



# THE 'TOPIARY TOURISM' GUIDE: THE 2024 EDIT

Helping you shape an experience at the very best world topiary gardens



# INTRODUCTION

World Topiary Day is an awareness day, conceived to highlight Levens Hall and Gardens' place within the topiary family, as the home of the world's oldest topiary garden and an official Guinness World Record Holder.

Since the celebration was first founded by our Cumbrian garden in 2020, it has lit up not just our own topiary experience for visitors but that of many other worldwide gardens too. With the assistance of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society (ETBS) and the passion of its European President, Patrick Salembier, the event has established firm roots in France, in particular, but also been embraced in Belgium, Italy, the USA and other countries. The love of topiary has literally been ignited on a global scale, as you can hear in this podcast - <https://bit.ly/4ay4fL7>

This year, we are publishing a guide to the fantastic topiary gardens taking part in World Topiary Day in 2024. What we have christened "topiary tourism" has truly taken root and gardening enthusiasts are craving more information about gardens that are home to fabulous topiary art, so they can plan itineraries specifically to visit them. Hopefully, this booklet will assist travel planning.

We hope you will enjoy this focus on the wonderful gardens who have embraced World Topiary Day, including its founder and author of the booklet, Levens Hall and Gardens. Whether you visit us - or the other gardens - on World Topiary Day or any other day of our season, we are sure you will understand the joys of topiary tourism.





# THE HOME OF WORLD TOPIARY DAY

LEVENS HALL AND GARDENS, LEVENS, NEAR KENDAL, CUMBRIA, UK

<https://www.levenshall.co.uk>

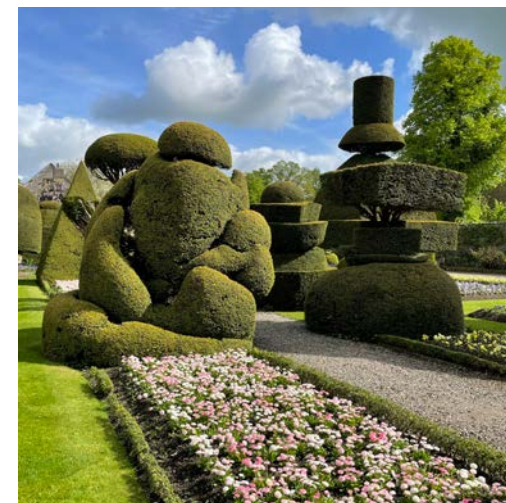
Levens Hall and Gardens' Topiary Garden was founded by Guillaume Beaumont way back in 1694 and is now home to over 100 quirky topiary pieces that take the art of topiary to a different level. Often described as an 'Alice in Wonderland' experience, in which visitors are greeted by an array of incredibly clipped trees, from the Top Hat and the Toppling Wedding Cake to Queen Elizabeth I and her Maids of Honour, the Judge's Wig and even Homer Simpson and Darth Vader, the garden never ceases to enthrall. With the Great Umbrella Tree – one of the nation's favourite trees – and its sister umbrella tree, which have graced the garden for over 300 years, being true headline grabbers, there is so much to appreciate, as the scent of the rose planting wafts on the breeze and visitors also delight in the original cottage of Beaumont, still the head gardener's residence today.

If you can tear yourself away from the Topiary Garden, you will discover much more: the incredible Beech hedge that helps form the very private Beech Circle; the original Bowling Green and now croquet lawn; the Fountain Garden where light cascades on to the lily-strewn pond; the Herb Garden and Vegetable Borders; the Pastel and Red and Blue Borders; the oldest known ha-ha in England and the Orchard.

Add to this a willow labyrinth and children's playground and there is so much to explore.

World Topiary Day 2024, on May 12, is the first annual WTD on which visitors can seek out works of art hidden in the gardens, with 11 paintings dotted around, just waiting to be found, all courtesy of charity fundraising artist, Bob Sutcliffe. Bob will also be staging an art workshop and children's art competition. Meanwhile, head gardener, Chris Crowder, will be leading three special 'topiary tours' at 11am, 1pm and 3pm – tours that cannot be enjoyed on any other day other than World Topiary Day (Sunday, May 12). Anyone arriving in the first hour of the year that marks 330 years of topiary at Levens Hall and Gardens will pay just £3.30 entrance, so do make a beeline for the garden between 10am and 11am. Tours and other activities will be free of charge. Should you stop off in the wonderful Levens Kitchen, you will discover a variety of edible topiary treats available, whilst you might just want to take home some special Levens Hall Morocco Ale, as sold in the shop.

At any other time of year, during our Spring to early October season, you can self-guide yourself around the topiary and then explore much more besides.





# ITALY

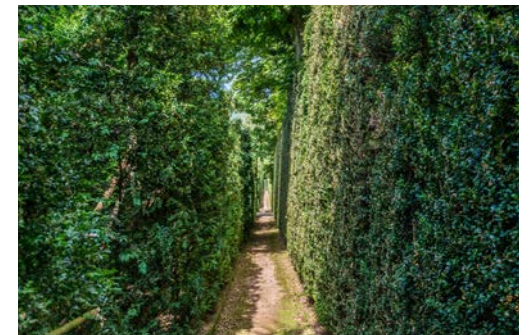
## THE MONUMENTAL GARDENS OF VALSANZIBIO

<https://www.valsanziobiogiardino.com>

These stunning Italian gardens, known as The Small Versailles, are located 17km from Padua and 53km from Venice and were founded around 1665. They are home to the world's highest concentration of boxwood plants, with 60 per cent of these being around 400 years' old. Boxwood at Valsanzibio forms walls over 5 metres in height and over 6000 Boxwood plants come together in the garden's labyrinth. Boxwood borders also create boulevards or alleys that represent those to be found within the Calle Veneziana, Venice.

