



# SOFT CENTRED

Within a rigorous plan, and an architectural framework defined by new and restored dry-stone walls, this Cotswolds garden overflows with luxuriant planting

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**C**oocooned in its own picturesque little valley, Temple Guiting Manor is a world apart from the realities of everyday life. In a scene reminiscent of *The Wind in the Willows*, the fifteenth-century Cotswold-stone manor house overlooks the meandering source of the River Windrush with its own small lake (complete with Ratty-style rowing boat), a setting so idyllic that it simply had to have an exemplary garden to complement it. Enter award-winning garden designer Jinny Blom, who in 2001 was commissioned by owner Steven Collins to redesign the gardens. The house was Grade I listed and in need of major work, so Jinny introduced Steven to architect Ptolemy Dean, who collaborated with Jinny on much of the historical research and on some of the architectural elements of the garden, including the walls.

'When I first got here the garden was completely neglected,' recalls Jinny. 'There was no structure to it whatsoever, so I had to impose a proper framework to give back the garden its original logic.' Also high on her list of priorities was to maintain the sense of scale and intimacy dictated by the valley (small, almost cosy) and the house (compact rather than sprawling). The first step towards reinstating some coherence to the garden was to get hold of a set of eighteenth-century plans. On these, an old road was marked, bisecting the property and long since lost. Along this line Jinny created the granary walk, a long, straight walkway enclosed within high walls, with blowsy herbaceous borders either side. On one side of this sits the tennis court, which fits snugly into the space between the former road and the property boundary, while on the other side is the main part of the formal garden, entered theatrically through an oak door.

The main garden falls into three terraces, neatly parcelling up the land to maintain a sense of intimacy. On the top terrace is the orchard, with a delicious mixture of apples, pears, plums, cherries and damsons, underplanted with spring bulbs. Stone steps



OPPOSITE The Cotswold-stone manor house overlooks its own small valley and lake. THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Aconitum* 'Sparks Variety'. In the granary walk, tall yew pillars punctuate the overflowing herbaceous borders. Clipped yew 'spectators' are ranged round the edge of the tennis court



THIS PAGE FROM TOP *Delphinium* 'Sungleam' grows alongside *Lilium regale* 'Album'. The long rectangular pool on the middle terrace is edged with York stone. OPPOSITE Rising up like sentries from abundantly planted borders, pleached hornbeams provide strong structure and interesting views between the trunks



descend to the central terrace, where the focal point is a long, oblong pool, serene and calming, with an open summerhouse that faces the gable end of the house. 'It's often a mistake to have seating areas too close to the house,' says Jinny. 'I wanted to entice people deeper into the garden, to get them to explore more.' This level is enclosed on three sides by pleached hornbeams, tightly clipped and rigorously controlled, rising up like sentries from the contrastingly exuberant borders to tame the unruly mass below. 'The hornbeams look different from different vantage points,' says Jinny. 'From the orchard they look like a

### THE PLANTING ON ONE TERRACE IS WHITE AND SILVERY, LOOSE AND NATURAL LOOKING

hedge, whereas lower down you get interesting views through the trunks'. With a white and silver theme, the planting on the central terrace is loose and natural looking, although tending to the traditional, including pale irises, tall foxgloves, the lovely *Rosa* Winchester Cathedral and sumptuous *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Duchesse de Nemours'.

On the lowest level, Jinny has divided the terrace into a series of five small compartments, each with its own character – the privy garden, with an outdoor dining area next to a charming old stone privy; a herb garden with fragrant lavender and artemisia; a green yew garden that draws the eye to the view over the valley from the orchard; a tongue-in-cheek parterre with white bedding and the initials of the owners marked out in box; and a rose garden, full of luscious colour and scent. A long band of *Rosa*



