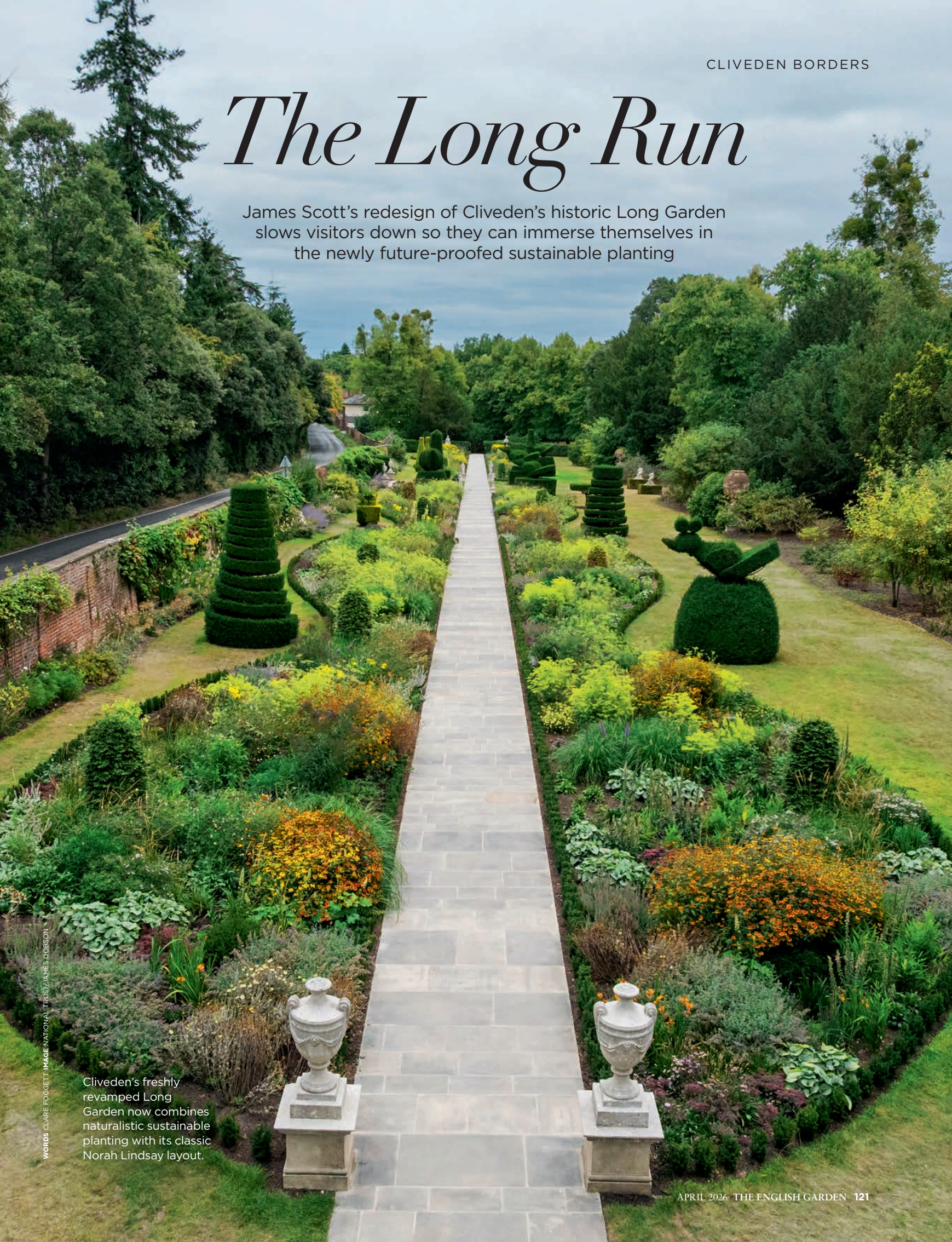


# *The Long Run*

James Scott's redesign of Cliveden's historic Long Garden slows visitors down so they can immerse themselves in the newly future-proofed sustainable planting



WORDS CLARE FOGGETT IMAGE NATIONAL TRUST/JAMES DOBSON

Cliveden's freshly revamped Long Garden now combines naturalistic sustainable planting with its classic Norah Lindsay layout.



Replanting the 200m-long borders in spring 2025.

*Baptisia australis* is a key perennial in the new scheme.



When garden designer James Scott of The Garden Company was asked by the National Trust to work on a restoration of the Long Garden at Cliveden, he leapt at the chance. Partly it was the prestigious location – Cliveden was famously the home of the Astor family and receives around half a million visitors annually – and partly it was the job itself. The Long Garden lives up to its name, comprising a pair of 200m-long borders. “You don’t usually get an opportunity to do a 200m-long border, it’s very generous. More often you’re trying to cram things into small spaces, so it was great to have such an incredible opportunity,” says James.

