



Gardens for the Senses. The Spanish Gardens of Javier Mariátegui

With texts by Javier Mariátegui Valdés and photographs by Javier Mariátegui Valdés, Casilda Mariátegui and Mark Bentley. 188 pp. with 245 illus., 305 x 259 mm, hard-cover, English
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It was not by chance nor by a trick of fate that Javier Mariátegui dedicated himself to gardening. He grew up among gardens.

Both his grandmothers were gardening enthusiasts, one of them, the Marchioness of Casa Valdés, wrote the book *Spanish Gardens*, which describes the history of Spanish gardening from Roman times to the present day.

This enthusiasm was passed on to him by his parents. From his earliest years he was making his own gardens, by reusing those plants discarded by his father.

Mariátegui studied landscape gardening and design at the Escuela de Paisajismo y Jardinería Castillo de Batres in Madrid. Subsequently he worked in England as a gardener. Back in Spain, he established the Jardines de España nursery, which looks after and employs handicapped children, with whom he first started making gardens. For the past thirty years, he has created numerous gardens across Spain and in several other European countries. He has also published many articles on landscape-gardening topics in specialized magazines and a book on one of his gardens: *El Jardín de los Tapices/The Tapestry Garden*. Among the present garden architects of Spain Mariátegui plays an outstanding role. Even the Spanish TV has dedicated a monographic program to him and his gardens.

It would be difficult to summarize in a few words the essence of Mariátegui's gardens, given the wide variety of styles, their versatility and numerous differences that perhaps becomes his »signature«. His style is not dogmatic, he loves order and disorder, straight lines and curved, the wild chaos of nature as well as strict geometrical patterns, varied and single species of plants, colour and absence of colour. Moreover he enjoys bringing elements that clash together until they harmonize.

Perhaps as a result of an intimate knowledge of the magic of water in Andalusian Moorish gardens, Mariátegui uses water as an essential element in many of his gardens. He makes it »work« in all its forms; in pumps, in cascades, in constant gentle movement, or rocking in waves, in disperse drops or in silence like a mirror that adds the magic of its reflection.

Distributors

Brockhaus Commission
Kreidlerstraße 9
D-70806 Kornwestheim
Germany
tel. +49-7154-1327-24
fax +49-7154-1327-13
menges@brocom.de

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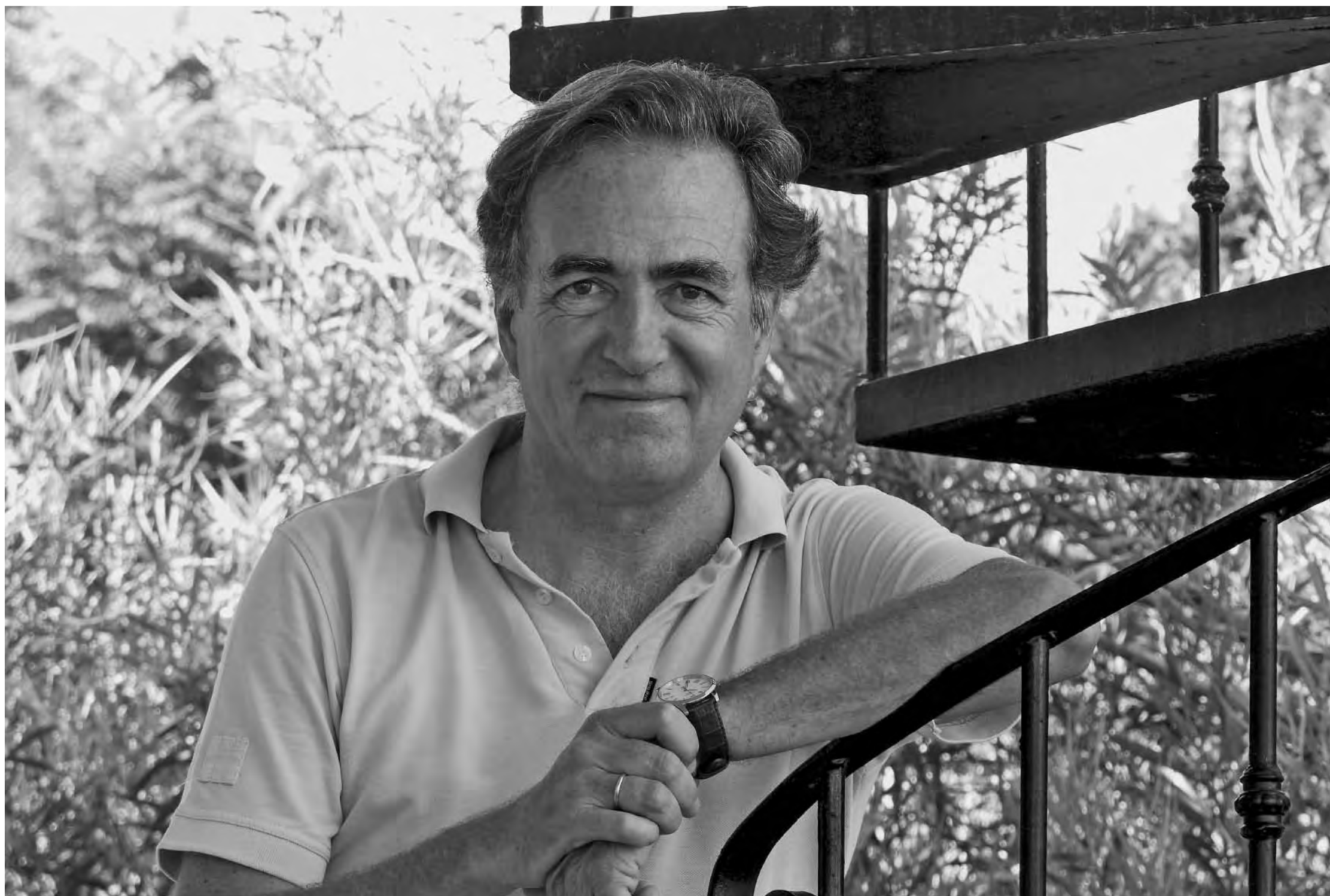
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Javier Mariátegui**

