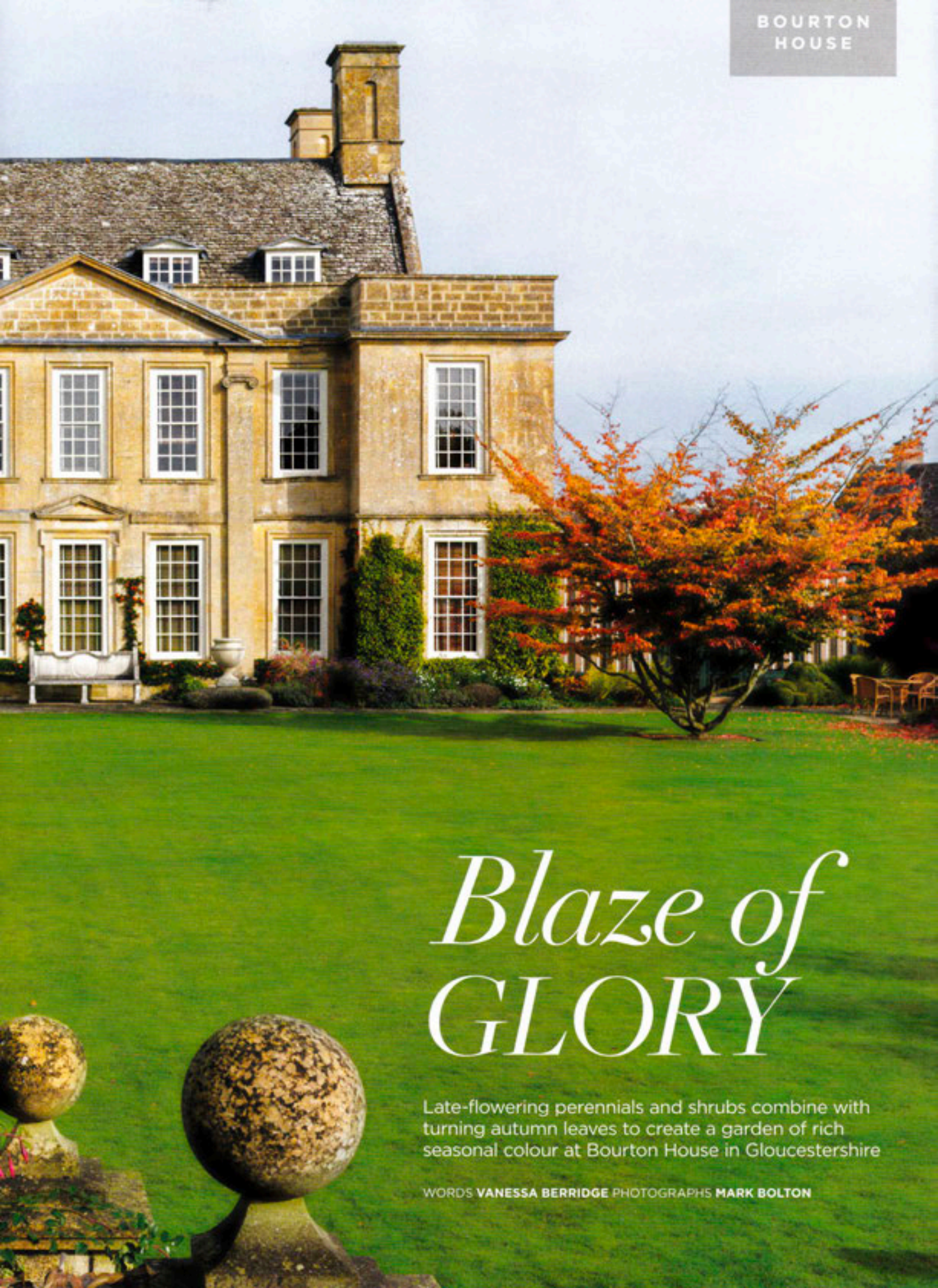


Bourton House, flanked
by *Parrotia persica*;
Fuchsia magellanica
grows in the foreground.





Blaze of
GLORY

Late-flowering perennials and shrubs combine with turning autumn leaves to create a garden of rich seasonal colour at Bourton House in Gloucestershire

WORDS **VANESSA BERRIDGE** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARK BOLTON**

