

# In Good Taste

*Decorating • Jewelry • Entertaining • Gardens • Travel*

DESIGN STUDY

## MASTERPIECE THEATRE



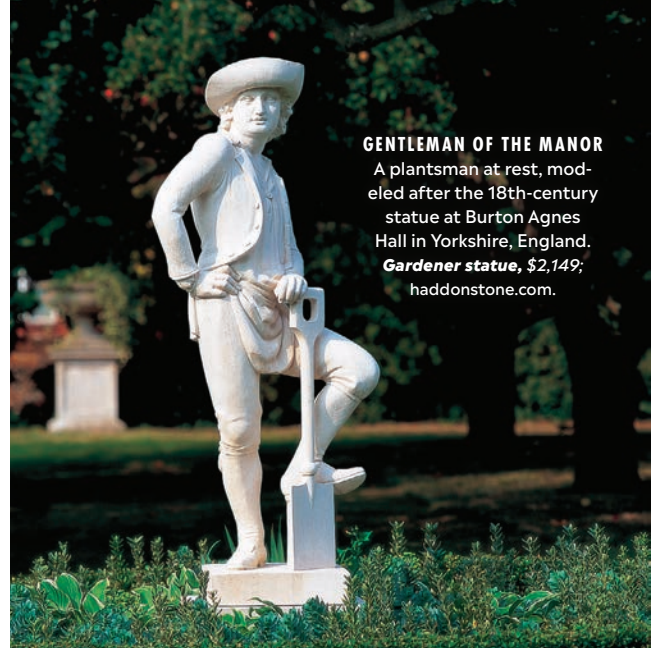
A LOOK AT THE GARDEN'S  
CHIMERICAL SUPPORTING  
CAST, FROM SUNDIALS  
TO STATUARY, CLASSIC  
BENCHES TO BOX  
PLANTERS



Armillary sphere sundial, from  
\$14,269; davidharber.com.



SOME AROSE QUITE LITERALLY FROM THE EARTH: troupes of curious, well-articulated statuary pulled from the Roman ruins. The most precious quickly found their way into homes, but early gardeners saw an opportunity for the overflow outdoors, along garden paths, mingling among the plants. There is a certain irony in using inanimate objects to rouse the living, and nowhere do art and paradox more beautifully intertwine than the garden. Since the Romans first trotted out their new (though fundamentally old) garden dwellers, ornamentation has rooted itself deep in the well-designed landscape. More than decoration, its role ranges from invitation to navigation, scaffolding for climbers to moments of permanence in a place of eternal change. A sense of frivolity, too, blossoms, turning tended plots into Mother Nature's stage.

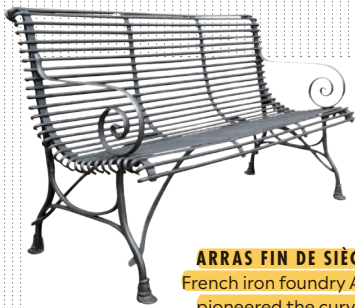


### GENTLEMAN OF THE MANOR

A plantsman at rest, modeled after the 18th-century statue at Burton Agnes Hall in Yorkshire, England. **Gardener statue, \$2,149;** [haddonstone.com](http://haddonstone.com).

## BENCHMARK SEATING

The garden thrones that laid a foundation for quiet outdoor idyll and their modern adaptations



### ARRAS FIN DE SIÈCLE

French iron foundry Arras pioneered the curved metal seat in the late 19th century, now ubiquitous in public parks. **\$3,600;** [authenticprovence.com](http://authenticprovence.com).



### ALMODINGTON

Colonial-era simplicity endures in the wooden, Maryland-born bench styled after the oldest surviving American-made garden seat. *To the trade; munder-skiles.com.*



### KENT

The most recognizable of Englishman William Kent's bench designs boasts scallop-shell crests, acanthus-scroll arms, and cabriole legs. **\$8,553;** [jonathan-sainsbury.com](http://jonathan-sainsbury.com).



