

GREEN
SQUARES
& secret
GARDENS

GUIDEBOOK



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Clifton & Hotwells **OPEN GARDENS**

7 & 8 June 2025

Notes	Garden	Sat	Sun	Attractions
(T) Tickets on sale at these gardens. Cash may be needed. Assistance dogs only allowed in the gardens Follow us on Instagram @green_squares_secret_gardens & use #CliftonSecretGardens	A All Saints	10-4.30	11.30-4.30	Sat 2.30-3.30pm: Organ recital by John Davenport, All Saints Director of Music
	C Arlington Garden	10.30-5	10.30-5	Sat 11-3pm: Hot and cold drinks and cakes
	D Bellevue	11-4	11-4	Sat & Sun 2-3pm: Guided tour of the Bellevue East. Tour starts at 2pm. Meet Lower Clifton Hill Gate
	F Clifton Park & Vyvyan Terrace	10.30-5	10.30-5	
	G Cornwallis (East) (T)	11-5	11-5	Cakes and cream teas
	H Cornwallis (West)	10.30-5	10.30-5	Tea and cakes, BBQ, sale of plants & second-hand books. Sat 2.45-3.15pm: Welsh Male Voice Choir
	J Hodgkin House	12.30-5	Closed	
	K Mall Gardens	All day	All day	
	M Paragon	Closed	10.30-5	Sun 2.30-3pm: Tobacco Factory Singers
	N Polygon	12-5	12-5	Pimms and strawberries and cream. Sat & Sun 4.15pm: Japanese flute recital. Sun 3.30-4pm: Tobacco Factory Singers
	O Richmond Terrace	2-5pm	2-5pm	Pimms and ice cream
	P Royal York Crescent	Closed	11-4	Cake and prosecco. 2-2.30pm: Royal York Singers
	Q St Vincent's Rocks (T)	10.30-5	Closed	
	R St Andrew's Churchyard	All day	All day	Tree trail of 25 trees
	S Victoria Square (T)	All day	All day	Sat & Sun 11am: Talk by the 'oldest resident' about his upbringing in Victoria Square '100 years' ago
	T Worcester Terrace (T)	10.30-4	10.30-4	Refreshments sweet & savoury, market stall. Sun 1.30-2pm: Tobacco Factory Singers
	U Maple Leaf Court	10.30-4	10.30-4	Wine, soft drinks and nibbles. Sat 2-2.30: Welsh Male Voice Choir
	V Dowry Square (T)	10.30-5	10.30-5	The Reloved Art Fair, tea, cakes, drinks and music from 3pm on both days. Sat 3.30-4: Welsh Male Voice Choir. WC available.
	X Clifton Hill Meadow	All day	All day	

Gardens

- A All Saints
- C Arlington Gardens
- D Bellevue
- F Clifton Park & Vyvyan Terrace
- G Cornwallis Crescent East
- H Cornwallis Crescent West
- J Hodgkin House
- K Mall Gardens
- M The Paragon
- N The Polygon
- O Richmond Terrace
- P Royal York Crescent
- Q St. Vincent's Rocks
- R St. Andrew's Churchyard
- S Victoria Square
- T Worcester Terrace
- U Maple Leaf Court
- V Dowry Square
- X Clifton Hill Meadow

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Tickets & information



All Saints Church
Suspension Bridge
Dowry Square



Clifton Down Shopping
Centre car park, Alma Road
West End car park

Scan to download
map to your
smartphone or go
to Googlemap at
www.gssg-bristol.com



THE GARDENS

A. All Saints, BS8 3ED

Visit the secret garden behind the beautiful All Saints Church, opened by kind permission of the church trustees. Stunning views of the rear of the modern church designed by Robert Potter and consecrated in 1967.

The surviving parts of the original church and the beautiful John Piper windows are also open for viewing outside of service times.

Entrance: Via the church. Steps and a steep slope to the garden.

C. Arlington Gardens, BS8 2ED

The gardens were created between 1840 and 1860 by Bristol developer Joseph Hall. The garden was originally laid to lawn and the now mature sycamores lining Arlington Villas were an original feature of it, along with a perimeter path.

