

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

# The Antiquarians at Home

Although Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle created their garden from scratch after moving to a central London row house, the lichen-covered fountain, gently worn pathways, and rambunctious jumbled garden beds look as if they have always been there. “The key to success,” says Fisher, “is faded grandeur.”

OPPOSITE: On sunny mornings, Fisher and Freemantle start the day with coffee and the newspaper in their central London backyard, sitting under a mature apple tree—the only reminder of the previous owners—amid a collection of mix-and-match vintage furnishings they leave outdoors to encourage development of a patina. “Furniture and objects should look as if they’ve grown roots because they’ve been in situ for so long,” says Fisher.







When antiques dealers Will Fisher and Charlotte Freemantle (cofounders of Jamb Limited on London's Pimlico Road) bought a Georgian row house a decade ago, they knew they wanted their brand-new garden to look as if it had been inherited from a previous century. "It's all about surface and mixing old with new," says Fisher. "In this day and age there is no excuse for new things to be too 'shiny.'" Further, although the couple lives in central London, they wanted the garden to seem as if it belonged to a gracious country house. (Happily, a neighboring church with a tall spire dominates the horizon to suggest a pastoral backdrop.)

The biggest question they faced was how to deal with the long, narrow ribbon of land. After all, a garden 19 feet wide and 120 feet long presents a special design challenge if one wants to avoid the look of a landing strip.

The answer was to divide the elongated rectangle into three distinct "rooms": a cottage garden, a walled garden, and a water garden. The trio of spaces transforms the landscape into a journey, with destinations along the way to a distant focal point: a classical pond that beckons visitors with the sound of running water.

The plantings are layered, particularly along the borders of the backyard, where "blurry edges" make the space appear wider than it is. From years of collecting antique garden ornaments to sell in their shop, the couple had amassed their own trove of urns, planters, and vases that they scattered about the gardens in pairs and trios to reinforce a feeling of haphazard accumulation by generations of gardeners. Says Fisher, "I love creating environments that are entirely new but appear authentic in every way."





### Forging a Connection

When Fisher and Freemantle bought their house, the ground-floor kitchen had no access to the backyard garden. "The kitchen had a door leading to a tiny boxed-in patio, which made it very damp and dark," says Fisher. To marry the kitchen to the garden, they doubled the size of the doors and serendipitously found some eighteenth-century Portland stone steps that, "while massively overscaled, were exactly the right length to bridge the gap between the garden and the kitchen below," says Fisher. At the base of the new staircase is a reclaimed iron drain.





### Classic Cottage Garden

The "room" nearest the house is an English cottage garden with classic elements: flower beds, a latticework trellis, and a pair of ancient stone cannons flanking a York stone path. "I always think a garden looks better full," says Fisher. Trees—including holly, yew, and bay—delineate the cottage garden's boundaries and add vertical interest to distract the eye from the narrow width.





## An Inexact Science

In the cottage garden, antique terracotta edging tiles outline the beds, planted with an artful jumble of what Fisher calls "country-house-cliché" flowers and shrubs. To name a few: hydrangeas, peonies, verbenas, alliums, echinacea, and fragrant Gertrude Jekyll roses (trained to grow against the lattice). They all grow together in a pleasing tangle where the main organizing principle is, as Fisher says, "tallest stand in the back, please. Planting was, how shall we say, not an exact science."

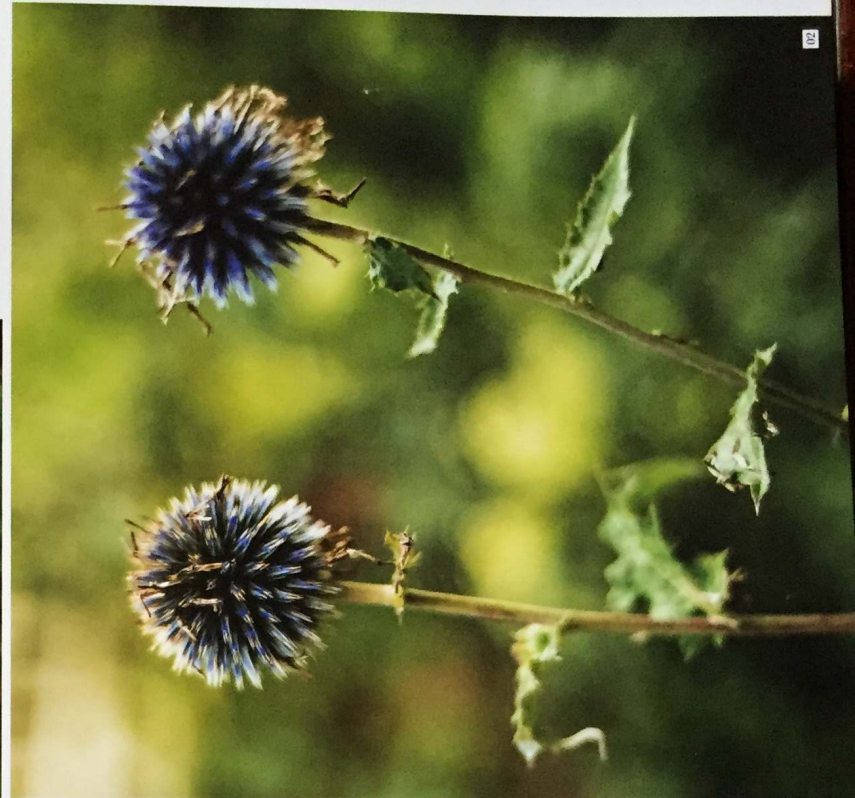


## 01 Windflowers

The graceful cupped flowers of Japanese anemones appear to hover in the air above long, delicate stems and add punctuation marks of color in a late-summer border. Like other varieties, 'Honorable Jobert' (with white flowers) and 'Bressingham Glow' (pink) prefer shade but will tolerate a sunny spot if it's well-drained.