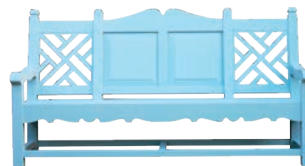
### ROUSHAM

The concave painted design by William Kent for his remodel of Rousham House in Oxfordshire. **\$18,600;** [jonathan-sainsbury.com](http://jonathan-sainsbury.com).



### DUK DE PENTHIÈVRE

Based on original Versailles prints, the solid oak bench with fretted balusters is still built today entirely by hand. *To the trade; ajfdesign.com.*



### CARLTON

The chinoiserie side panels of this grand seat were all the rage in late Victorian and Edwardian England. **\$5,570;** [andrewcrace.com](http://andrewcrace.com).



### LUTYENS

Architect Sir Edwin Lutyens's slatted, rolled-arm design is easily one of the most replicated. **\$1,385;** [kingsleybate.com](http://kingsleybate.com).



### JEFFERSON

The Chippendale-esque back of Monticello's bench harmonizes with railings seen all over the property. *To the trade; munder-skiles.com.*



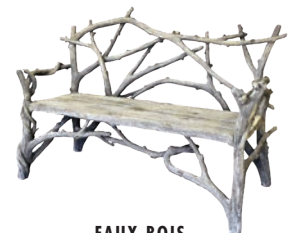
### CAST-IRON FERN

Industrial-age technology forged a new path, enabling Victorian-era ironwork to mirror all manner of foliage. *Price upon request; bi-gardenantiques.com.*



### WHEELBARROW

Wheels enhanced seats during the Arts and Crafts era, as portable design sanctioned mobility in the garden. **\$3,721;** [andrewcrace.com](http://andrewcrace.com).



### FAUX BOIS

The French art form that began in the mid-1800s calls for steel and concrete to mimic the properties of wood. *To the trade; mfgg.com.*



## Design Study



### RIFFS ON RENAISSANCE

Artistic gravitas returns in an early-20th-century **limestone fountain** inset with iridescent mosaic work. \$17,200; [authenticprovence.com](http://authenticprovence.com).



### NEW LIFE FOR OLD WELLS

As planters and fountains, wells like this **17th-century vessel** reveal centuries of stonework. \$22,600 for a pair; [chateaudomingue.com](http://chateaudomingue.com).



### GAUDÍ-ESQUE MODERNISM

In form, color, and patina, this **faux-bois dining set** resembles the Spanish architect's earthy, expressive forms. \$8,500; [obsoleteinc.com](http://obsoleteinc.com).



### GARDEN TROPHIES

From the Baroque tradition of the hunting trophy, this **rustic wreath sculpture** is crafted of 19th-century English tools. \$2,800; [authenticprovence.com](http://authenticprovence.com).



### ISTRIAN STONE

Impressive Mediterranean limestone was used for wellheads and fountains and now, too, as this **carved cistern planter**. Price upon request; [negarden.com](http://negarden.com).



### ONE-OF-A-KIND OBJÉT

This **regal zinc crown** hails from the top of a 19th-century castle in southern France. \$8,500; [innergardens.com](http://innergardens.com).



### DUTCH COLONIAL FURNITURE

As resilient as its tropical origins, the simply adorned **teak seat** speaks of island fortitude. \$1,400; [michaeltrapp.com](http://michaeltrapp.com).

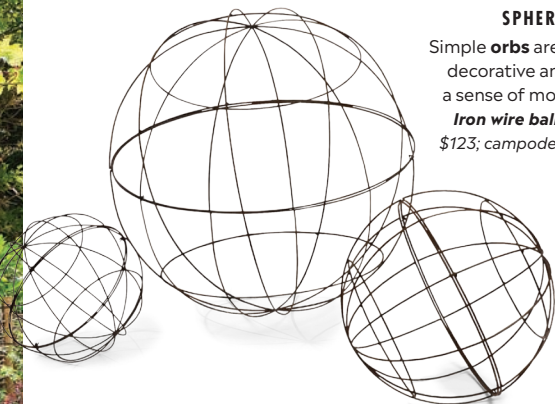
## COLLECTIBLE CURIOSITIES

History holds as many tributes to the tended landscape as there are souls toiling in the dirt, with each antique turning Saturday strolls into layered hops into the past. Here, six antiques dealers share the intriguing discoveries earning prime placements in their shops and gardens.