After WWII, maintenance of the garden was only sporadic but since 2016 Arlington Garden Association has transformed a dark wasteland into a haven of quiet in a busy community. The gardens are maintained entirely by volunteers using funds donated by supporters. To learn more please visit Facebook.com/ArlingtonGarden.org.uk or email arlingtongardenbristol@gmail.com.

Entrance: From Arlington Villas.

D. Bellevue Pleasure Gardens, West Garden, BS8 1DB

The land for Bellevue was purchased in 1790/91 from the Merchant Venturers. The property developer went bankrupt and the 19 planned houses were not completed. Instead, by 1806 the East Garden became a 'pleasure ground and shrubbery'.

Early maps show a perimeter path, access gate and enclosing railings, some of which survive. Bellevue was supposedly so-called as ship-owners could watch their trading vessels come and go in the harbour from their homes.

Entrance: Via the gate halfway along the railings – there are two steps.

F. Clifton Park And Vyvyan Terrace, BS8 3DG

This resident-maintained garden has some fine trees and plenty of seats to sit on to enjoy the tranquility.

Planned in about 1833, the street became known as 'Clifton's most ambitious terrace'. From the garden you can see the impressive palatial centrepiece with its eight large Ionic columns. The end pavilions have attached

columns and odd bowed balconies. The terrace is named after Sir Richard Vyvyan, who was MP for Bristol in 1832.

Entrance: Through the gate opposite 15 Vyvyan Terrace.

G & H. Cornwallis Crescent Gardens East & West, BS8 4PJ

Behind the uninteresting rears to the houses that face the road is something truly unexpected. A wide terrace walk supported on vaults looks over sizeable gardens and some woodland.

A single terrace was begun in 1791 but the developer had to allow the public right of way through the middle. Until the late 1700s, local people were centred around the river and the Hotwell Spa but went up the hill to get fresh water and run small market gardens.

Entrance: From the central path (Polygon Lane) opposite the bottom of Hensman's Hill. This is also a route to The Polygon gardens. Some garden paths are rather rough and unsuitable for wheelchairs.

J. Hodgkin House, BS8 1JG

Hodgkin House is a home for international postgraduate students, founded in 1961 when 5, 6 and 7 Meridian Place were set aside as a hostel for male students from overseas.

The house was named to honour Africanist Thomas Hodgkin and his wife Dorothy. She won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1964. The garden was opened in 2018.

Entrance: From Wetherell Place, third entrance on right from Gordon Road.

K. The Mall Gardens, BS8 4DS

These gardens compensated for the small areas behind the fine houses, providing pleasure gardens and somewhere for children to play.

The gardens are overlooked by the Clifton Club, formally the Clifton Hotel and Assembly Rooms, where Princess (later Queen) Victoria stayed in 1830. Residents care for the gardens and the 15 planters along the pavements – all contain herbs for neighbours to use.

The west end of the gardens is kept as scrub to encourage wildlife.

Entrance: There are gates on both sides of the gardens.

M. The Paragon Garden, BS8 4LA

One of the most dramatic gardens in Bristol. The terraced gardens are perched on the hillside with spectacular views across the river to Rownham Hill and out towards

Dundry. Built 1809–1814, the terrace is unusual in that the convex side faces the view. On the street, note the porches; the balconies on the other side are just as interesting.

Entrance: The far end of the crescent.

Disabled Access: The top lawn area only is accessible for wheelchairs and prams, but has good views.

N. The Polygon, BS8 4PW

This small Georgian terrace has no road at the front so feels secluded despite being near the city centre. Residents have worked together to cultivate the neglected communal garden, planting fruit trees and creating sitting areas, a pond, wild patches and a border of perennial plants, annuals and bulbs.

The garden is a place of tranquility and beauty that is a year-round haven for wildlife: birds, pollinators and mammals.

Entrance: From the path (Polygon Lane) opposite the bottom of Hensman's Hill or down to the bottom of Glendale, off the west end of Cornwallis Crescent or along the path to the side of Hope Chapel, on Hope Chapel Hill.

O. Richmond Terrace, BS8 1LL

The 35 terraced houses, dating from 1791, were built in the form of an outward-facing square with the communal shrubbery or pleasure ground in the centre, faced by the backs of the houses. The garden took part in the 'Dig for Victory' campaigns during both world wars and some individual plots remain.

