

# Reflections on Small Country Gardens of Jane Austen's Era

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## I. Introduction

- influence of Ann's personal background and history
- availability of 18C. plants
- drawing on your own knowledge and style

## II. Garden influences in England c. 1775 - 1825:

- historical
- social and cultural
- practical

## III. Components of a small country or cottage garden - to everything a purpose:

- utility areas and stillroom
- walls, pathways, lawns, hedges, gates, terrace
- culinary and herb gardens, cutting garden
- shrubbery
- beds and borders

## IV. Selected herbs and flowers in typical use:

- culinary and medicinal plants
- decorative and cutting flowers

## V. Suggesting Jane's style in the 21 C.

- outdoors - mixed borders, high hedges or walls
- indoors - pottery and china containers, floral and oriental themes

## Some of Ann's favourite references for gardening in the English cottage style:

*Magic Gardens*, Clarkson, Rosetta E. New York: Macmillan, 1939 and 1992.

(A goldmine of references to Frampton (1577), Gerarde (1597), Parkinson (1640), Culpeper (1652), Miller (1722), Hill (1755), and other herbalists/garden writers of the 16C. to 18C. whose books would have been found on library shelves in the Austen family homes.) See also Clarkson's *Herbs: Their Culture and Uses* and *Green Enchantment*, reprinted by Macmillan in 1990.

*A History of British Gardening*, Hadfield, Miles. London: Spring Books, 1969, and as *Gardening in Britain*, by Hutchinson & Co., 1960.

*A Country Herbal*. Gordon, Lesley. New York: Gallery Books, 1980. (extensive bibliography)

*Curtis's Flower Garden Displayed*, Whittle, Tyler, and Cook, Christopher. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. Also Magna Books, 1991.

*The Scented Garden*. Verey, Rosemary. New York: Van Nostrand Rheinhold, 1981. and *The Flower Arranger's Garden*. Verey, Rosemary. Toronto: Stoddart, 1989.

*Peonies The Imperial Flower*. Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1999.

## Flower Power - The Role of Flowers in the Home Environment

Most of us would probably agree that having fresh flowers close to us where we live or work makes us feel good.

Recent behavioural research, "The Home Ecology of Flowers Study", takes a close look at flowers and the important role they may play in our daily lives. Dr. Nancy Etcoff, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School studied the effect of the presence of flowers in the home on people's moods, feelings, and energy levels.

Of fifty-four participants, ages 25-60, half received a "control" home décor item, other than flowers, and the others received fresh flowers. Participants used a series of self-report measures for up to a week to permit the research team to know where they were and what they were doing at specific periods of the day and to record their emotions. Here are the three main findings:

1. Flowers affect compassion. Participants who lived with fresh cut flowers for up to a week felt an increase in feelings of compassion and kindness for others.
2. Flowers chase away anxieties at home. Overall, people felt less negative after being around flowers at home. They most often placed flowers in kitchens, eating areas, and living rooms and reported a desire to see flowers when they got up in the morning.
3. Living with flowers can provide a boost of energy, happiness and enthusiasm at work. People were more likely to report feeling happier and having more enthusiasm and energy at work when flowers were present in their home environments.

"As a psychologist, I'm particularly intrigued to find that people who live with flowers report fewer episodes of anxiety and depressed feelings," Etcoff says. "Our results suggest that flowers have a positive impact on our well being."

Dr. Nancy Etcoff is a faculty member of the Harvard Medical School and the Harvard University Mind/Brain/Behavior Initiative. At Harvard, she currently teaches a course entitled "The Science of Happiness."

For more information about flowers and research on their influence on health and well-being, take a look at the attractive and informative website of the Society of American Florists at [www.aboutflowers.com](http://www.aboutflowers.com)

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