Valsanzibio was founded by Venetian noble, Giovanni Francesco Barbarigo, who sought a refuge from the Black Plague besetting Venice, which had already struck his family. An inscription on the garden's Staircase of the Sonnets reads, "In Venice there is Hell and here instead there is Paradise." His sons, Antonio and Gregorio, then developed the gardens in the late 17th century, building allegorical messages and symbolism in, at every step. The gardens are a monumental symbolic pathway to perfection, with a walk through them being a journey taking one from falsehood to truth and from ignorance to revelation. The journey starts at Diana's Pavilion, from which you then walk alongside the Fishery of the Rivers. It ends at the Square of the Revelations, in front of the stunning villa that is still the family home today. En route, visitors encounter the Labyrinth, the Hermit's Grotto Rabbit Island, The Statue of Time, the Fountain of Tricks or Water Jokes and the Staircase of the Sonnets. The gardens are also full of incredible statues, with inscriptions that create reasons to think and reflect.

In 2024, the first stop-off for our Topiary Message in a Bottle, after it departed from Levens Hall and Gardens, was Valsanzibio. Check out the Instagram post about it [here](#) and, if you wish to know more about the Valsanzibio gardens, listen to the podcast [here](#).







# HAUTS DE FRANCE

## JARDIN DU CHÂTEAU DE DAMPIERRE EN YVELINES

<https://www.domaine-dampierre.com>

These gardens, with links to acclaimed landscaper and inspiring topiary designer, Andre Le Notre, located just a stone's throw from Le Nôtre's masterpiece at Versailles, Paris, are stretched over 90 hectares. Admission is free to under 18s, with the location being under continuous restoration, to bring back the glories remarked upon by Anne of Austria, who once declared them to be the most beautiful gardens in Europe. There are around 80 different topiary trees to be seen here, as the restoration, due to complete in 2025, encapsulates the spirit of Le Nôtre. Visitors can also enjoy unique experiences, including carriage rides around the 90-hectare site, which might afford a glimpse of fallow deer or wild boar, as well as the opportunity to view the Ruins of the Château de Becquencourt. If you prefer something more modern transport-wise, then maybe opt for an electric cart. There are also other amenities, including a wildlife track, picnic area, play areas, Dragonfly Paths and wildlife observatories within the grounds of this Remarkable-status site.



## LE JARDIN DES IFS

<https://www.lejardindesifs.com>

Located east of Rouen in Gerberoy in northern France - deemed one of the country's most beautiful villages - these 3000m<sup>2</sup> gardens, renowned as the oldest topiary garden in France, were once the pleasure gardens at the private residence of the governors of the region but are now part of a family home. The landscaper is unknown but a Le Nôtre style was adopted within the historic garden which bears Remarkable Garden status in France. It features French-style topiaries that are 300 years old, in a typical Renaissance aesthetic, with the collection being unique thanks to its impressive monumental yews. The gardens are open from May to September, Wednesday to Sunday and not to be missed is the topiary igloo, France's tree of the year in 2017 and shaped like an Inuit abode.



# HAUTS DE FRANCE

## JARDINS DU MONT DES RECOLLETS

<https://www.parcsetjardins.fr/jardins/626-jardin-du-mont-des-recollets>

Located at Mont Cassel between Lille and Dunkirk, these magical 1.5-hectare gardens were created in 1990 and, as well as being a Remarkable Garden with the Jardin Remarquable mark from the French Ministry of Culture, have also proved to come top in votes for France's favourite garden. This Flemish garden was inspired by paintings from the Flemish Renaissance and boasts numerous topiaries, with the presence of yew and boxwood topiary being what it is best known for, along with its area inspired by Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow'. This whimsical garden with its different 'green rooms' also offers sweeping views over the surrounding countryside, through round windows cut into the box hedges.



## PARC DU CHÂTEAU DE CORBEIL-CERF

<https://www.parcsetjardins.fr/jardins/33-parc-de-corbeil-cerf>

The de Lubersac family owned this property, situated in Corbeil-Cerf, north of Paris, between 1769 and 2019 and, although there is a castle at the site, it is best known for its gardens. Back in the 19th century, the Marquis de Lubersac achieved a balance between the built environment and nature and renowned landscaper Duchêne was heavily involved. However, the formative years, for those wishing to experience the garden today, were in 1960, when landscape architect, René Pechère, added 4 gardens. These were a rose garden and three secret gardens, one of which was a box border garden. The topiaries in the French Garden are well worth seeing but visits are by reservation only.