Since 1997, the Residents Association has restored as much of the garden as possible to the original intentions of 1791.

Entrance: Gates are in Richmond Lane, which starts opposite Buckingham Chapel on Queens Road. There are a few steps from the road to the garden.

P. Royal York Crescent Gardens, BS8 4JX

The magnificent sweeping curve of houses on their raised pavement above the garden is Royal York Crescent, built 1791–1820.

This was speculative building that had its hiccups: during the Napoleonic Wars the Crescent barely escaped being turned into barracks. In 1880, the grounds still stretched down to Cornwallis House and Cornwallis Crescent.

A residents' gardening club meets weekly and the replanted central beds are now maturing.

Entrance: Either halfway along Royal York Crescent (steep steps) or halfway along York Gardens (level access).

Q. St Vincent's Rocks Garden, BS8 4BJ

In 2002 the conversion of St Vincent's Rocks Hotel into houses and apartments was completed. The garden was landscaped and since then it has been tended by enthusiastic residents.

The garden is well treed, which makes for challenging growing conditions.

In recent years, residents have planted many spring bulbs and shade-tolerant plants and aim to achieve a wildlife-friendly garden that residents can enjoy and that gives pleasure to passersby.

Entrance: Gates to the garden are at the junction of Sion Lane and West Mall.

R. St Andrew's Churchyard Tree Trail, BS8 1BN (Clifton Hill) or BS8 4EH (The Fosseway)

The graveyard on either side of Birdcage Walk was consecrated in 1822 and developed during the nineteenth century as a new style of garden cemetery. By the early 1900s the lime tree avenue and the many flowering shrubs and trees had matured and St Andrew's was recognised as one of the most beautiful graveyards in the country.

More information at www.friendsofbirdcagewalk.org.uk.

S. Victoria Square, BS8 4ET

On an 1815 map, Victoria Square is a field called Ferney's Close. A diagonal path is marked crossing the field and it remains as the path today. Between 1835 and the 1880s the four sides of the square were built, each reflecting changing taste. In the square was a pleasure garden with statuary, some of which still lies on the grass.

T. Worcester Terrace Gardens, BS8 3JW

Worcester Gardens lie hidden behind ancient trees and dense hedging. The terrace was designed by Charles Underwood and built 1848–1853, boasting a grand frontage with fine full-length cast iron balconies that overlook the square. Today the gardens are managed by the residents, who act as custodians of this secret green space.

Entrance: Through the gate on the terrace side of the garden.

U. Maple Leaf Court, BS8 1EF

Welcome to Maple Leaf Court, the former site of Maple Leaf Court Coaches and latterly Wessex Buses.

The site was demolished in 1976. Work began on building new premises in the 'Georgian' style and was completed in 1981. There are 43 flats with a central lawn and peripheral beds, always bursting with colour.

Entrance is via a small patio garden (there are four steps).

A short walk through the house leads into this wonderland of plants, shrubs and majestic silver birches. Then, slightly sunken in the far corner, is the big surprise – a Japanese garden. It is wonderfully unexpected and delightful.

Entrance: On Clifton Road opposite the Lansdown Pub and Post Office Building.

V. Dowry Square, BS8 4SH

Dowry Square is one of the oldest squares in Bristol, laid out in the 1720s and never enclosed to the south. It was home to Hotwells Spa patients and early inventors including Humphry Davy (nitrous oxide), Jacob Schweppe (tonic water) and Peter Roget (thesaurus).

In the days of the spa, the garden was laid out as a formal parterre to be enjoyed by visitors, but was completely empty by the 1920s.

In WWII it was used by a butcher to keep sheep. From the 1960s, residents began to restore the houses and give new life to the now lovely garden.

X. Clifton Hill Meadow, BS8 1BN

This sunny slope on Clifton Hill was once a meadow, and part of the original village green of Clifton. It is now council land, and local ecological group West Bristol Climate Action planted a wildflower meadow here in November 2021 to transform it into a pollinator-friendly meadow again. It is hoped that the meadow and lawn will inspire you to copy them at home.