The garden was originally the work of aristocratic garden designer Norah Lindsay in the 1930s, although there’s impressive topiary that pre-dates Lindsay’s involvement. But fast-forward the best part of a century and it was clear that the garden needed a revamp. Low box hedging edged the borders, “but it was completely decimated by box blight and the box moth caterpillar,” explains

James. “The planting was annual bedding, which was quite nice, but bedding is resource-intensive and needs a lot of watering, so when the National Trust approached us, they wanted to change the way they were doing things, to have something more sustainable and more current.”

Although his brief was to bring the Long Garden up to date, James was keen to reference Norah Lindsay’s original design. “She was very good in the way she used the dynamics of planting and colour. She was bold but still quite naturalistic,” he notes. “I didn’t want to recreate exactly what she’d done, but we’ve used plants that were part of her original palette, while adding a lot of grasses that she didn’t use.”

The first job to tackle was the hard landscaping. The central grassed path wasn’t up to the wear and tear of thousands of feet, so it has been paved with an aged York stone that enables easy access for all. Next up was the ravaged box, which James replaced with *Taxus x media* ‘Hillii’, a form of yew that doesn’t produce a strong leader, so is more amenable



*Rudbeckia triloba* ‘Prairie Glow’ and *Agastache rugosa*.

Beech and yew topiary join more mature specimens.



Umbels such as *Patrinia scabiosifolia* and *Foeniculum vulgare* are crucial components of the planting scheme.

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## James’s advice REVAMPING YOUR OWN BORDERS



**Soil is really important.** In a typical tired old garden I would recommend getting organic matter – green waste compost or mushroom compost – into

it. Spread a 10-15cm layer on top so it adds a lot of volume and when you dig it in, you can really see it. We were lucky at Cliveden because we didn’t have to do a lot of work on the soil: it was very clearly deep, high-quality, and well looked after.

**Stand back and look** at what’s around your border. If there’s a certain tree in the distance, try to replicate its shape in the garden – a little crab apple like *Malus* ‘Evereste’ for example – to break down the boundaries.

**It’s much easier** to get a good dynamic of planting in a generously sized border than a narrow strip, so make it as large as possible. And in smaller spaces think about plants that do more than one thing – we chose *Rosa glauca* and *R. spinosissima* at Cliveden because they’ve got really good autumn hips as well as summer flowers.

**Think in layers.** You need a bit of structure, so add shrubs or topiary for the shape and form that will be your backbone. And think in terms of texture as well as colours because you need foils to set off your flowers.

**Once you’ve got** your backbone and you’re thinking about smaller plants, I always make sure I’ve got a good palette of things with ‘buttons’ (such as phlomis or alliums), things with spikes (such as perovskia or *Salvia x sylvestris* ‘Mainacht’), and flat, tiered things (umbels such as achilleas). If you try to put all those together, with some texture from grasses, you’ll probably get a pretty decent planting scheme.

CLIVEDEN BORDERS



Solid topiary contrasts with frothy *Eurybia divaricatus*.

*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Cassian's Choice'.



to being pruned to a small size. He also took the opportunity to subtly reshape the borders while replanting their boundary hedges.

“You’ve got a backdrop of mature trees and amazing topiary – helter-skelter shapes, birds – and we wanted to reflect them but in a subservient way. We didn’t want to compete with them,” explains James. He added yew domes and beehives of beech to the design, to increase the amount of year-round interest, and then used a limited palette of natural-looking shrubs: *Hydrangea aspera*, *Indigofera heterantha*, *Teucrium lucidrys* and the species roses *Rosa glauca* and *R. spinosissima*.

Herbaceous plants and generous quantities of grasses including *Miscanthus* ‘Silberfeder’, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Waldenbuch’ and *Molinia* ‘Karl Foerster’ joined the shrubs and topiary. On the list of perennials, about 15 per cent are plants that were originally chosen by Norah Lindsay for the garden, such as *Achillea filipendulina* ‘Gold Plate’, *Nepeta racemosa* ‘Walker’s Low’, *Sidalcea* ‘Elsie Heugh’ and *Thalictrum rochebruneanum*.



Cliveden’s head gardener, Anthony Mason.

“We also used a few blowsy things I wouldn’t normally choose, like *Chrysanthemum* ‘Barnardo’s Hope’, and unusual perennials such as *Datisca cannabina* and *Baptisia australis*. Norah Lindsay wasn’t a fan of putting small plants at the front, tall ones at the back. She played with those dynamics in the same way we do. To my mind, the garden’s in the style of Norah Lindsay but it’s also what she might do now if she’d had the benefit of seeing how things have changed over the past 80 years,” James says.

“It’s very naturalistic, and very dramatic. We want people to feel immersed in it when they walk through it and hopefully slow them down a bit,” he adds. “Cliveden’s head gardener Anthony Mason and his team were brilliant to work with – we designed it, but they did all the work. It was a lovely, really enjoyable project.” ■

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Cliveden, Cliveden Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire SL1 8NS. [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk).  
The Garden Company, [thegardenco.co.uk](http://thegardenco.co.uk)

A York stone path makes the new garden more accessible.

