



Gardens of Senses. The Spanish Gardens of Javier Mariátegui

With texts by Javier Mariátegui Valdés and photographs by Javier Mariátegui Valdés, Casilda Mariátegui and Mark Bentley. 188 pp. with 245 illus., 305 x 259 mm, hard-cover, English ISBN 978-3-936681-98-7 Euro 58.00, £ 42.90, US\$ 64.00

It was not by chance nor by a trick of fate that Javier Mariátegui dedicated himself to gardening. He grew up among gardens.

Both his grandmothers were gardening enthusiasts, one of them, the Marchioness of Casa Valdés, wrote the book *Spanish Gardens*, which describes the history of Spanish gardening from Roman times to the present day. This book continues to be a reference for all lovers of this particular field of history and art.

This enthusiasm was passed on to him by his parents. From his earliest years he was making his own gardens, by reusing those plants discarded by his father.

Mariátegui studied landscape gardening and design at the Escuela de Paisajismo y Jardinería Castillo de Batres in Madrid. Subsequently he worked in England as a gardener. Back in Spain, he established the Jardines de España nursery, which looks after and employs handicapped children, with whom he first started making gardens. For the past thirty years, he has created numerous gardens across Spain and in several other European countries. He has also published many articles on landscape-gardening topics in specialized magazines and a book on one of his gardens: *El Jardín de los Tapices/The Tapestry Garden*. Among the present garden architects of Spain Mariátegui plays an outstanding role. Even the Spanish TV has dedicated a monographic program to him and his gardens.

It would be difficult to summarize in a few words the essence of Mariátegui's gardens, given the wide variety of styles, their versatility and numerous differences that perhaps becomes his »signature«. His style is not dogmatic, he loves order and disorder, straight lines and curved, the wild chaos of nature as well as strict geometrical patterns, varied and single species of plants, colour and absence of colour. Moreover he enjoys bringing elements that clash together until they harmonize.

Perhaps as a result of an intimate knowledge of the magic of water in Andalusian Moorish gardens, Mariátegui uses water as an essential element in many of his gardens. He makes it »work« in all its forms; in pumps, in cascades, in constant gentle movement, or rocking in waves, in disperse drops or in silence like a mirror that adds the magic of its reflection.

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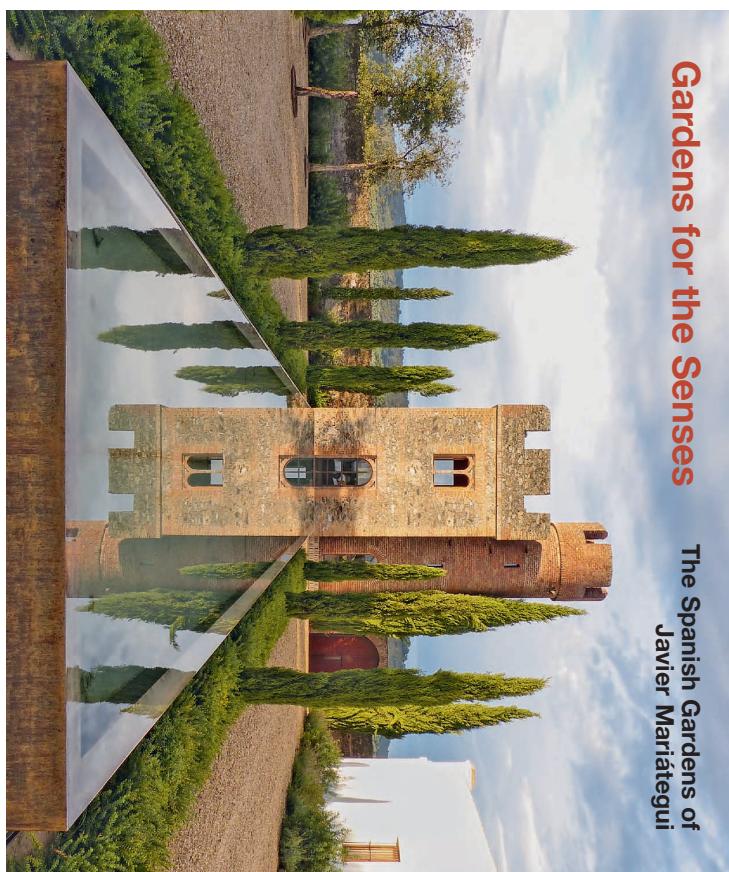
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The Spanish Gardens of Javier Mariátegui



Gardens for the Senses

The Spanish Gardens of Javier Mariátegui

It was not by chance nor by a trick of fate that Javier Mariátegui dedicated himself to gardens. He grew up surrounded by gardens. Born in 1929, he was growing up in Madrid, where his father, the architect and engineer of Cruz y Ortiz, wrote the book *Spanish Gardens*, which describes the history of the present-day Madrid. The book continues to be a reference to all lovers of this particular field of history and art.

