

A Garden to Visit

WALES: Bodnant Garden

This is one of my favourite gardens in North Wales. Perched high above the Conwy valley with breathtaking views of Snowdon and other mountains, Bodnant garden unfolds confidently and majestically through a series of terraces and winding paths down a steeply sided slope.

What I enjoyed most about this garden was the way the slope has been tamed to create a counterpointing pattern of levelled spaces.

After a while you lose the effect that you are heading downhill, and enjoy the regular rhythm of short descent, wide plateau and descent.

The final destination is a delightful, shady dell with bridges and weirs over the hillside stream.

In this garden, the design means that the ends of the terraces take on some prominence as they form bisecting axes against the dynamic of the slope. Consequently, a lot of thought has gone into these focal points to ensure that attention isn't allowed to leak away beyond the garden's boundaries.

This is a great garden to gain ideas on step design, pergola design (see wooden trellis detailing in pictures to the right), scale and proportion and how to work with large stone retaining walls (some more than 4m high).



Bodnant's major garden visitor draw is the Laburnum arch, a late spring wonder of the British gardening world and a very fragrant and eye-catching phenomenon. If bright yellow en masse (or serious hayfever) renders this an unattractive proposition, then choose June or September for the voluminous herbaceous borders, flowering climbers and amazing views.

A surprisingly mild location for a north Wales garden, (shelter belts and a west-facing aspect all help) means that the plant palette takes in many tender exotics as well as the magnificent specimens that have a provenance of the foothills of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal.

Directions: LL28 5RE, Tal-y-Cafn, Conwy, N. Wales
t: 01492 650460, www.bodnantgarden.co.uk