### TORUS

David Harber's mirror-polished stainless steel sculpture offers a new perspective through a modernist **ring shape**. **Torus sculpture**, \$21,312; [davidharber.com](http://davidharber.com).



### SPHERE

Simple **orbs** are primarily decorative and bring a sense of movement. **Iron wire balls**, from \$123; [campodefiori.com](http://campodefiori.com).

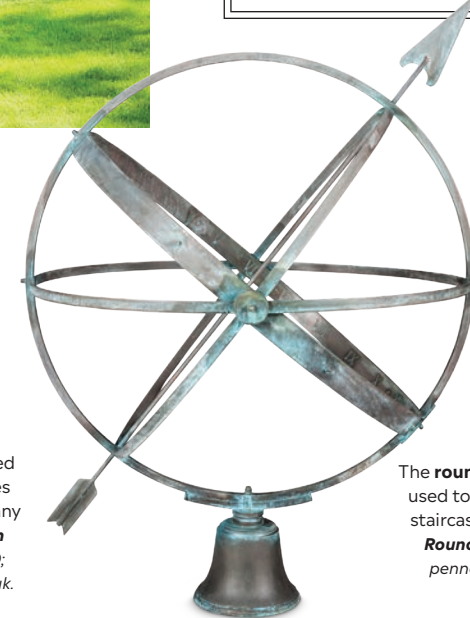
## Fine Geometry

Against the wild, unpredictable shapes of nature, familiar forms bring an air of strength and permanence to the garden.



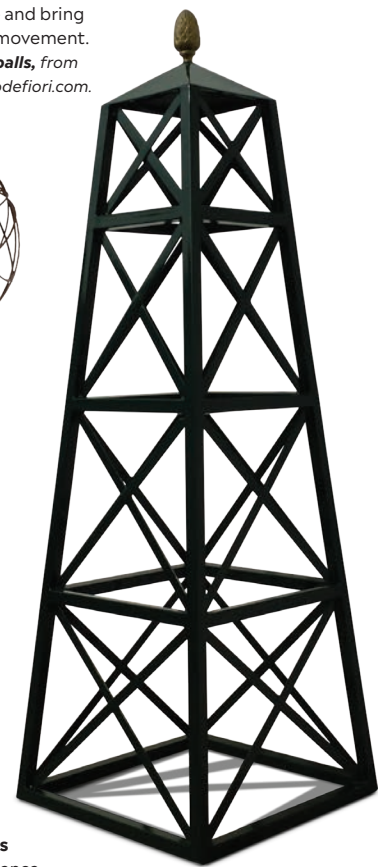
### TUTEUR

The pyramid-shaped **three-dimensional trellis** beautifully trains plants. **Leigh planter obelisk**, \$3,950; [authenticprovence.com](http://authenticprovence.com).



### ARMILLARY SPHERE

Ancient astronomers used it to represent the circles of the heavens; today, many are **sundials**. **Greenwich armillary sphere**, \$1,900; [architectural-heritage.co.uk](http://architectural-heritage.co.uk).



### OBELISK

The **monolith's** commanding presence lends stature to a border. **Concorde obelisk**, price upon request; [accentsoffrance.com](http://accentsoffrance.com).



### FINIAL

The **rounded ornaments** are used to adorn balustrades, staircases, and gate posts. **Round Cap finial**, \$300; [pennoyernewman.com](http://pennoyernewman.com).

## COOL WATERS

Feats of aqua engineering that helped unlock the sensory power of pools and fountains, propelling them to prominence over time



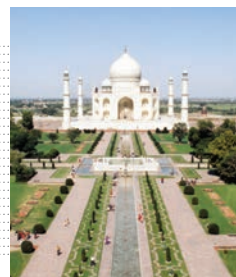
### A.D. 118–138

**Canopus**, the ingenious colonnade-studded basin at Roman emperor Hadrian's residence in Tivoli, Italy, draws on a small aqueduct in the adjacent hillside.



### 1565–1570

Landscape architect Pirro Ligorio designs Villa d'Este's water gardens in Tivoli using a system of levels, allowing the **Oval Fountain** to be fed in part by gravity.



