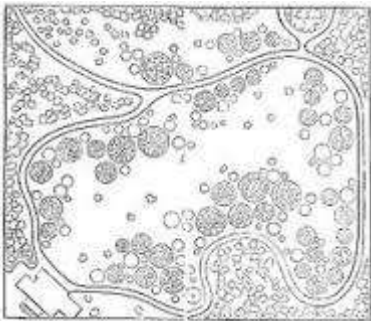


GARDENESQUE

The term *gardenesque* was adopted in the late-nineteenth century and was used in contrast to that of the *picturesque*. The term emerged from the concern that landscaped picturesque gardens were indistinguishable from the natural, wild growth found in nature. It was coined by J. C. Loudon in 1832: in *The Gardeners Magazine* (1835) he wrote that *'a garden is a work of art, and a scene of cultivation, every plant or tree placed in it should be so placed as never to be mistaken for a tree or plant placed there by nature or accident.'*¹ The gardenesque favoured identifiable planting design and introduced a fashion for exotic or foreign plants, which could be easily differentiated from the indigenous flora and would in themselves create works of art. Thus the cultivated Snowball bush (*Viburnum opulus Sterile*) would be planted rather than the wild Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*). The Monkey Puzzle tree, an example of which can be seen on the South Lawn at the Palace, was a tree of choice because of its exoticism.

The gardenesque style sought to re-establish order, regularity and individuality; it called for each plant or tree to be placed within its own space, in order to reach its full potential. Loudon popularised the fashion for circle flower beds and borders, both of which remain a common feature of public gardens today. The picture here from Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* shows a design by Loudon for circular beds. This extract from the magazine shows how prescriptive Loudon was: *'We wish we could strongly impress on the mind of every amateur, and of every gardener, that, for all general purposes of planting beds of shrubs, or beds of flowers on a lawn (.....) the best form is the circle, provided that it be always kept of small size, say from 18in. to 6ft., in diameter, one circle never placed nearer to another than 2ft., and these beds be thrown together in groups or constellations, as stars are in the firmament.'*²



Examples of gardens influenced by Loudon include Kew and Inverewe Gardens in Scotland. One of the finest examples is Birmingham Botanic Gardens, designed by Loudon.

However, it was not until after Loudon's death that the term gardenesque came into usage and then as a term to *'describe a style of garden layout characterised by rampant eclecticism and lack of artistic unity'*³; a total contrast to Loudon's ideas. The term was also taken up by Edward Kemp who defined it thus: *'Its object is beauty of lines and general variety... It does not reject straight lines entirely near the house, or in connection with a flower-garden, or a rosary; or a subordinate building (as a greenhouse) that has a separate piece of garden to it. Nor does it refuse to borrow from the picturesque in regard to the arrangement and grouping of plants.'*⁴ It is Kemp's interpretation of the gardenesque which survives in modern usage.

¹ Loudon, J.C., *'The Principle of Recognition' in The Gardener's Magazine*, Vol. II. (Longman, London, 1835), p.415

² Loudon, J.C., *'A Summary View of the Progress of Gardening and of Rural Improvement generally, in Britain, during the year 1840'*, *The Gardener's Magazine and Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement*, Vol VI. (Longman, London, 1840), p.622

³ Jellicoe, G., et al. *Oxford Companion to Gardens* (Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 211

⁴ Jellicoe G., et al. *Oxford Companion to Gardens* (Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 211