POINTS OF INTEREST BETWEEN THE GARDENS

1. Victoria Square

The whole north-west terrace was built to look like the front of a palace – including a royal coat of arms above the centre – in the vain hope that Queen Victoria would stay there. About 20 yards from the east end of the central path, over the wall to the south you can just see the top of the arch of a tunnel that ran under the path. It let children play in either garden when the central path had railings and locked gates, removed in WWII. The leftmost house in Landsdown Place (the north-east side of the square) has a plaque to Dr William Budd, who lived there. In 1847, he discovered that typhoid was spread by water, when the only households in an outbreak in Richmond Terrace had drunk from a particular well.

2. Fosseway fountain

On the left side of the fountain at the entrance to St Andrew's churchyard is the iron loop that once held a metal mug on a chain for people to drink the water. The mugs were placed in the carved-out hollows. There is a ground-level drinking bowl for animals.

3. Historic walking route

You can follow part of an old route that people who lived by the river used in order to get drinking water from the Richmond Spring. Take Hanover Lane, which runs from where Richmond Lane meets Richmond Terrace East. Where the lane joins Gordon Road, turn right and then left onto Meridian Place. A few doors down on the right is a steep flight of steps (unsuitable for anyone with walking problems). Follow it down between the houses to Meridian Vale. Turn right at the bottom and go up Lower Clifton Hill to find Bellevue's garden on your left.

4. Strangers' Burial Ground

An extension to St Andrew's churchyard, filled mostly by people not helped by the cure at Hotwells Spa. Thomas Beddoes (1760–1808) is buried here. He had a clinic in Dowry Square where, in the vain hope of curing TB, he had cows in the bedrooms breathing over his patients.

5. Dover Place notice

11 Dover Place was a governess agency: see the old notice on its wall. Just beyond, look down onto the Strangers' Burial Ground.

6. Bobbies' Field

The steep grassy bank of Clifton Hill was once common land, with a cattle pound. The road was built in the 1830s. The lower part of the green is locally called Bobbies' Field. It is said that the local police came here to do exercises.

7. Saville Place gateposts

The wide entrance to the Place has two similar gate posts. One is made of brick, the other of cast iron – with

the maker's name misspelled on it.

8. Royal York Crescent notice

High above the ground-level black door of 1 Royal York Crescent is an original notice against fly-posting carved into the stone.

9. Prince's Buildings coat of arms

Above Nos 7 and 8 is the painted coat of arms of the then Prince of Wales – later King George IV.

10. Historical plaques

At 112 Princess Victoria Street, a plaque marks flamboyant chef Keith Floyd's first bistro. Almost opposite is a plaque to architect Berthold Lubetkin, famous for his design of London Zoo's Penguin Pool.

11. Sion Hill

Beside the Avon Gorge Hotel's entrance is that of the former Clifton Spa Pump Room. The doorway's arch was brought up from the Hotwells Spa at the foot of the gorge. Further on, you can look down at the top of the rails of the Rocks Railway (1893–1934) and the steps that led to the station. The BBC used the tunnel as a bomb-proof studio during WWII.

Opposite is Sion Spring House. In the late 18th century, via a 260-foot borehole, a spring produced nearly 34,000 gallons of warm water a day. This allowed Sion Spring House to serve as a bath house, and the water was sold at one penny a bucket and piped to cisterns under nearby houses.

12. Caledonia Place stone blocks

The stone blocks on the pavement were to help people get in and out of carriages.

13. The Clifton Club

Formerly the Assembly Rooms, built 1806–1811. Its architect, Francis Howard Greenway, was convicted of forgery in 1812 and transported to Australia. Here he became known as 'the father of Australian architecture'. Ironically, his portrait is on some Australian dollar notes.

14. Christchurch Green monuments

Lieutenant General Sir William Draper (1721–1787) put up two monuments in the garden of his house, Manilla Hall, where Manilla Road now stands. They were later moved to their current position near the roundabout. The cenotaph is probably the UK's first public war memorial.

15. Channings Hotel

The hotel was built between 1879 and 1882, supposedly for Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting to stay in if/when the queen came to visit Bristol and stay in Victoria Square, but she never did so.