### 1632–1653

The Taj Mahal's **chahar-bagh** water garden; quadrilateral pools cross at a central water supply, symbolizing overflow of the life-giving element.



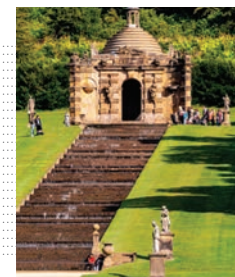
### 1632

The first in Japan, the **fountain at Kenroku-en** is powered by a then-sophisticated system that builds pressure from a higher pond and the Sai River.



### 1668–1689

A monumental feat of engineering years in the making, the **Latona Fountain** at Versailles originally spirited water in from the Seine about seven miles away.



### 1696

**The Cascade** at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire flows down more than 200 feet of steps designed to vary the sounds of the rushing water.



### 1730s

Sixty-four fountains and 138 water jets regale the Grand Cascade at Russia's Peterhof Palace; crowning these is the spectacularly gilded **Samson Fountain**.



### 1763

At Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, master landscape architect Capability Brown damns a river to create a **watery mirror** for an existing Palladian bridge.



### 1931

Inspired by Villa d'Este, Pierre S. du Pont's **Main Fountain Garden** showpiece comes alive at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania.



**Wattle fencing and tuteurs** at Prieuré d'Orsan in the Loire Valley are inspired by 12th-century monastic gardens.



## Enchanted Willow

Centuries after its medieval heyday, the woody treillage rises in nimble arbors, fencing, and furniture.

Ohio artist Howard Peller crafts **living willow fences**, or “fedges”: loosely woven networks of wooded borders. [livingwillowfarm.com](http://livingwillowfarm.com)



A **willow-and-pear gloriette** in Charlotte Moss's East Hampton, NY, garden



## Design Study

Corner finials punctuate paneled square boxes. *Jardins du Roi Soleil* **Château de Versailles planters**, to the trade; [ajfdesign.com](http://ajfdesign.com).



## SEND OUT THE CITRUS!

Such was the springtime cry through the paths and parterres of King Louis XIV's palace grounds after their designer, André Le Nôtre, mobilized an army of his own: wood-paneled planter boxes to make the king's precious orange trees and other tropicals portable and easily scuttled off to the south-facing orangery for the winter. Today, we prize *casse de Versailles* (“crates of Versailles”) for the spirit in which Le Nôtre created them, as an enduring sense of freedom in the garden.

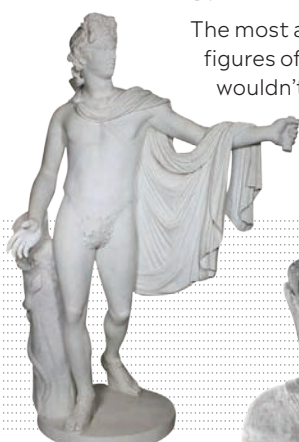
## GALLERY of the GODS

The most almighty of lawn parties: six reigning figures of the glitzy garden circuit (and they wouldn't think of arriving empty-handed)



### VENUS

“It girl” Aphrodite is a gracious garden regular, a reminder of the **intense pleasures** of nature and that all gardens are, in fact, affairs of the heart. [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com)



### APOLLO

Louis XIV's magnetic favorite drops gifts like Greek candy, bestowing **sun and light**, music, poetry, and harmony. (Perhaps he was the true ruler of Versailles?) [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com)



### BUDDHA

Nature's **growth and rebirth** cycles pay dividends to India's immortal. Find the benevolent visitor under leafy canopies, clearing a path to enlightenment. [pennoyernewman.com](http://pennoyernewman.com)



### PUTTO

The cheeky Renaissance-born cherub is the most **imaginative and playful** of garden callers, ducking about with the spirit of both angel and devil. [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com)



### DIANA

Arriving to **tame the wild**, the tenacious huntress takes up residence in rural country gardens more as master curator than coquettish guest. [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com)



### NEPTUNE

The rugged seafarer rides in as a champion of the **nourishing power of water**, holding court alongside fountains and in shell-encrusted grottos. [1stdibs.com](http://1stdibs.com)