



BLENHEIM PALACE

The Secret Garden

In 1952 the 10th Duke and his Head Gardener designed and built a garden. This garden was to be a private garden for the Duke and was not open to visitors. The 10th Duke died in 1972 and the garden slowly went wild. It was restored in 2003 and opened to the public in May 2004.

The paths of the garden wind around a three acre site. There are new and ancient trees and a large variety of plants. Some of the plants like shade and some like the sun. There is a small cascade and several pools with water running continually between them. The garden has been designed to look interesting all year round with foliage (leaves) of different shapes, colours and size.

By the entrance to the garden there are some rhododendrons. They have been planted here because there is enough light. Elsewhere in the garden there is too much shade for such flowering plants. The garden does not have many flowering plants. The plants have different coloured leaves, shapes and sizes. Only in the spring are there lots of flowers. There are 10,000 bulbs in the ground that flower in March.



There is a large laburnum tree not far from the entrance that is taller than expected. The tree had to grow tall to find the light over all the wild undergrowth in the time when the garden was left untended.

Some of the trees in the garden are very old. The oak tree near the entrance to the garden is 170 years old. Grass has been planted underneath a number of trees. Usually grass does not grow well under trees because there is not enough light. The lower branches of the different trees have been taken



off in order to allow enough light to get through for the grass to grow. This picture shows an oak in the Secret Garden where there is a lawn around the base of the tree.

Behind the oak tree near the entrance to the garden, there is a purple Judas tree. The more light this tree gets the more purple its leaves become. Here the leaves are a mixture of colours because it is in a slightly shady place.

Around the sunken soldier are the remains of the rockery planted by the 10th Duke in 1952. The plants that grow here have to like rocky soil and some shade. In other areas in the garden,



where there is both shade and sun, the gardeners have used different types of plants such as grasses and ferns with varied colours and shapes.



Near the water the gardeners have planted some spiky leaved plants to remind people of reeds that usually grow in wet ground. The water flows out of the stone lion's head and travels down to the large pond. Each section of the water channel is dammed and level. This means the water only flows down the slope once each section has filled up. This stops all the water rushing away down the slope.

As the water flows towards the pond with the cascade there is a Lawson Cypress tree that has unusual shaped branches. The tree grew like this because there were other plants in its way as it grew. The other plants have now been cleared.



The area round the large pool with a small cascade has its own micro climate. The water is always flowing and this moves the air around. This in turn means that it stays a little warmer around the pond in winter than in other parts of the garden. Plants can be grown here that usually need to be in a warmer part of the country. They can grow here without being protected in the winter.



There is a pergola towards the middle of the garden with plants growing up its sides. Ivy is grown on the shaded sides. Jasmine and clematis have been planted on the sides which get more sun.

This is a picture of the original pond made by the 10th Duke in 1952.



This garden is quite a new garden so some of the plants are still quite small. As they grow and fill up the space available to them the gardeners will adapt and change the design. Some plants need a lot of space to spread. Some of the smaller plants seen in these pictures will eventually need to be moved. They are planted closely now so that the ground does not look bare.

There are some large Blue Cedars in the garden. Grass grows underneath these trees because the lower branches have been taken out (as under the oak trees) and the rest of the plants kept at a distance to allow enough light to get through for the grass.



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