# HAUTS DE FRANCE

## LES JARDINS DE LA MANCHE

Located at Le Touquet, close to Paris, Les Jardins de la Manche comprise a number of different themed gardens, drawing inspiration from English, French, cubist and modernist influences, in a 45-minute natural circuit that visitors can explore. Some of the spaces along the way feature fabulous topiary creations nurtured by Patrick Salembier, President of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society's (EBTS) European branch, who was the inspiration and designer of works carried out by the Municipal Technical Services in La Touquet. This was in his role as project manager for Green Spaces in Le Touquet and author of the Charter of the Parks and Gardens of Touquet-Paris-Plage, "Jardin de la Manche". The topiary that has been developed in this location is significant enough for the EBTS to make Le Touquet its European headquarters. A collection of topiary in garden No.8 has been dubbed the Boxwood Beach, and will soon include over 200 varieties listed by Lynn R Batdorf, former curator of the US National Arboretum in Washington, who served as the International Cultivar Registration Authority for Buxus. Lynn inaugurated the French collection in 2012, in consultation with Patrick Salembier. Garden No. 6 also features a yew parterre, as inspired by Latona at Versailles, and inaugurated by Joël Cottin, head gardener at Versailles, and Thierry Lerche, head gardener at the Palace of Fontainebleau.

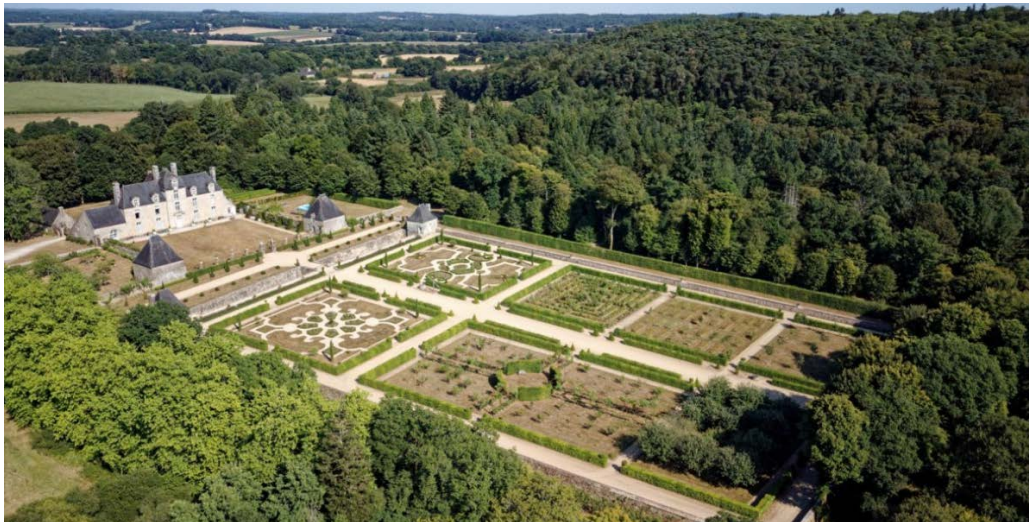
## CHÂTEAU D'ESQUELBECQ

<https://chateau-esquelbecq.com>

Located on France's border with Belgium, these gardens span 1.5 hectares and comprise compartmentalised gardens plus a main courtyard. This is a Flanders treasure, with a typical Flemish castle from the Renaissance era, shaped as a quadrilateral and boasting a number of towers and surrounded by a large moat. The garden is separated from the castle by the moat and evokes the appearance of walled garden from the Middle Ages. There are two parts to the garden. One, to the east, is a cross, whose paths are traced by fruit trees, highlighted by boxwood borders. To the west lies a compartmented vegetable garden. Lines of boxwood add character and an element of authenticity to these historic gardens.







# BRITTANY

## CHÂTEAU ET JARDINS DE LA BALLUE

<https://www.laballuejardin.com>

Situated close to Mont St Michel, these gardens feature many outdoor 'rooms', which are linked together by stunningly designed spaces filled with imaginative topiary. Combining an Italian mannerist style and inspired by the Yin-Yang principle, the gardens were laid over 50 years ago, to the dramatic designs of Paul Maymont and François Hebert Stevens. The gardens have built on this with many creative additions that have brought both mystery and power to the experience. Look around here and you will appreciate a baroque garden, distinguished by three-dimensional organic shapes and sculpted allegorical figures in movement. In the outdoor 'room' that is the Undulating Grove, visitors will find a topiary garden of *Taxus baccata* and *Buxus sempervirens*, along with *ilex*. A planting of Lady's mantle within this garden is intended to replicate the frothing of the sea. Move to the Scented Grove and high box walls create an intimate environment featuring an ornamental octagonal pond, planted with scented water lilies. Then, there is the Green Open Air Theatre, a semi-circular grove of *Taxus baccata*. In contrast to the logical aspects of the gardens, visitors will also discover a secret room - a topiary maze or labyrinth - whilst 22 wisterias grow on columns of yew in the Wisteria Walk, to represent Yin and Yang. There is much more to discover but with all of this emphasis on topiary, it is no surprise to also find a stunning parterre - a geometric arrangement of lines, triangles and hexagons laid out so as to be viewable and fully enjoyed from the château.

## LE CHÂTEAU DU COSCRO

<http://www.coscro-bretagne.fr>

This 16-hectare property is undergoing restoration to recreate the original 17th century garden, following both archaeological and ethnobotanical work. Boxwood hedges and low-level green walls mark out parterres, whilst sculpted topiary punctuates walkways and other areas of the design. The gardens also feature two small orchards, a vegetable garden, a pond and a fountain, at a property with the Historic Monument mark.