ST ANDREW'S TREE TRAIL

The trail starts at the Fosseway end of the path with pleached lime trees (*Tilia x vulgaris*) that leads through the 19th century graveyard of the demolished St Andrew's church. All the trees can be seen from the central path – to the left or the right hand side (LHS or RHS).

LHS. 1. Handkerchief or Ghost Tree (*Davidia involucrata*). From China. Named after French priest Father Armand David, the first westerner to describe the giant panda.

LHS. 2. Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*). Native to Northern Iran and Azerbaijan. Named after Friedrich Parrot, a German scientist and keen mountaineer. 'Ironwood' refers to the strength of its timber.

LHS. 3. Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). A native of North America. The timber is of high value for furniture, flooring and veneer. Grown for its autumn colour.

RHS. 4. Lime Tree (*Tilia x vulgaris*). Native in most of the temperate northern hemisphere. The wood, soft with little grain, is used for marionettes and building models.

RHS. 5. Chusan Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*). Cultivated in China and Japan for thousands of years for its coarse, but very strong, leaf sheath fibre, which is used for making ropes, sacks and other coarse cloths.

RHS. 6. Ash Leaved Maple (*Acer negundo*). Used in the oldest existing 'Anasazi' wood flutes from the Americas. Early instruments from Arizona have been dated to 620–670 CE.

RHS. 7. Laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*). Historically used for cabinet making, inlay, and musical instruments, including bagpipes before imported hardwoods took over.

RHS. 8. Bay Tree (*Laurus nobilis*). The leaves are used in cooking. Bay figures prominently in classical culture and in Italy graduating students still often wear laurel crowns instead of a hat or cap.

LHS. 9. English Yew (*Taxus baccata*). The timber is so strong that old trees can still stand with hollow trunks. Traditionally the wood was used for longbows and tool handles.

LHS. 10. Irish Yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'). Differs from the English Yew in that the leaves are borne in whorls around the stem instead of only being on two sides.

LHS. 11. Box (*Buxus sempervirens*). The timber is finely textured and hard. Used for wood engraving and to make violin pegs and musical instruments.

RHS. 12. Bottle Brush 'Buckeye' (*Aesculus parviflora*). Introduced to British horticulture by John Fraser, who made his first 'botanizing' trip through the American South in 1785.

RHS. 13. Field Maple (*Acer campestre*). In parts of Europe it was believed that maple branches hung around a doorway could prevent bats from entering the building.

RHS. 14. American Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*). Produces pendant white flowers in spring, which mature into bladder-like, teardrop-shaped fruits containing large black seeds.

RHS. 15. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Traditionally used to smoke herring. The mast (edible nuts) was used in the autumn to feed pigs.

RHS. 16. Plane (*Platanus* sp.). Found throughout Northern Europe. Pollution-tolerant so often planted as street trees.

LHS. 17. Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*). Appeared as natural mutants of the common beech in various parts of Europe as early as the 15th century. Popular in 19th century landscapes and gardens.

RHS. 18. Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*). Used medicinally by native people for thousands of years. Its fruit husks contain an anti-bacterial and anti-fungal compound.

RHS. 19. Maidenhair Tree/Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*). Native to China, the Ginkgo is a living fossil, found in sediments dating back 270 million years.

RHS. 20. Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). Bundles of birch twigs were used to drive out the spirits of the old year. Its wood made bobbins and reels for the Lancashire cotton industry.

LHS. 21. Ash Tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Thought to have medicinal and mystical properties. The wood was burned to ward off evil spirits.

LHS. 22. Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*). Native to Scandinavia. The timber is sometimes used to make tool handles. It has small red berries in the autumn.

The following trees are in the enclosure by the war memorial.

23. Cedar (*Cedrus libani*). Planted in nearly every British stately home and mansion from the 1740s onwards, but rarely planted now.

24. Neolitsia (*Neolitsea* sp.). Native to China, Korea, Taiwan and Japan, it is a relatively rare tree in this country. The oil in the scented leaves is anti-inflammatory.

25. Weeping Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). Used in a Native American purification ceremony that also involves vomiting. Europeans incorrectly blamed the holly, hence the Latin name.