “visible when you sit down,” he says. It’s one of his favorite perches. Other places to pause and ponder include a restored grape arbor draped in leafy vines, a firepit framed in boxwoods, and a spa surrounded by fragrant jasmine. The latter two overlook a majestic oak that Wiseman has painstakingly sculpted over the years, opening views of Angel Island. “A garden doesn’t wait for you,” Wiseman says. “You have to constantly be attentive.” ♦

From the firepit, Wiseman takes in the Bay view through a California live oak’s carefully pruned branches. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Tasmanian tree ferns, aloe, succulents, and ivy frame a walkway. ♦ Japanese wisteria crowns an Italian-inspired loggia. ♦ Wiseman’s maple grove oculus required 25 years of meticulous pruning. ♦ Jasmine surrounds an ergonomically designed hot tub that doubles as a garden water feature and fountain. ♦ A grape arbor offers a shady spot for rest and contemplation.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW WILLMAN