# ALSACE (GRAND-EST)

## JARDINS DE LA FERME BLEUE

<https://www.jardinsdelafermebleue.com>

This garden, which has held Jardin Remarquable status since 2005, is located at a traditional blue-painted Alsace farm in Uttenhoffen north of Strasbourg. It is the joint work of Alain Soulier and Jean-Louis Cura and boasts distinct areas, many of which feature topiary or boxwood in different shapes and styles. One of these, Le Parterre de Buis, comprises a number of geometrical shapes formed from low boxwood 'walls' or borders, with larger boxwood features at their corners or key points. However, beautiful topiary features can be found all over the gardens, from the Jardin Régulier to the Jardin Italien. A small crystal garden overlooks the street and is lit by a veranda, serving as an orangery in winter. Meanwhile, the works of contemporary artists can be found lining the gardens and another charming feature is the lampshade workshop, one of the last such workshops in France.





# NORMANDY

## LES JARDINS DU MONTPERTHUIS

<http://www.lesjardinsdumontperthuis.com>

Located in Chemilli, this Remarkable Garden saw a field transformed into a delight of topiary, medieval medicine garden and much more, with work around the 15th/16th century Manoir de la Pillardière starting in 2010, under the watchful eye of landscape architect Philippe Dubreuil. With topiary punctuating flower beds, acting as an attention-grabber close to ornamental ponds or archway to frame the view, and creating magnificent embroidery and parterre features, this garden is a hidden gem in the Normandy region. With a collection of ornamental cherry trees, oaks, lime trees, hawthorns, peonies, hydrangeas and more than 300 varieties of old roses gracing the rose garden, there is much to catch the eye, even before you encounter the vegetable garden, waterfall and greenhouse with its collection of cacti and citrus fruits. Visits are possible on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, or by pre-booking for groups of 20 or more, in a season running from mid-May to September.





# NEW AQUITAINE (DORDOGNE REGION)



## JARDINS DU CHÂTEAU DE LOSSE

<https://www.chateaudelosse.com>

Also in the Dordogne, these gardens feature a 1576 château (castle), restored from 1980 onwards, to recreate the look, feel and spirit of the original 16th and 17th century gardens. With Jardin Remarquable status and that of Historic Monument since 1928 for the renaissance castle, these gardens feature 'green rooms' surrounded by corridors which form a labyrinthine path. The visitor is directed to the Ellipse and the Fountain of the Satyr and can enjoy fantastic views over the river Vézère. The 'Tonnelle de Glycine' opens onto the walkway and boxwood crenellations. Below, one can discover topiaries and fragrant plants, as well as the stream of the fountain of Apollo and Venus. In the 'Rustica', which borders it, cypresses represent a lost colonnade, whilst topiary arches stand out on the walls, above clumps of choisyas. Then, there is the 'Room', evoked by an enclosure of woven hornbeams, augmented by English roses. A topiary fan can feel satisfied by sights, sounds and scent at the Château de Losse, perhaps lingering on a garden seat or drinking in the knot garden with its delightful pink roses and views of the river upstream. There is more to explore, however, as the castle's dry moat is planted and laid out for walk that leads into the parkland and alongside the river. This leads to the Nymph's Basin, carved into the rock and laid out in the 17th century. Whilst all of this may delight the adults, the children are not forgotten, with a mini labyrinth thrilling the little ones.



## LES JARDINS DU PIERRAIL

[www.chateau-pierrail.fr](http://www.chateau-pierrail.fr)

The one-hectare formal garden and 8-hectare landscaped garden here at Les Jardins Du Pierrail, at Marguérone in New Aquitaine, are classed as a 'Remarkable Garden' in France, having the Jardin Remarquable mark. The property - including the 17th century castle - has been owned by the Demonchaux family since 1970 and encompasses a 90-hectare vineyard, on the south and south east hillsides of the small valley of the Fonchotte river. Visitors can follow paths that wind between topiaries, as well as colourful hydrangeas and various trees. Explore this topiary delight for free on World Topiary Day 2024, or pay a small €5 charge at other times, when self-guided and guided tours - as well as wine tastings - can be booked by appointment. Email [alice.pierrail@orange.fr](mailto:alice.pierrail@orange.fr)



# NEW AQUITAINE (DORDOGNE REGION)

## EYRIGNAC ET SES JARDINS

<https://www.eyrignac.com>

These glorious gardens, created in 1965 and boasting 500 years of rich history, welcome visitors every day of the year, offering them the opportunity to explore a Jardin Remarquable and Historic Monument just a few miles from Sarlat. The enchanted environment of Eyignac features seven gardens set around a 17th century manor. The volume and variety of topiary – of which there are around 300 examples – makes Eyignac special, with the topiary comprising green sculptures, greenery rooms, boxwood embroideries and French-style garden beds. The range of motifs on show is infinite, thanks to combinations of basic geometric shapes: sphere, cube, cone, pyramid and spiral. By mastering nature and playing with perspectives, these gardens have been able to fully showcase the topiary, described as “boxwood arabesques”, as well as the gushing fountains, water mirrors, grass carpets and the carefully sculpted plants hand-pruned by the Eyignac gardeners. With a rural and intimate atmosphere coming together, there is a colour palette that evolves with the seasons, whether you are exploring the Garden of the Springs, the Florist Garden, the Vegetable Garden, or the one-shade-of-green ‘parterre’ gardens: the Garden of Wanderers; the Garden of Drunkenness; the Garden of the Daughters of the Wind and the latest edition, the Reflection of the Sky. Whilst the topiary is a delight to admire, don’t miss a visit to the White Rose Garden, with its flower garlands and flowerbeds and unique view of the Dordogne landscape.







