

Monet's PASSION

IDEAS, INSPIRATION & INSIGHTS
from the PAINTER'S GARDENS

ELIZABETH MURRAY



FIG. 1. Claude Monet, The Artist's Garden at Giverny, 1900. Oil on canvas, 81 x 92 cm (31⁷/₈ x 35⁷/₈ in.). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

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Chapter One

THE GARDEN MONET CREATED

This is where Claude Monet lives, in this never-ending feast for the eyes. It is just the environment one would have imagined for this extraordinary poet of tender light and veiled shapes, for this man who has touched the intangible, expressed the inexpressible, and whose spell over our dreams is the dream that nature so mysteriously enfolds, the dream that so mysteriously permeates the divine light.

—OCTAVE MIRBEAU

“Claude Monet,” *L’art dans les deux mondes*, March 7, 1891

Claude Monet created his finest work of art as a living study in light and color, an ever-changing canvas that used his most beloved flowers as his paints. Each plant that grew in this magnificent painter’s paradise was thoughtfully placed, just as in an exquisite flower arrangement prepared for a painter’s still life. In turn, the gardens that Monet worked on for over forty years became the inspiration for his paintings for the second half of his life.

The gardens at Giverny consist of the Clos Normand garden, featuring nearly three acres of flowers, with its Grande Allée (the flower tunnel with great arches of rambling roses above the broad walk carpeted with creeping, round-leafed nasturtiums), and the two-acre water lily garden with the arching green bridge woven with wisteria. We know these subjects well from Monet’s paintings—brilliant Impressionist depictions of nature’s moments of full bloom, glorious color, and light preserved on canvas through the hand of the great master.

At the time Monet started painting, most painters began their practice with still lifes in the studio—bowls of fruit or bouquets of flowers—and, when they could afford it, with a model. Landscape painters often sketched various views from nature and then created the finished composition in their studios under controlled