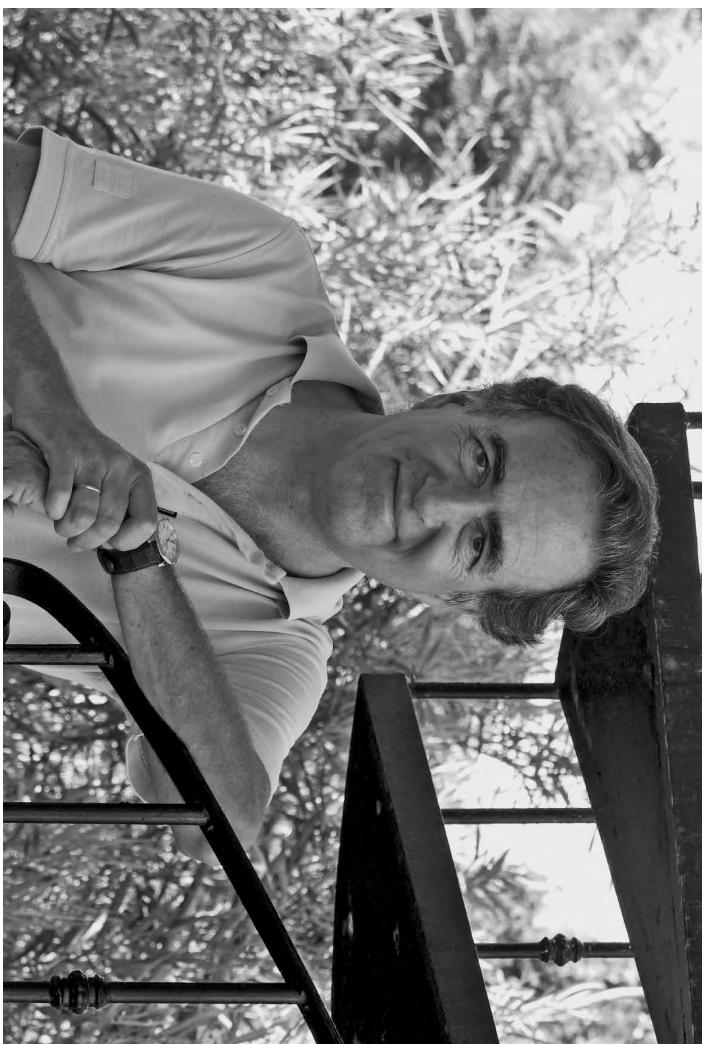
This enthusiasm was passed on to him by his father, who was making his own gardens, by naming these plants discovered by his father. Mariátegui studied landscape gardening and design at the Escuela de Arquitectura y Urbanismo de Madrid. After graduation, he subsequently worked in England as a gardener. Back in Spain, he established the Jardines de Estella, a nursery, which looks after and sells plants and seeds to gardeners. For the past thirty years, he has created numerous gardens across Spain and in several other European countries. He has also designed many private gardens and landscaped a rock on one of his books: *Edificios y los Jardines* / *The Roofs and Gardens*. Among the present Latin American characters of Javier Mariátegui, he is well known for his work in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina. In 1988, he was awarded the Conde de Alfonso X the Sage prize for his work in gardens.

It would be difficult to summarize in a few words the essence of Mariátegui's gardens. They are a mixture of traditional styles, with a strong personal touch. "I like to mix different styles and colours. I like to mix traditional and modern elements. I like to mix nature and culture. The mix creates a strong new and unique style. My designs are based on the use of colour and texture. I like to use a variety of plants, with different patterns, varied and simple species of plants, colour and textures. I like to catch together many elements. I like to make them bring the colour to life and make it last in an intimate room. The style is magic; it's winter in Andalucía."