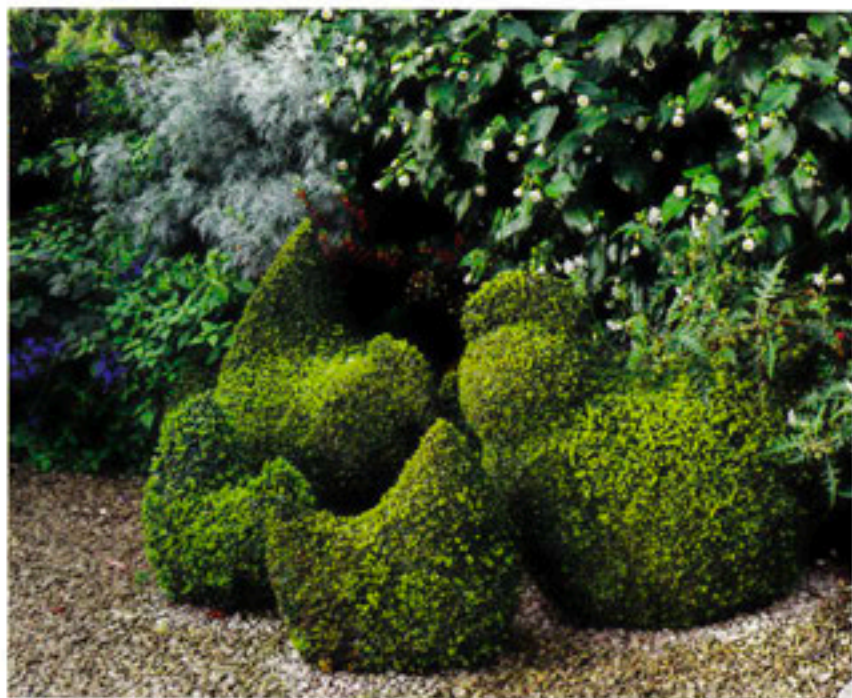


IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO HAVE A GOOD GARDEN in June with a bit of effort, but the real test comes when summer is drawing to a close. Bourton House passes with flying colours, its borders packed with late-flowering salvias, asters, cannas, dahlias and penstemons, all at their peak. Visitors later in the year will be bowled over by the garden's autumnal charms.

The three-acre garden has natural advantages: it looks down to the south over fields and up towards tree-covered hills, at their best as the beech leaves turn a glorious shade of burnt umber. The garden's own fine trees – more beech, yews, pillars of *Populus tremula* 'Erecta' and an exedra of *Malus x floribunda* – are around the periphery,

Above An arbour covered with *Quercus ilex* in the Lovers' Lane border, with weeping mulberries either side.
Right Lemon yellow *Salvia madrensis*.





Pyramids of variegated box punctuate lines of latticework, chosen from a book of Chinese designs

giving the garden a sunny, open aspect. The elegant 18th-century house is clad in clipped lines of orange-berried *Pyracantha* 'Mohave', and sits comfortably in a garden structured by yew hedging and Cotswold stone walls.

Bourton House has been owned by Roelof Quintus since 2010, but for the previous 27 years, it was the home of the Paices. Monique Paice, working with then head gardener Paul Williams, was responsible for creating the bones and planning the planting of the garden that is open to the public from April to October. Head gardener is now

Paul Nicholls, in his 19th year at Bourton House, and ably assisted by Jacky Rae and Gareth Griffiths, all of whom take a proprietorial interest in the garden. Just keeping the extensive yew hedging and box topiary neat is a task in itself.

The curtain-raiser is the front parterre, with spirals, twists, roundels, cones, and sweeps of box like quiche slices, plus yew pillars, and mophead *Prunus lusitanica* 'Myrtifolia' in pots. The cultivar was chosen because its small leaves look less ragged when they are newly clipped than the larger leaves of the species.

Another feast of box in the Knot Garden has at its centre a large basketwork pond, planted with wands of *Scirpus*; water bubbles up from a spring on the hill. Pyramids of variegated box punctuate lines of box latticework, chosen from a book of Chinese designs discovered by the Paices. Running along one side of the Knot Garden is a line of yews, underplanted with echiums, *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana* and *Gunnera*. A *Paulownia*

tomentosa is cut hard back in spring, suppressing its flowers, but allowing its leaves to grow as large as platters by late summer.

Steps drop down through yew hedging to the main lawn on which stand two goblet-shaped



Clockwise from top A family of box chickens cluster on the gravel path in front of *Abutilon* 'Boule de Neige'; the pink flowers of *Fuchsia arborescens*; the Knot Garden with its central basketwork pond; shrubby *Ceratostigma willmottianum* produces blue flowers in autumn.



PAUL'S PLANTING ADVICE

- It is important to keep some stock of prize plants in case of a hard winter. Divide plants and pot up divisions for over-wintering in the greenhouse or conservatory. It is also worth taking a few cuttings at this time.
- Get the basics right in the first place for your containers. Use a good quality soil-based compost (rather than peat-based which can dry out faster). Water and fertilise pots regularly.
- Buy quality plants from reputable nurserymen.
- Watering, feeding and deadheading are all important for a succession of flower.
- Don't be afraid of trying out different combinations in your containers - you can do it for a year at a time to get a sense of what you might like. Try something such as a small shrub, which might have a leaf shape or form that you want.
- Keep the hoe going regularly so that weeds don't have a chance to take control.
- Don't be complacent about the sun: wear sunscreen even on cloudy days.



