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Hampshire horticultural highlights

Hampshire will be blooming, once again, in 2018.

A garden-lovers' destination in the South East of England, Hampshire is associated with some of the great names in gardening history, from the Rothschilds' at Exbury to Sir Harold Hillier near Romsey.

Though difficult to prune, a "Six of the Best" horticultural highlights tour of the county for 2018 might feature the following...

The world famous woodland gardens of [Exbury](#) in the New Forest is where visitors come to smell the heady aromas and see the stunning colours of The Rothschild Collection of azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias as they burst into bloom throughout spring. New for 2018, Exbury Gardens will welcome [a new tearoom](#), run by the prominent hospitality and restaurant group Searcy's.

At the [Sir Harold Hillier](#) Gardens, meanwhile, there is an amazing displays of more than 42,000 different plants set within a 180-acres garden paradise, including a Bog Garden, Heather Garden, Hydrangea Walk, Himalayan Valley and Acer Valley - along with one of Europe's largest Winter Gardens. The Hillier Gardens will be celebrating 20 years of the Winter Garden in 2018. Opened in 1998 it has been planted to showcase a range of plants that look their best from November to March, including the National Collection of Hamamelis (witch-hazel). Over the years it has been extended and it is now one of the largest Winter Gardens in Europe.

The 12th century priory setting of the National Trust's [Mottisfont](#) near Romsey, is one of Hampshire's best loved gardens. People flock here every summer to see its stunning rose garden with an amazing variety of wonderfully perfumed roses in a range of vibrant colours and delicate hues. Autumn 2018 will see the unveiling of a new garden at Mottisfont, home to the National Collection of old-fashioned roses. [The Frameyard Garden](#) is aimed at "providing a sumptuous introduction to the internationally famous rose collection".

Equally popular is the [Winter Garden](#) at Mottisfont, as well as a riverside walk which takes visitors on a tranquil and tree-lined stroll along the banks of the River Test.

More intimate gardens in Hampshire, with a bigger story to tell, include the beautifully maintained gardens at [Jane Austen's House Museum](#) at Chawton. The Museum marked the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's death during 2017. And in commemorating the famous author, the Museum commissioned a stone letter-cut memorial from artist Pip Hall – which is now located in the gardens. The memorial was officially launched earlier this year, and is in the tradition of the plaque on the front of the house.

The gardens at [Gilbert White's House](#) in nearby Selborne, meanwhile, help to introduce the world's first ecologist to a steady flow of visitors who, this year, can

enjoy all of the benefits of a recent £3m refurbishment of the Gilbert White & The Oates Collections.

West Green House also has something to celebrate in 2018. It was 25 years ago that a dynamic Australian theatre-professional-turned-garden-creative discovered a beautiful Hampshire garden in desperate need of restoration. Using her extensive horticultural skills, blended with more than a dash of Australian flair, Marylyn Abbott set about recreating the historically fascinating gardens at [West Green House](#) which will celebrate its Silver Jubilee with a series of live events from April to Christmas 2018.

Making it very different from most other English gardens, West Green House can also boast its own, annual [Opera Season](#).

Away from the gardens of Hampshire themselves, [Winchester Cathedral Flower Festival](#) returns with a stunning array of flower arrangements inspired by the magnificent Winchester Bible, the largest and finest surviving 12th-century English bible. This event will run from September 5 to 9.

To find out more about where to see Hampshire in Bloom, visit <https://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/things-to-do/attractions/gardens>.

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