Mariátegui's Madrid is less winter as an essential element in many of his gardens. It is a work in its forms, in textures, or colour in winter. In summer, or in silence like a mirror that adds the magic of its reflection.

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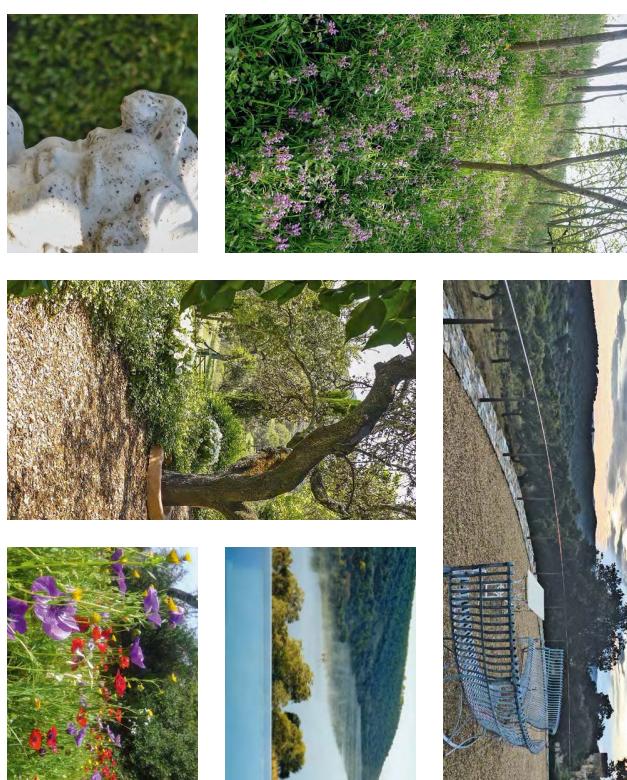
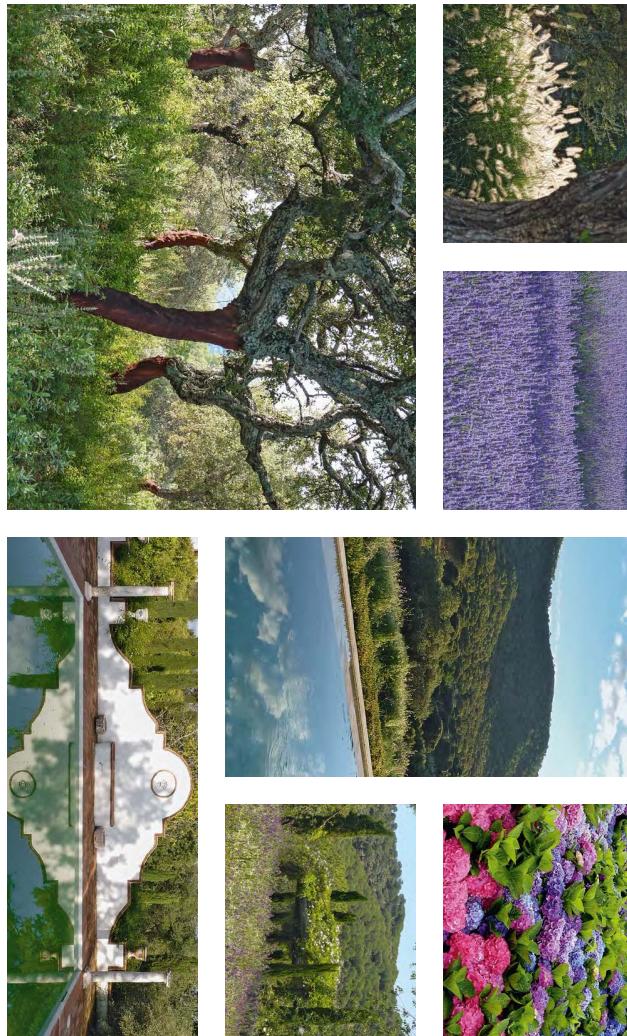
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Dedicated to
my mother
origins and inspiration
Guillermo and Ana
patrons and concrevers
of dreams
Angel Gil
a loyal friend
Juan Luis Libano
an indispensable source
of imagination
and all those whose efforts
helped to create
each of the gardens



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... Just gardens

Light, the melodious murmur of water, views, scents, the bending of modern and classical order, dramatic effects, the impact of a single vast reflection on water, and so on. Motion, nature and order, informing the flowers of my childhood – all of these have informed the guidelines of my garden designs, of which, here, I present a small sample.