# NEW AQUITAINE (DORDOGNE REGION)

## LES JARDINS SUSPENDUS DE MARQUEYSSAC

<https://www.marqueyssac.com>

These 19th century gardens are South West France's 'most visited', having been restored in 1996/7, to bring back to life the original creations of Julian de Cerval. Originally reflective of a typical Napoleon III era garden, with a strong Italian influence in terms of cypress, umbrella pine and small Naples cyclamen planting, these are wild and romantic gardens with Jardin Remarquable status. Lime trees, laburnum, plantain, elms and more are set within a nexus of boxwoods, of which there are over 150,000 hand-pruned, round and rolling examples. Set around a National Historical Monument – a chateau – the wow factor moment is probably the walk to Périgord's most panoramic view, ranked as 3-star in the Michelin Vert Guide. Three circuits lead to this 'Belvedere', 192 metres high, 130 metres above the river Dordogne and around 800 metres from the château itself. These gardens abound with interesting features, including drystone huts, benches carved into rock, rock gardens, a small rotunda and even a treetop walkway. Enjoy a stroll and breathe in the scent of herbs, including santolina, rosemary and lavender, wafting on the breeze.

## JARDIN LACORE

<https://jardin-lacore.fr>

Located at Saint-Pardoux-d'Arnet in the Creuse department of central France, this garden was created in a truly artistic style, in 1980, by landscaper Alain Gribet. Awarded the status of Jardin Remarquable in 2023, it can be regarded as a work of art, with Gribet being both gardener and animal mosaic sculptor. In 2001, he used 1500 yew trees to design a hugely impressive 2500m<sup>2</sup> labyrinth, which can be admired from the top of a granite tower. Having now attained a beautiful maturity, the labyrinth is an essential aspect of the whole visitor experience and a very different take on topiary. A large mosaic greenhouse and numerous animal mosaics can be seen along the tree-lined path, where more than 700 varieties of trees and shrubs can also be admired. Small beds of yew and box hedges, as well as numerous driftwood creations, decorate another part of the garden, which is completed by pond, orchards and vegetable garden. Visits are by appointment and bookable at the website.



# THE LOIRE

## JARDINS HAUTE COUTURE

<https://www.jardinshautecouture.fr>

These 5000m<sup>2</sup> gardens, part of a quintessential Touraine manor house and stunning B&B at Huismes, which is tucked into the craggy limestone cliffs of the Loire Valley at its most narrow point, were created in 2009. The vision was to design a contemporary and sustainable terraced garden, full of Italian inspiration but planted in the English style. The gardens tumble down the hillside to water meadows known as the Ile St Marin. In 2023, they had the honour of being deemed the second most exceptional garden in France to visit. Yew, boxwood and holly topiaries rub shoulders with a collection of David Austin roses and medicinal plants, around a delightful former residence of an illustrious stonemason. Opening into the Indre and Loire valleys and sandwiched between these two rivers, in the heart of France, they reveal their secrets one by one, through a maze of green rooms, punctuated with topiaries, pergolas, arches and richly coloured flowerbeds and leading to startling points of view. The terraced gardens are a true sanctuary for biodiversity, with the structured topiary serving as tower blocks for nesting birds, whilst other flora and fauna also provide habitation and nourishment. This concern for nature is backed by a sustainable aesthetic, ecological and educational approach, which began with sustainable water management and an intelligent plant selection for the terrain and climate. Look up into the cliff face and also spot the troglodyte dwellings.

## CHATEAU DE MAUBRANCHE

<https://www.chateau-maubranche.com>

Chateau de Maubranche, located in Moulins-sur-Yèvre east of Bourges, was originally built by a Scotsman – Thomas Scuer – who was head of Louis XI's Scottish Guard. This explains the French and Scottish arms on display at this quadrilateral-shaped castle with enormous square keep. The 90-hectare garden, in which more than 100 yew and boxwood topiaries can be found, was created in 1895, by Henri Duchêne. The topiary can be found in the eastern, western and southern views – perspectives so important to Duchêne's classical French design. The eastern comprises a 420-metre green carpet, adorned with four statues, corner stone balls and yew topiaries. The western view is 820 metres in length and includes a parterre with stylised fleur-de-lis, a 250-metre lawn bowling green and yew topiaries. To the south, there is a bed of boxwood and more yew topiaries. A northern parterre has been a later addition. In addition to century-old box hedges, there are more than 150 topiaries in the making within the park.





# THE LOIRE

## DOMAINE DE POULAINES

<https://domaine-poulaines.com>



Five hectares of gardens and an arboretum are surrounded by a 20-hectare park at these gardens, which are at the gateway to Berry and Touraine, slightly south east of Tours and south west of Orléans. 100-year-old box trees surround the manor house, now welcoming guests in cottages and guest house. The gardens, which have the Jardin Remarquable mark, have been lovingly restored to reflect 18th and 19th century descriptions and species. Despite this being a historic park, there is a contemporary atmosphere to the gardens, in which you can discover not just topiary but a Lilac Walkway, Secret Garden, Bamboo Garden, tree house and much more. With planting that attracts the eye all year round, this is a gloriously restored garden to visit and a haven for biodiversity. The property also holds a Michelin Star and other hospitality/accommodation accolades.