## 02 Globe Thistles

*Echinops bannaticus* 'Taplow Blue' is a useful border flower because it takes up little space in a garden bed and delivers a bright punch of color with lollipop-round blue blooms. It will self-seed freely (unless deadheaded); for a more disciplined design, divide clumps in autumn.





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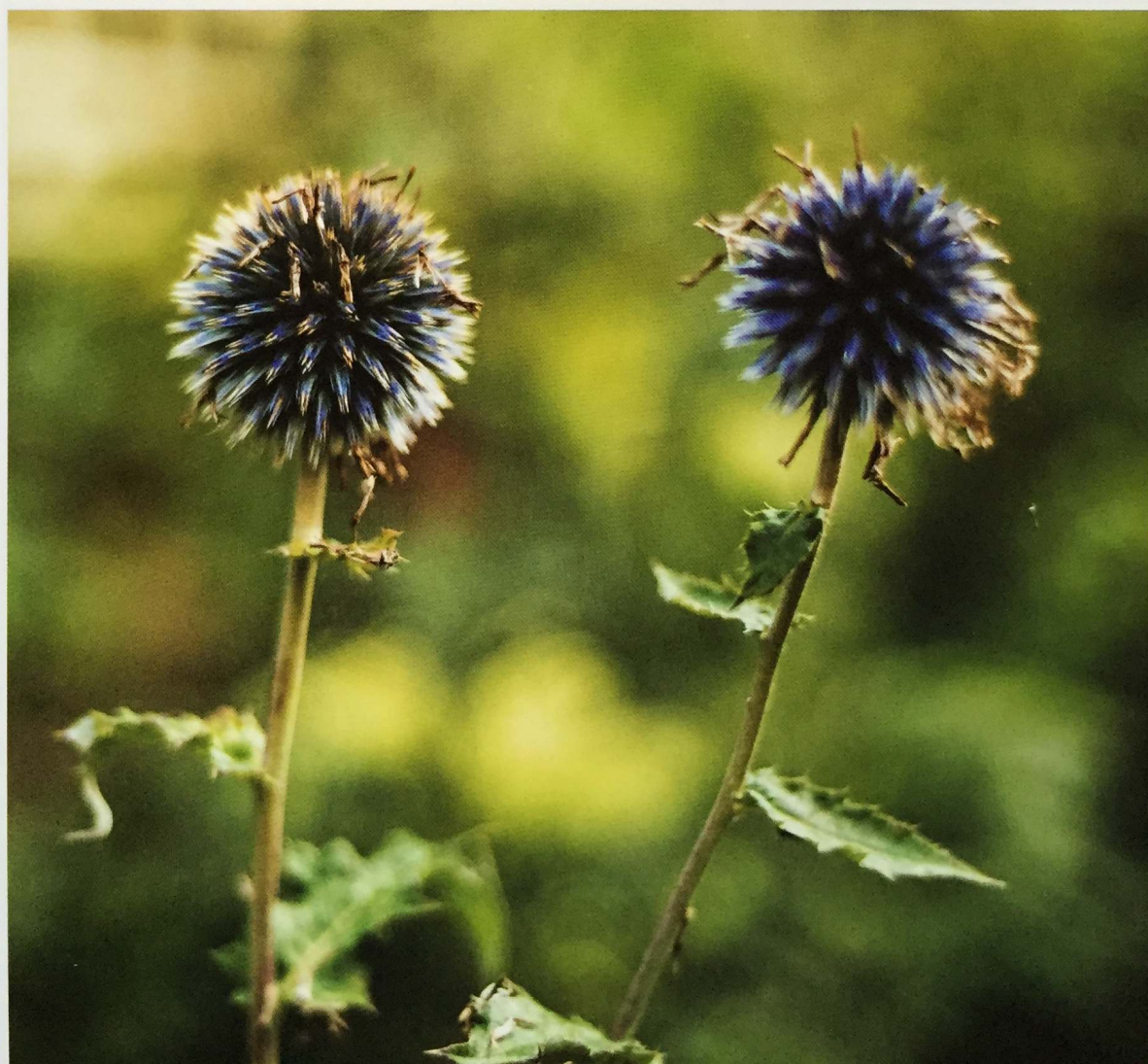


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### 03 Walled Garden

The middle garden “room” (which has a patch of green lawn and is the site of a table and chairs where Fisher and Freemantle often drink coffee) acts as a foyer to the pond beyond. Fisher said he created the walled garden after Freemantle—who had just given birth to their first child, Eliza—explained to him that in digging the pond, he hadn’t fully grasped what it meant to have children. “The wall and gate followed my epiphany that water and crawling babies don’t mix.”

### 04 Exotic Import

The rectangular pond is 18 feet long but only 9 feet wide, leaving space on either side for plantings. Clumps of Australian tree ferns—popular in London, where they thrive in the mild climate—have hairy trunks and parasol fronds; their primitive wildness looks particularly exciting in the middle of a city. “We all need a touch of the exotic,” says Fisher.

### 05 A Fine Folly

The 6-foot-6-inch-deep neoclassical pond was dug by hand; its formality is undercut by strategically placed planters perched on its ledge of York stone. “The pond was a folly, an obsession, and a complete waste of time and money. I love it,” says Fisher.