In each of them I have sought to adapt to the landscape, to the buildings, to the client, and to my perception of what the genius loci, the spirit of the place, called for. These gardens are the distillates created from such ingredients.

Led by passion, and by a willingness to always try something new or earn it from them, I have often walked through parks in the dark, whose destination I could not initially ascertain. After an initial year results always came as a surprise – as though in a poem, things appeared that had not realised were there.

I am lucky to have had clients who taught me to see gardens from a different perspective, who guided me along the way who knew what they wanted but not how it could be achieved. There I just made my small contribution, so the garden – my garden – became the outcome of a trust in intervening, ideas and people: owners, interior decorators, contractors, friends in the gardening community, office colleagues and, at the end of the day, the gardener, drawing from here and there to achieve something in harmony with the landscape.

Most of these gardens are in the countryside, set within sweeping, overwhelming landscapes, where the garden should be the frame that will attach value to such a display:

I just asked the crane ... for my drawings that

these should not be "signature" gardens, but gardens perfectly adapted to their place...

I feel obliged to thank all of those who have entrusted me with their gardens; a task so noble and beautiful, a work that has made both them and me a little bit eternal for me spaces we have created carry a part of our soul; they are like Tibetan prayer flags, inscribed with musings, verses, requests, prayers ... and which, when caressed by the wind, thrust them rustling and their powers into the universe, spreading from cloud to cloud, from water to land to the ends of the earth.

I have had the great fortune of never being absolutely certain about anything, which has forced me to ask for countless opinions, feelings and impressions on each garden and its details. Thus, from the first sketches to the final plans the evolution has been temerarious.

Each and every one of these gardens has its own soul, but they do share some common traits. One of these is simplicity in both design and choice of plants; sometimes it is just one species that has coloured the whole garden, endowing it with impressive force. These are gardens that are easy to maintain, and where, throughout the seasons, a green architecture remains, a backbone, springing through the plantations. In each of them I have sought to create clear, individual sensations. As a consequence, the plants have almost always been modified when translated to the site, really having modified themselves on the landscape. More often than not, reality has made the plan simpler, and removing

things has revealed a force and intensity that was being concealed by an excess of plants.