## CHATEAU DE VALMER

<https://www.chateaudevalmer.com>



Head to Chançay, close to Tours in the Loire Valley, and you will find these 5-hectare gardens, originally created in the Italian renaissance style in 1525, backed by a 60-hectare park and linked to the property's vineyard. With the Remarkable Garden mark, as well as being designated a Historic Monument, these gardens grace a hill overlooking the valley of the Brenne - one of the tributaries of the Loire. The tiered and terraced gardens comprise the High Terrace, the Terrace of the Florentine Fountains, Léda's Terrace and the Terrace of the Anduze Vases. In the Terrace of the Florentine Fountains, visitors can look out for singing water jets and a large rectangle of yew trees symbolising the former castle. There are also century-old tree peonies in spring, as well as an abundance of annuals. Meanwhile, large yew buttresses punctuate the Terrace of the Anduze Vases and box trees border the conservatory vegetable garden, with its 15th century design inspiration. Balustrades, stairs, statues, columns and a rare troglodytic chapel can all be discovered as you traverse eight levels of gardens, with over 30-metres difference in height, gazing down towards the large canal, running parallel to the river. The moat forms a separate garden, both cool and sunny, but to breathe in the plants thriving there, surrounded by high yew buttresses, you must go down the curious 15th century spiral staircase with its own links to yew, cut from the Léda Terrace.



# THE LOIRE

## LES JARDINS DU MANOIR DE FAVRY

<https://chateau-les-arcis.com>

These one-hectare gardens, located between Le Mans and Laval in the Loire, were created in 2004, achieved the Remarkable Garden label in 2019, and are a location in which topiary takes pride of place. Both anchored in the past and contemporary in equal measure, the blend between old and new is so skilled it creates the impression that the gardens have always existed. The journey through them leads the visitor through a variety of themes and dividing places, until they reach a final climax. Joys to encounter include the Daedalus, with a refined and graphic design structured with Japanese privet topiaries, from which the visitor is cleverly taken on to a discovery of both orchard and vegetable garden. Around its artificial canals, islands and peninsulas, waves of plants encourage the visitor onwards towards a very orderly garden. Here, a huge surprise awaits, in the form of cleverly designed greenery forming baroque waves and intersecting in a sophisticated manner within an undulating outline. Geometric topiaries, presented on a green carpet, are the feature following this tsunami of wave-like and rhythmic clipping. From there, there is a chance to discover the white palette of the rose garden, set in a framework of boxwood, punctuated with more topiary and backed by Portuguese laurels. Here, only white roses with delicate fragrances are allowed to blossom! The overall effect imparted by a visit to these gardens in Favry is described as one of 'green theatre' and it is hard to argue with that.

## JARDINS DU CHATEAU DES ARCIS

<https://domaine-poulaines.com>

These historic Renaissance gardens, dating from 1600, were restored in 2010 and are both a Remarkable Garden and a Historic Monument situated to the west of Le Mans. Once a stately residence for Charles de Cervon, companion of Henry IV, the castle features impressive keep and large moat. The gardens were developed a little later, once peace had returned to France. Here, topiary lovers will discover an embroidery of topiary in the Jardin Bouquetier, where flower beds represent the colours of the four seasons. They can also explore canals, shaded paths, the Labyrinth Island, rose garden and secret corners of the park. Fittingly this poetic place is said to demonstrate a second Renaissance.





# THE LOIRE

## DONJON DE BALLON

<https://www.donjondeballon.fr>



This Middle Ages Renaissance garden, located in Sarthe, 23 km from Le Mans, was created to complement the medieval fortress and keep. The gardens comprise a botanical orchard, a rose garden with old-fashioned roses and an enclosed garden. Whilst it has more than 100 different rose varieties, peonies and clematis, it is also home to a beautiful set of topiaries. These cannot escape the visitor the moment they arrive, with 30 boxus topiaries being situated to the left along the Linden Walk, where there are mixed borders on the right and interesting trees including a *Parrotia persica* and *Kolkwitzia amabilis*. However, the Medieval Garden (Le Jardin clos du Moyen Age), also offers topiary delights. This garden is surrounded by ramparts that have foundations dating back to the 12th century and is divided into three parts. In the Well Garden, the visitor will discover geometric shapes and a 45-metre well that provided the property with water. In the Middle Garden there are a host of interesting aromatic, medicinal and tinctorial plants, as well as stem roses. Then, in the Garden of the Holy Ghost, home to the Chapel of the Holy Ghost, there is a boxus hedge design inspired by labyrinth drawings. Expect to see plenty of pyramid-shaped topiaries, as well as lollipops and pyramids with pom-pom tops.

## PARC ET JARDINS DU CHÂTEAU D'AINAY-LE-VIEIL

<https://chateau-ainaylevieil.fr>



Located south of Bourges, in the Loire region, these 7-hectare gardens - with both the Remarkable Garden and Historic Monument labels - were created in 1984. Beautiful examples of geometrically shaped and themed or tiered topiary trees can be found in various places within these gardens, which have been in the family of Marie-Sol de la Tour d'Auvergne since 1467 and which surround and nestle alongside a glorious fortified castle and moat. Originally Renaissance water gardens, they feature two Renaissance pavilions at the entrance to the gardens and still have the elaborate hydraulic system inherited from the Middle Ages. The intoxicating scent of roses, comes from the rose garden opposite the pavilions will seduce, but topiary lovers will also want to make a beeline for the Les Chartreuses - open-air garden rooms on a terrace overlooking the surrounding canals, linked together by a succession of arcades and boasting micro-climates that nurture the planting within. In the Meditation Garden, a Yew House sits within a garden of box and germander beds but in the Parterres de Broderies, the fourth garden of Les Chartreuses, the topiary inspiration of Le Nôtre, originally created at Versailles, can clearly be seen. This embroidery style topiary was copied in many a French garden and reproduces the pattern of the fleur-de-lis, in a sumptuous style. Meanwhile boxwood borders are home to white roses and the central part of the garden is formed of yew. In total there are 2km of boxwood borders, which help highlight beds of roses, perennials and grasses.