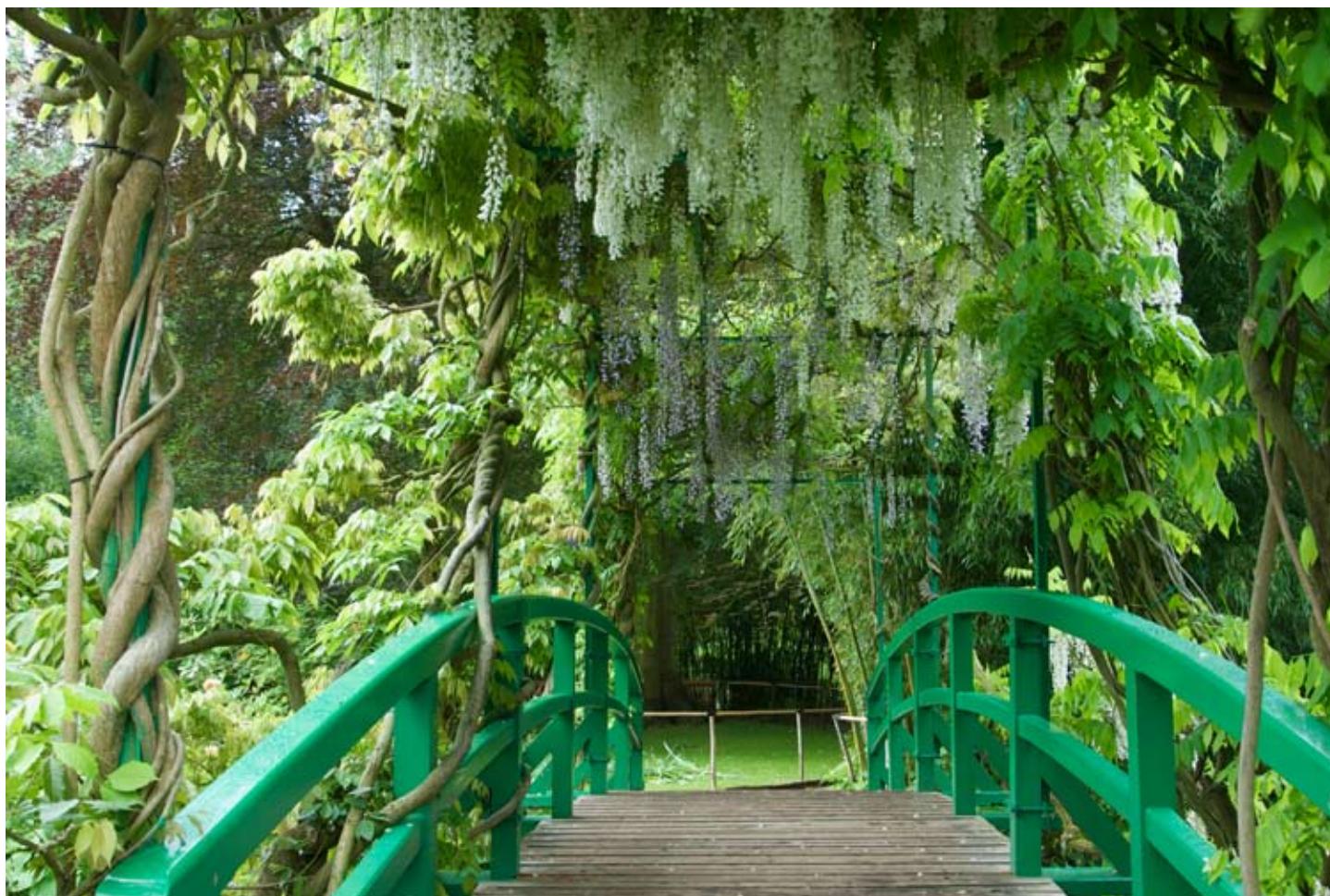


FIG. 2. Monet in front of his home in Giverny, c. 1923. Autochrome.

PHOTOGRAPH MUSÉE CLAUDE MONET



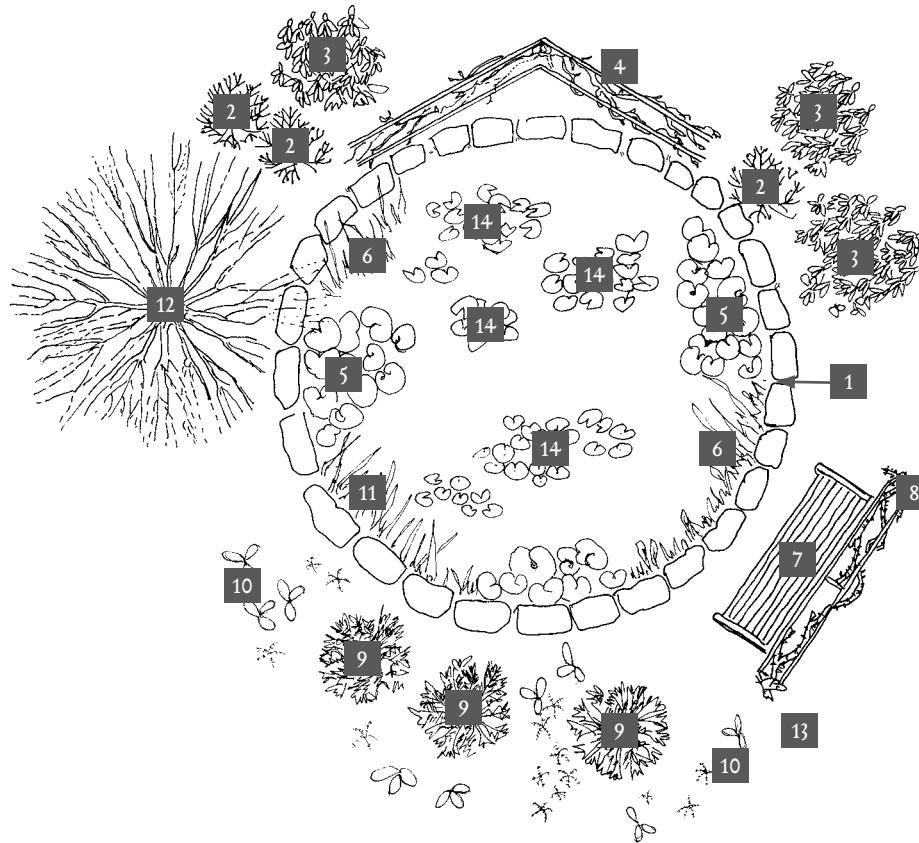
These pink cactus dahlias, with their distinctive reflexed petals, were one of Monet's favorites. Dahlias come in at least 12 different flower sizes and shapes and in all colors except pure blue. They make prized cutting flowers and are stunning in the summer and autumn gardens.