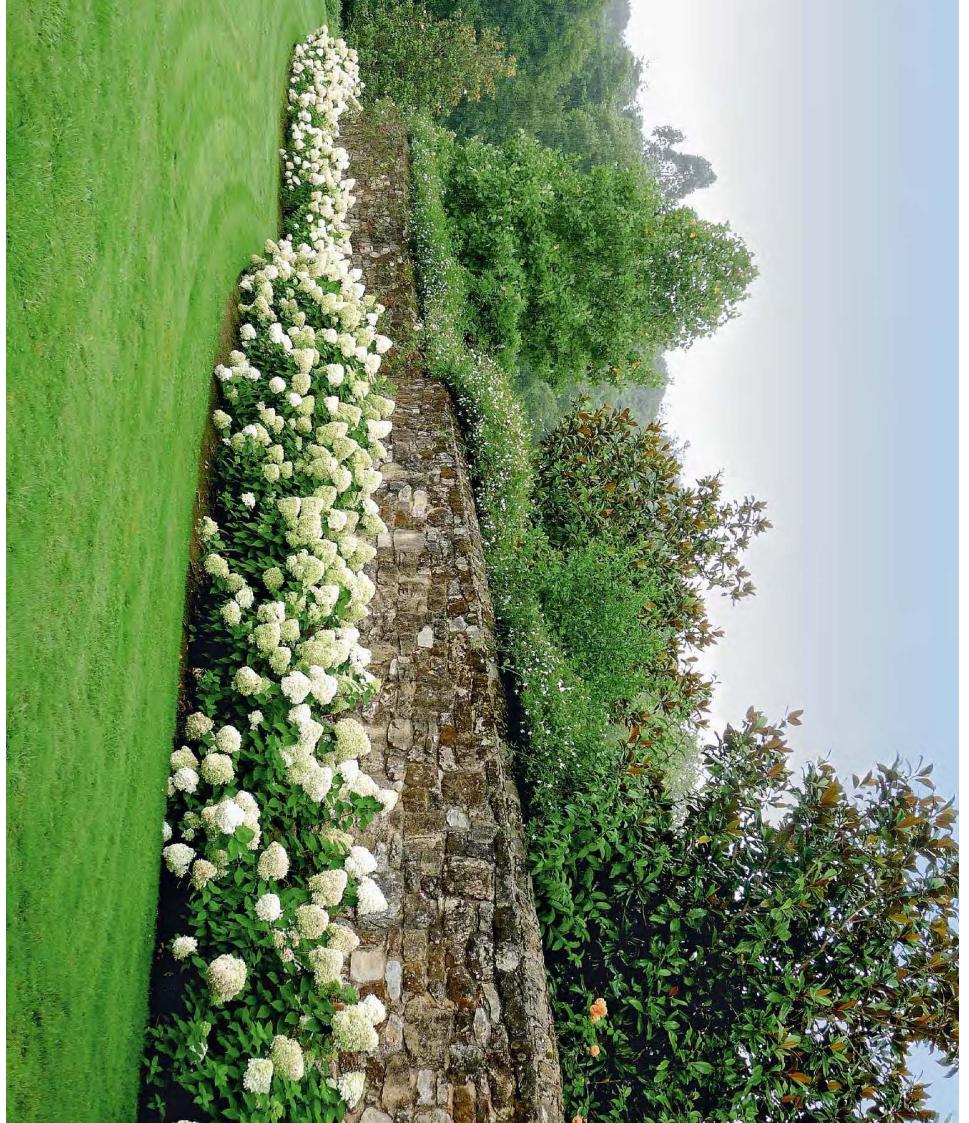
I have looked down stone walls, changed the course of streams, modelled the landscape in the 18th century fashion, have done it in the 20th century fashion, have

done one thing and the opposite at the same time ... gardens with curves, only, and with straight lines, and with a combination of both, do not believe that one can find a winning formula and repeat it. Rather, I find each garden to be like writing a book; something important that we do in our lives. Each one must, therefore, be unique, achieving its own dignified and distinctive character, regardless of its size.

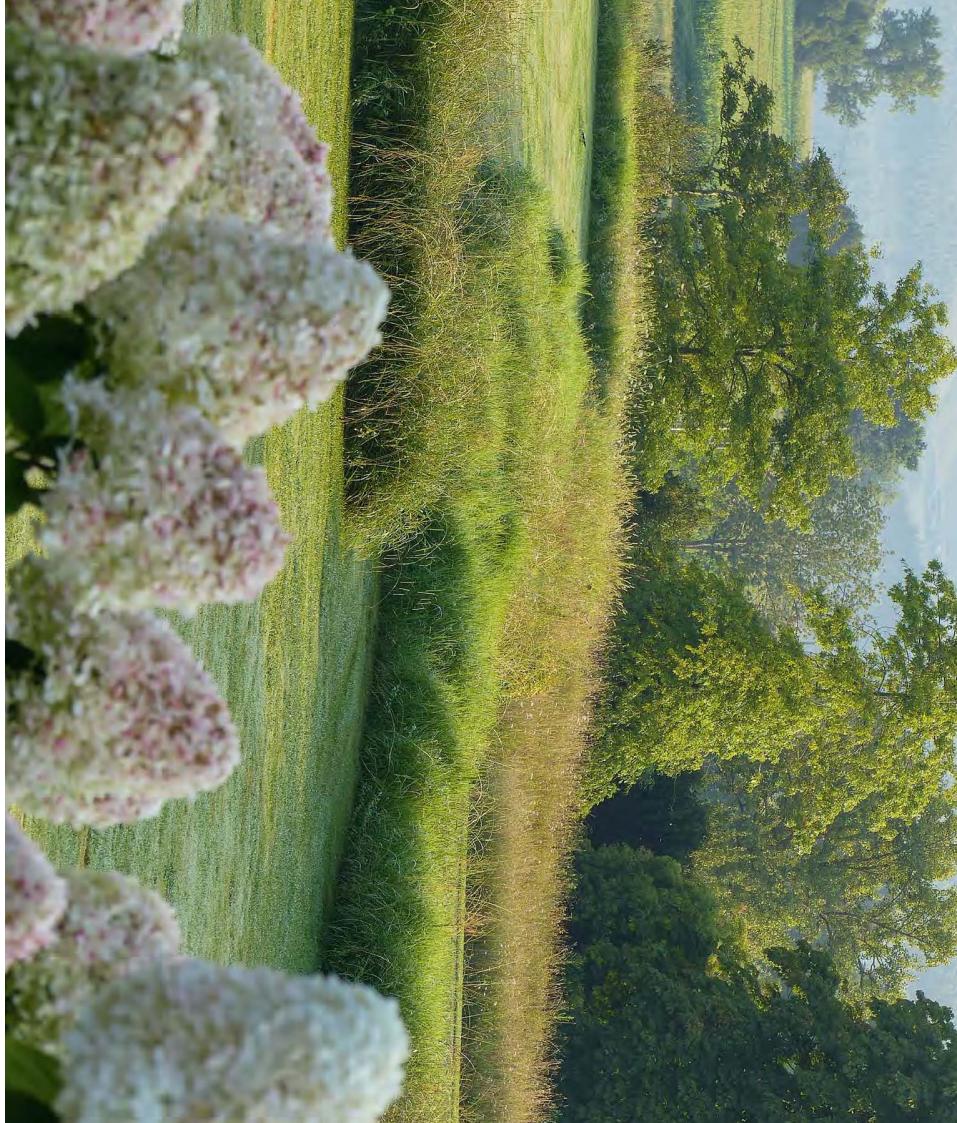
I do not think that my solution for a garden is necessarily better than the rest; it is, however, my best solution. I admire many landscape architects ... and amateurs, self-taught garden designers ... who make me see things that I otherwise would not.