# PYRENEES-ATLANTIQUE

## LES JARDINS DE CHÂTEAU DE VIVEN

<http://www.chateau-de-viven.com>

Situated in Viven, 20km north of Pau in the Atlantic Pyrenees, these gardens are open from May to October and well worth a stop, being an official Jardin Remarquable and a Historic Monument. The garden was resigned in the 18th century style in 1988, based on three groups of existing ancestral boxwoods. Further developments took place in 2013, with a rearrangement of its striking Maltese Cross feature and the introduction of more interlacing and embroidery within the planting. As well as topiary punctuating the gardens there is a green maze of boxwoods which delights adults and children alike. Roses are another inescapable facet. Pierre de Ronsard rose bushes, chestnut roses and Queen Elizabeth roses can all be discovered here and an arbour of roses attractively adorns a lovely pool feature. Other glorious plant species to enjoy include rhododendrons, wisteria, azaleas, camellias and bougainvillea but, if you have any doubt what species you are looking at, simply scan a QR code and you can find out!



# OCCITANE

## CHÂTEAU DE BOURNAZEL

<https://www.chateau-bournazel.fr>

This castle, located between Rodez and Villefranche de Rouergue in the Aveyron department, north east of Toulouse in southern France, is one of the most remarkable renaissance châteaux in southern France, created in the 1540-60 period. The beautiful gardens, which have been awarded the Jardin Remarquable mark, have been recreated through painstaking research and constitute two distinct spaces: the orchard to one side and a formal walled garden to the other. It is the latter that will delight topiary lovers, as it includes nine parterre gardens, a labyrinth, fountains and a pool and garden of 11 'rooms'. The parterre gardens are particularly distinctive, providing a series of steps, to be followed in any order, which lead those taking them down an allegorical path. Each parterre is designed to represent one of the significant qualities valued by Renaissance cultural minds, with these including honour, bravery and beauty of spirit.





# ALPES-MARITIMES

## LA PROPRIÉTÉ MARRO

<https://www.proprietemarro.com>

This garden, located in Cagnes-sur-Mer fairly close to Nice airport, is a city-centre location, old market garden property that has retained its ancient watering system, based on two 19th century wells and two ancestral furrows, as well as rainwater that keeps the field green all year long. It is still a permaculture vegetable garden but marries this functionality up with topiary art, having about 20 topiaries, aged between 10 and 30 years old, and of varied species and shapes. There are also 40 trees that are 30-50 years of age, including citrus, olive, pomegranate and carob. Ornamental plants then add to the ambience. A pyracantha hedge, pruned in a variety of geometrical shapes (cone, cylinder, torus, pyramid, prism, cube and sphere), surrounds this large pleasure garden, which has been open to visitors since 2016. Anyone taking up the opportunity to pass through its door may discover some tools of yesteryear, utilised in both wine-making and farming, such as a wine press, tank and crusher, still used to make wine from grapes grown on the hillside, and wooden dibbles, which allow for the pricking out of onions and leeks



# AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES

## LES JARDINS DE LA CROZE

<https://www.jardinsdelacroze.com>

This is an English-style park, designed in the mid-19th century by landscaper Choulot, and located at Puy de Dôme, west of Lyon. Consequently, it features many classic trees and shrubs, with the topiary kings – yew and boxwood – being prolific in terms of their presence throughout the gardens. The regular Italian garden is very much as it was back in 1919 and includes numerous topiaries. The French vegetable garden has retained its 17th century structure and is distinguished by six squares lined with boxwood and a central path oriented south-north, cut by two wide transverse paths, and offering a perspective on an Empire fountain in Volvic stone. The squares are compartmentalised by Renaissance-inspired boxwood designs. Immense, pruned boxwoods can also be seen in the Fleuri Orchard, accessible by a small courtyard forming a bridge over the canal and featuring a row of quince trees, cord apple trees, perennials, peonies, irises, climbing roses. Remarkable rose bushes, including numerous old varieties, mid-twentieth century classic and spectacular creeper roses, can also be enjoyed in the rose gardens.





# BELGIUM

## VAN BUUREN MUSEUM AND GARDENS

Built in 1928, this Brussels-located property was the house of banker and arts patron David van Buuren. Whilst its interior is a superb example of Art Deco mastery, the gardens are a masterpiece of landscaping in themselves. Firstly, towards the end of the 1920s, Jules Buysens conceived the Regular Garden, the Picturesque Garden and the Large Rose Garden in the spirit of Art Deco. Then, in the 1960s, René Pechère created the Labyrinth and the Heart Garden, working on behalf of Alice van Buuren. The Labyrinth was inspired by a dream in which she walked in white through a maze. She commissioned Pechère to bring the dream to life and he chose the Song of Solomon as its theme, this being a 1st Millennium love poem, written in Hebrew. Certain passages from the poem were illustrated through the creation of seven 'green rooms' in the topiary labyrinth, with sculptor André Willequet assisting with these. More topiary can be discovered in the Heart Garden, themed around hearts to pay tribute to Alice's deceased husband and present him with a token of love. This opens with text, placed in front of a hedge on its perimeter – an enticing reason to enter another topiary adorned 'sphere', which is open every afternoon except Tuesdays.