Monet designed this gracefully arched wooden bridge—a prominent feature of the water garden—to span a narrow part of his pond. The 18-foot structure was inspired by one of his Japanese woodblock prints. In 1911, following the devastation of major storms and flooding, he repaired and enlarged his water garden, adding the iron arbor. He planted the white Chinese wisteria on the lower handrails and the long lavender Japanese wisteria on the arbor; when in bloom, they create a canopy of lace. The reflections of the bridge are magnificent in the pond below.



The Blooming Mirror Water Garden



- 1 10-FOOT CIRCULAR GALVANIZED METAL STOCK TROUGH
- 2 AZALEAS IN PINK, WHITE, AND MAUVE
- 3 CLUSTERS OF RHODODENDRON IN PINK, DEEP PURPLE, AND RED
- 4 PURPLE WISTERIA
- 5 COLTSFOOT
- 6 PURPLE SIBERIAN IRIS
- 7 BENCH WITH 5-FOOT-WIDE ARCH

- 8 PINK CLIMBING ROSES
- 9 TREE PEONIES IN PINK AND WHITE
- 10 FOXGLOVES AND ORIENTAL POPPIES IN PINK, WHITE, AND MAUVE
- 11 YELLOW FLAG WATER IRIS
- 12 WEEPING WILLOW, JAPANESE FLOWERING CHERRY, OR CRABAPPLE
- 13 PINKISH-BEIGE PEA GRAVEL
- 14 WATER LILIES



In celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the first publication of *Monet's Passion: Ideas, Inspiration, and Insights from the Painter's Gardens*, this completely revised edition of Elizabeth Murray's best-selling book offers new text and new images—as well as new garden plans based on Claude Monet's spectacular gardens at Giverny.

A professional gardener and artist, Murray helped to restore the Giverny gardens in the 1980s and has since enjoyed privileged access to the site, which she visits annually to capture Monet's passion at its most radiant and riotous. In this redesigned, updated edition, Murray discusses the development and history of Monet's Giverny estate and brings new insight to Monet's approach to gardening and design. Emphasizing his keen understanding of color balance and his genius for maximizing the effects of light, Murray explores the color combinations and techniques with which Monet experimented in both painting and gardening—each pursuit informing the other. Murray's lush photographs chronicle the present-day gardens, and a section titled “Bringing Giverny Home” provides detailed Giverny-based garden plans that can be executed anywhere. Full-color illustrations of the gardens, a list of the plants originally used by Monet, and a plant cultivation section round out this immensely helpful guide to creating year-round beauty in one's own backyard.

About the Author

ELIZABETH MURRAY received her bachelor's degrees in fine art, environmental education, and botany from Sonoma State University. She is the author of numerous gardening and art books, including *Painterly Photography: Awakening the Artist Within* and *Cultivating Sacred Space: Gardening for the Soul*. Her photography is housed in several museum and private collections, including the de Young Museum of San Francisco and the New Orleans Museum of Art. Murray resides in Monterey, California, where she designs gardens as healing spaces and teaches creativity classes using photography, painting, and flowers.



140 pages, including transparent overlays for garden designs
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New garden designs for “Bringing Giverny Home”
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Box 808022, Petaluma, CA 94975

800 227 1428 | www.pomegranate.com

Pomegranate Europe Ltd.

Unit 1, Heathcote Business Centre, Hurlbutt Road
Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6TD, UK

[+44] 0 1926 430111 | sales@pomeurope.co.uk

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