All in all, it is diversity that I find most interesting: summer-only gardens, or gardens chiefly for the spring and autumn, depending on the time of the year when their owners will enjoy them – actually one is used all year round. Some seem to sound and presence of water, other scenes, or the colours of the seasons, or the architecture of gardens, some become transparent, while others have a pervasive presence; some have ancient origins, and some are brand new.

Above all, they are gardens ... just gardens.



Lines in the forest



Lines in the forest

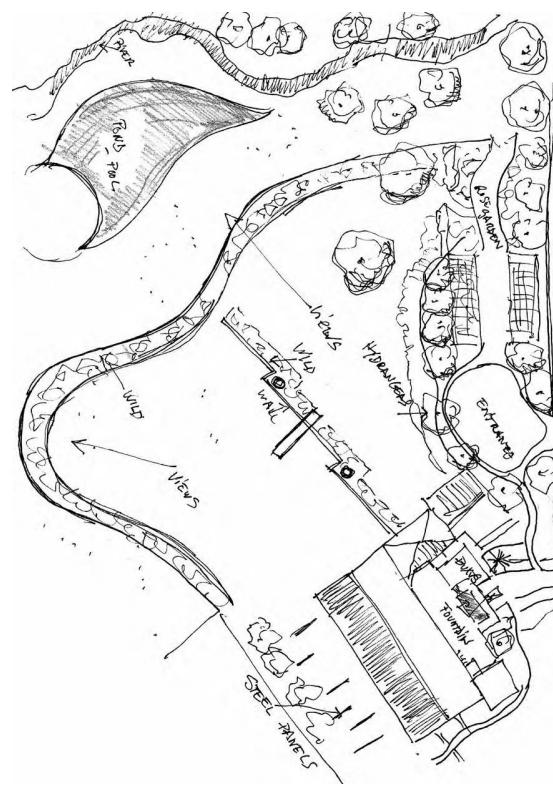
When I first arrived in my garden, it was full of walls; a space closed unto itself, devoid of views, with houses towering over it.