In a warm summer, such as we've just experienced, Paul and his team spend hours watering and deadheading the plant-packed beds

Parrotia persica, now the colour of caramel. The lawn is surrounded on three sides by deep mixed borders of annuals, hardy, half-hardy and tender perennials, and shrubs. This is a high-maintenance garden, with abutilons, such as the dark red 'Nabob' and contrasting white 'Boule de Neige', being lifted, over-wintered and then replanted in the borders each spring. Hardy perennials, such as *Helenium* 'Wyndley', are regularly divided in September.

The West Lawn border is predominantly blue-purple, with *Salvia leucantha*, *S. uliginosa*, *S. 'Amistad'*, *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire', *Penstemon* 'Alice Hindley', *Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group and *Aster x frikartii*. There are white highlights of the thorny *Solanum sisymbriifolium* and *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert', and darker contrasts from *Abutilon* 'Nabob' and *Potentilla nepalensis*

'Miss Willmott'. Structure is given by *Tetrapanax 'Rex'* and *Rhus typhina*.

Opposite is the hot-coloured Warm Border, backed by *Cotinus 'Grace'*, *Euonymus planipes* and *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima'. As the shrubs have grown bigger, so the border has been widened to make space for a radiant mix of 'Bishop of Llandaff' and 'Moonfire' dahlias, bright yellow, late-flowering *Salvia madrensis*, *Crococsmia* 'Lucifer', *Helenium* 'Wyndley', *Ligularia* 'Britt Marie Crawford' and *Argyranthemum* 'Jamaica Primrose'.

The terraced beds at the end of the lawn are a cheery jumble, with yellow *Rudbeckia fulgida* rubbing shoulders with blue *Salvia guaranitica*, dark *Penstemon* 'Midnight', fuchsias and *Sedum* 'Matrona'.

The garden is full of surprises and contrasts. In a walled area lower down the slope are the

Above The Warm Border of *Salvia leucantha*, *Canna* 'Durban', *Dahlia* 'Moonfire' and *Helianthus* 'Capenoch Star'.



White Garden's double borders, a romantic display of *Artemisia*, the fluffy-headed *Achillea ptarmica* 'Perry's White',

Romneya coulteri, *Galega x hartlandii* 'Alba', *Eryngium giganteum* and *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', with flowerheads the size of footballs, flanking the gates at the end of the gravel walk.

There is detailing everywhere. An arbour covered with *Quercus ilex* stands in the middle of Lovers' Lane a wall-hugging border of unfamiliar plants including the pale yellow, cinnamon spotted *Amicia zygomeris*, and *Arundo donax* 'Variegata', with structure provided by two weeping mulberries. The opposite wall is lined with buttresses of *Buxus* 'Rotundifolia', interspersed with pots of white marguerites, and the gravel is scattered with spirals of box. These pick up the shape of the scalloped line of low box that runs beside Lovers' Lane.

There are both contrasts and echoes everywhere, which creates a rich and satisfying experience for visitors – especially in autumn when a garden as remarkable as Bourton House is indeed a rarity. ■

Open Tuesday to Friday, 10am-5pm, April to October (except the Easter weekend and bank holidays). Bourton House, Bourton-on-the-Hill, Gloucestershire GL65 9AE. Tel: 01386 700754; bourtonhouse.com

Above *Pyracantha* 'Mohave' is trained up the sides of the house, here with dainty *Fuchsia magellanica* 'Alba'.

BOURTON HOUSE GARDEN NOTEBOOK

Evergreens and some unusual seasonal planting keep this garden full of interest as autumn peaks



BOX FEATURES

Box topiary and hedging form major features at Bourton House, especially in the Parterre and Knot Garden. "We clip the box in May," says Paul, "and then might give it a light tidy in September, but nothing too fierce as the winter weather can burn it."



ABUTILON CARE

The abutilons are lifted in autumn, repotted and then pruned in November before spending winter in a polytunnel. They are planted back in the ground in late May or early June. "We don't plant them out before then for fear of late frosts," says Paul.



AUTUMN COLOUR

Towering beeches, their leaves on the turn, form a perfect backdrop to this autumnal garden. Much of the planting is chosen to peak in September, as in this bed of bold yellow *Rudbeckia fulgida*, *Penstemon* 'Midnight' and asters planted above the main lawn.



SMART STRUCTURE

Large box domes give structure to the deep terraced borders, which flank a short flight of steps at the bottom of the main lawn. These clipped bushes relate to the formality elsewhere in the garden, amid relaxed planting of *Penstemon*, *Plectranthus* and *Fuchsia*.