



RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Art Detectives

A guide for
young visitors

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Painting the Modern Garden Monet to Matisse

You will need
a pencil to
write and draw

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Introduction

The French painter Claude Monet once said that he probably became an artist because of his love of flowers. He had a beautiful garden, with a huge water lily pond, and spent a lot of time planning the plants he used in his flower beds, in the same way that he planned the colours he used in his paintings. His garden inspired many of his most famous artworks. Lots of his fellow artists were also gardeners, and they too used the idea of the garden as a way of imagining and experimenting in their paintings. This exhibition explores the magic and mystery of gardens, and the passion that some of the most important artists of the 19th and early 20th century held for their gardens.

Let's explore...

Section 1.

Impressionist Gardens



The Impressionists were a group of artists who thought it was more important to get down the sense, or 'impression', of something, rather than all the little details. For them, painting their gardens out-of-doors was a way of connecting with nature. They began to treat their gardens as outdoor studios, or even as works of art in their own right.

Monet was great friends with another artist called Renoir. Here Renoir has painted Monet working on a canvas outdoors.

Find Pierre-Auguste Renoir,
Monet Painting in His Garden at Argenteuil, 1873

Previously, painters had to mix their own paint in their studios, but in the 19th century we see the introduction of paint in tubes, like toothpaste. Can you imagine why this made it easier to paint outdoors?

Monet has prepared for rainy weather – can you spot his umbrella in this painting?

The canvas Monet is working on in Renoir's portrait of him is actually in this room – can you find it? How can you tell? *CLUE: Look for a bush of brightly coloured red and yellow flowers. These are called dahlias.*

Section 1.

(continued)



Find Gustave Caillebotte, *Dahlias: The Garden at Petit-Gennevilliers*, 1883

What time of year do you think this picture was painted?
Why?

Can you spot the greenhouse in this painting?

CLUE: Its roof is actually green!

Did you know Monet once made his family
spend the night in his new greenhouse
to make sure it was warm enough!
Do you think his children enjoyed that adventure?
Why or why not?

Section 2.

International Gardens



Step into the inner, green room
in this gallery.

By 1900, the painting of
gardens had grown very
popular, not just in France but
across Europe and the United
States. The style of painting
however varied clearly from
country to country. A more
international approach to
gardening also brought
incredible flowers to Monet
and other artists, sometimes
plants they would not have
seen before.

How well do you know your flowers?
Can you draw:

- A poppy?
- A rose?
- A lily?
- A chrysanthemum?

There are examples of all of these flowers
in the gallery you are in to help you!

There are also two dogs in the paintings in this room.
Can you find them?



Section 3.

Monet's Early Years at Giverny



Find Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, 1903, 1904, 1905

Monet's garden at Giverny, a village to the northwest of Paris, is world famous and today receives many thousands of visitors. Monet re-designed this garden with a team of helpers (including his family) and worked very hard to create the effects that he had ambitiously imagined.

You can see a map of Monet's house and garden on the wall as you enter this gallery, to give you an idea of its size.

Monet's Water Lilies pictures are a series of around 250 paintings. He painted the image of his water lily pond again and again, at different times of day and different times of year.

Choose a word from the selection below that best describes these paintings:

Dreamy Soft Blurry Warm
Cold Busy Changing



William Nicholson, *Miss Jekyll's Gardening Boots*, 1920

These boots seem old and well-worn – one of the soles is even coming off! They belonged to Gertrude Jekyll, a famous English garden designer.

What other clothing and kit would you need as a gardener?

[illegible]

Section 3.

(continued)

Design your own glorious garden in the space below.
Think about the kind of flowers you'd like to plant,
the bridges or greenhouses you could build, and
any animals that might be taking a walk, or a snooze!



Section 4.

Gardens of Silence



Find Joaquin Miry Trinxet, *The Artist's Garden*, c. 1922

You might notice that none of the gardens in this gallery have any people within them. They seem serious and mysterious.

What are the main colours the artist has used in this painting?

There are some exotic birds in this scene, a parrot and some peacocks. Can you find them?

Why do you think an artist would choose to paint a garden with no people in it?

Section 5.

Avant-Gardens



Find Gustave Klimt, *Cottage Garden*, 1905–07

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new group of artists known as the 'avant-gardes' began to emerge. Their art was bold and radical, and caused many shockwaves in the art world. Just like the Impressionists before them, the avant-garde artists were inspired by nature and gardens, and they experimented with bright colours.

How do the works in this room seem different to those you have seen already?

How many different kinds of flowers can you see here? Think about their colours and shapes.

Section 5.

(continued)

Get inspired by Gustav Klimt's painting and colour in the flowers below. Which colours go well together? Remember to add leaves and stems.



Section 6.

Gardens of Reverie



Find Pierre Bonnard, *Resting in the Garden*, 1914

During this period of time, cities across Europe began to get bigger, and gardens became a prized possession as somewhere to escape the pollution and chaos of the city.

Pierre Bonnard and Monet were close friends and lived within walking distance of each other. Monet enjoyed a formal garden, while Bonnard preferred a wilder style. For him, the garden was a place for relaxing and day-dreaming.

The woman lazing in the sun in this painting is Bonnard's wife Marthe. Write a story imagining her afternoon, and what she might be feeling or thinking about.

What do you like to do in your garden?

Section 7.

Monet's Later Years at Giverny



Find Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, after 1918 (triptych)

Towards the end of his life, Monet suffered with cataracts – cloudy patches in his eyes that led to loss of vision. In the 1920s he underwent surgery which improved his eyesight, and in the last decade of his life he began to paint his water lilies on very large canvases – so big he had to build a studio especially for them.

Monet donated these 3 enormous canvases to a gallery in Paris, as part of a series intended to mark the peace in Europe following the end of the First World War.

What message or mood do you think the artist is trying to get across with this work?

Do you find it easier to look at the 3 canvases all together, or do you focus in on one part?

How does this work make you feel?

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