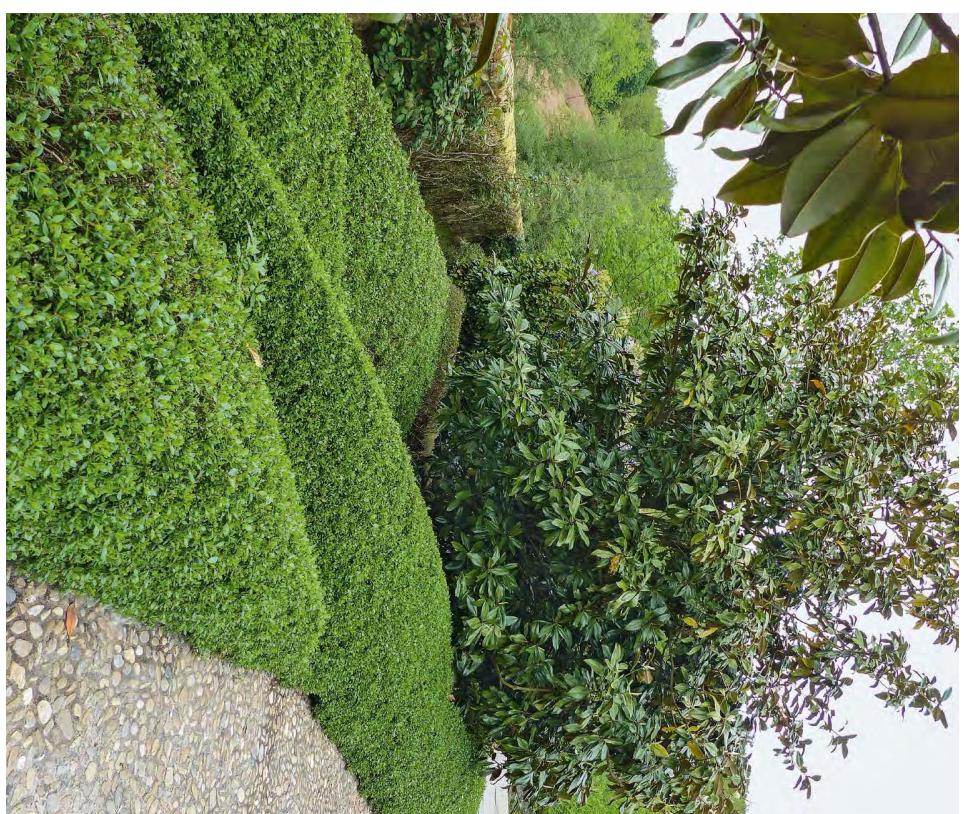
However, the hillside, the river and the mellow landscape invited soft, curving lines. I can still recall the first sketch where the hillside was turned into an array of water-filled terraces, each receding into the next, blurring with the sea in the distance. In the end, I made only one large terrace on two levels surrounding the house. The array of water sheets became the only one, following the brook with a marked, lagoon, or lamer like a lake.