# USA

## LONGWOOD GARDENS

<https://longwoodgardens.org>

These Pennsylvania-located gardens cover nearly 200 acres, but topiary lovers will want to make a bee-line for the Topiary Garden, a labour of love, with yews shaped by dedicated horticulturalists over nearly a century. Magical, fantastical and delightful, it celebrates an artform stretching back to Roman times, whilst its beauty is said to be its “uniformity, formality and mystery, sprinkled with a dash of humour.” This garden features 35 specimens and more than a dozen different topiary forms, ranging from wedding cakes to spirals and birds. Topiary first appeared at Longwood in 1936, when a former vegetable garden was transformed by founder, Pierre S du Pont. A horseshoe of yew was placed around a sundial and accompanied by 11 domes and two cones in the shape of an ellipsis. Twenty-two years later, 30 large yew topiaries, in six different designs were purchased, and planted around the sundial. More were brought in during 1962 and then in 1971, when the garden formally became known as the Topiary Garden. In 1980, designs by head gardener, Jack Hamilton, were moved in, with his skill being specific ‘character’ trees, such as a rabbit and armchair with table. A more geometrical approach was taken by his successor. The desire to create whimsical, as well as more sober pieces has continued, with topiary adding a huge amount of personality to Longwood.





# UNITED KINGDOM

Besides Levens Hall and Gardens, there are other great topiary gardens to visit in the UK. Those which are showcasing their topiary through World Topiary Day in 2024 are listed below.

## WALES

### PLAS CADNANT

<https://plascadnant.co.uk>

Described as one of North Wales best kept secrets, Plas Cadnant Gardens, situated at the side of the Menai Strait, are a hidden gem, located close to Menai Bridge on the Isle of Anglesey and only open to the public fairly recently, thanks to an inspired restoration of the gardens since 1996. Visitors can stroll around the beautiful walled garden with its curving walls and pool, wander through a wooded dell full of fabulous plants and flowering shrubs, or pause beside a bewitching stream of natural pools and waterfalls in the secret valley garden. With this three-gardens-in-one appeal, Plas Cadnant is already regarded as one of Wales' liveliest gardens. Topiary plants here provide punctuation within key areas, drawing the eye towards features such as walkways and pools, whilst adding drama and serenity in equal measure. Even featuring in the Plas Cadnant logo, they simply cannot be overlooked here. The gardens are bordered by a SSSI (site of special scientific interest), home to the delightful Red Squirrel, rare ferns and mosses, so keep eyes peeled for wildlife whilst in this 10-acre paradise.



## KENT

### BALMORAL COTTAGE

<https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/34649/balmoral-cottage>

Balmoral Cottage is open on certain days of the year only but is the work of owner, Charlotte Molesworth, who has transformed the garden at the property, located at Benenden in Kent, since 1983. She has taken a love of topiary acquired during her childhood and transplanted it into her own garden, where what she describes as an "eclectic and eccentric" collection of topiary can now be seen. This includes peacock, spirals, spheres, pyramids, wedding cakes, geometric shapes and even sculptures of past dogs, all forming a glorious 3-D landscape. Topiary lollipops adorn the top of the hedge that frames the entrance to this varied and charming garden, where the art of topiary has become the backbone of an artistic plantsman's garden, complete with organically managed vegetable garden and underpinned by a strong principle of catering for the needs of nesting birds and small mammals.





# UNITED KINGDOM

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## CAMBRIDGESHIRE

### ELTON HALL

<https://eltonhall.com>

The gardens at Elton Hall, near Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, are testimony to 40 years of hard work by Meredyth Proby, who has restored the Proby family gardens first landscaped in 1670 and then set to a new design in 1911. Having scaled this down somewhat and responded to various natural threats to flora over the time frame, the garden now has many blissful facets, with topiary playing a major part in creating a glorious atmosphere where the beauty of nature and peace and calm reign. As well as the Topiary Garden itself, in which various shaped pieces have been created over the last three decades, visitors will find topiary by the charming Lily Pond. Here, it represents the family dog, the family crest and peacocks, all of which frame the view and balance the setting of the house between the parterre, lawns and pathways. Tall yew hedges also help compartmentalise the garden into smaller more intimate areas, bordering both the Flower Garden. In the former, a variety of species bloom splendidly, whilst, in the Orangery Garden, a Mediterranean mood is exuded by more than just the oranges and lemons grown in terracotta pots.



## SHROPSHIRE

### BRAMBLE COTTAGE

<https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/45604/bramble-cottage>

Bramble Cottage, in Shotatton near Shrewsbury, is a wonderful example of a topiary garden that has been created over the last three decades by its owners, Brigitte and Adam Wilson. A three-quarter-of-an-acre site features yew topiary, box parterre and a formal rose garden, with the topiary features including a Yew avenue. Plenty of box balls will catch the eye and there are yew, box and beech hedges to add to the green vista. Visits are by arrangement only, from May to October.