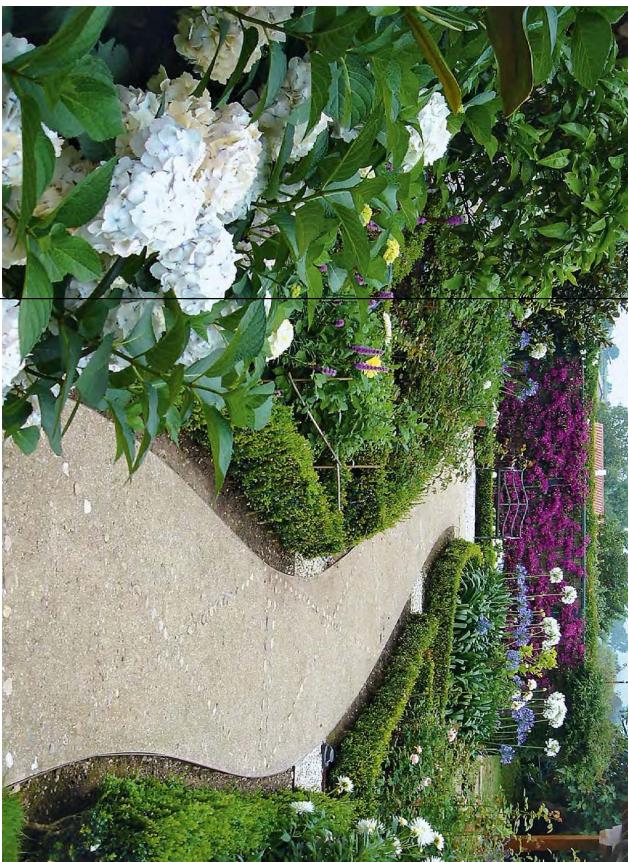
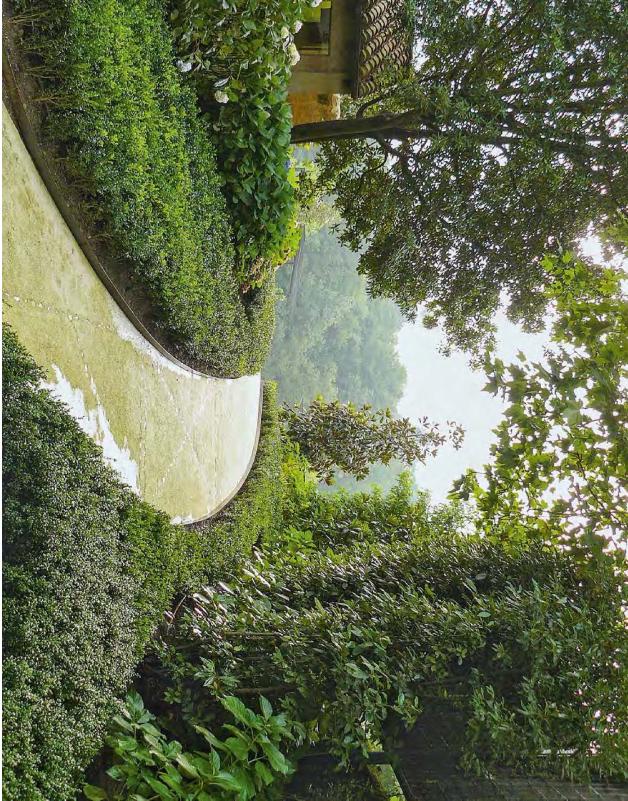
The mistletoe, white flowers, the rhubarb, the bowwood shrubs that give an impression of order; tame, a water sculptor, a garden that opens up as though an entrance hall, while still concealing the rest of the house. An orchard which eventually became a spacious flower garden, and the radiating grounds with wild meadows. The north-eastern gates bring the garden once or twice a year, leaving the orange trees, burnt and gaunt, and bringing down larger trees, yet each time it leaves with courage, eager to burst out in spring.

Like others in this book, this garden is many people's labour of love. Its owners were the backbone and driving force behind everything, with them we laid out the site and the trees, and we defined each and every detail, while the interior designer was always taking us on site, either. The contractor turned sketchy suggestions into accurate drawings ... and stood at the end, drawing and learning from all them.

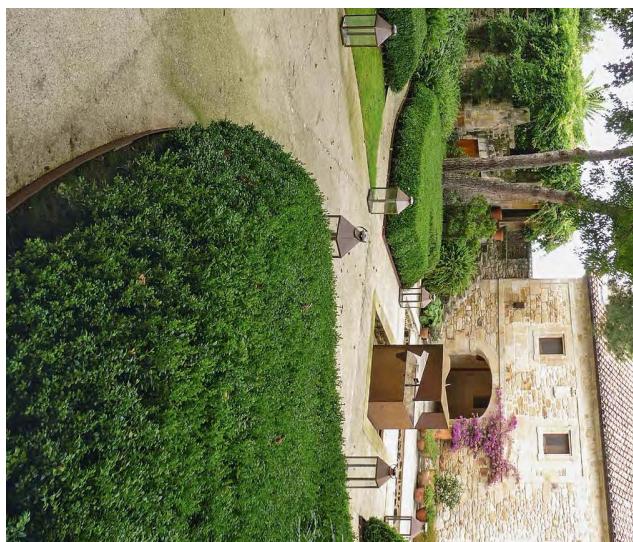
A dish cooked by many hands, where each added their ingredient.







Previous pages: waves of escallonia and magnolia trees.
In the entrance court, the softly undulating contours of the patches of boxwood and hydrangeas form a highly structured green architecture, while enveloping a modern fountain – the source of a cascade of sheets of water.





Water is discovered as one advances through the garden; it appears and disappears as though a natural spring. An evergreen structure of boxwood ferns and hydrangeas is its companion throughout the seasons.





Architecture and nature are fused into each other. The undulating terrain allows for the interplay of volumes and spaces, of light and shade, to offer varying perspectives of the garden; to create sculptural features that change throughout the year.