Edition Axel Menges

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Dedicated to

my mother
origin and inspiration

Guillermo and Ana
patrons and conceivers
of dreams

Ángel Gil
a loyal friend

Juan Luis Libano
an indispensable source
of imagination

**and all those whose efforts
helped to create
each of the gardens**



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... Just gardens

Light; the melodious murmur of water; views; scents; the blending of modern and classical; order; dramatic effects; the impact of a single vista; reflections on water, and its subtle motion; nature and order intermingled; the flowers of my childhood – all of these have formed the guidelines of my garden designs, of which, here, I present a small sample.

In each of them I have sought to adapt to the landscape, to the buildings, to the client, and to my perception of what the genius loci, the spirit of the place, called for. These gardens are the dishes created from such ingredients.

Led by passion and by a willingness to always try something new for each of them, I have often walked through paths in the dark, whose destination I could not initially ascertain. After an initial fear, results always came as a surprise – as though in a poem, things appeared that I had not realised were there.

I am lucky to have had clients who taught me to see gardens from a different perspective; who guided me along the way; who knew what they wanted but not how it could be achieved. There I just added my small contribution, and their garden – my garden – became the outcome of a host of intervening ideas and people: owners, interior decorators, contractors, friends in the gardening company, office colleagues and, at the end of the line, I, the gardener, drawing from here and there to achieve something in harmony with the landscape.

Most of these gardens are in the countryside, set within sweeping, overwhelming landscapes, where the garden should be the frame that will attach value to such a display.

I just added the frame ... for my idea was that these should not be “signature” gardens, but gardens perfectly tailored to that place.

I feel obliged to thank all of those who have entrusted me with their gardens: a task so noble and beautiful, a work that has made both them and me a little bit eternal, for the spaces we have created carry a part of our soul; they are like Tibetan prayer flags, inscribed with musings, verses, requests, prayers ... and which, when caressed by the wind, thrust their musings and their prayers into the universe, spreading from cloud to cloud, from wave to wave to the ends of the earth.

I have had the great fortune of never being absolutely certain about anything, which has forced me to ask for countless opinions, feelings and impressions on each garden and its details. Thus, from the first sketches to the final plans the evolution has been tremendous.

Each and every one of these gardens has its own soul, but they do share some common traits. One of these is simplicity in both design and choice of plants: sometimes it is just one species that has colonized the whole garden, endowing it with impressive force.

These are gardens that are easy to maintain, and where, throughout the seasons, a “green architecture” remains, a backbone shining through the plantations. In each of them I have sought to create clear, individual sensations. As a consequence, the plans have almost always been modified when translated to the site: reality has imposed itself on the landscape. More often than not, reality has made the plan simpler, and removing

things has revealed a force and intensity that was being concealed by an excess of plants.

I have knocked down stone walls; changed the course of streams; modified the landscape in the 18th century fashion; I have done one thing and the opposite at the landscape's behest – gardens with curves only, and with straight lines, and with a combination of both. I do not believe that one can find a winning formula and repeat it. Rather, I find each garden to be like writing a book: something important that we do in our lives. Each one must, therefore, be unique, achieving its own dignity and subtle grandeur regardless of its size.

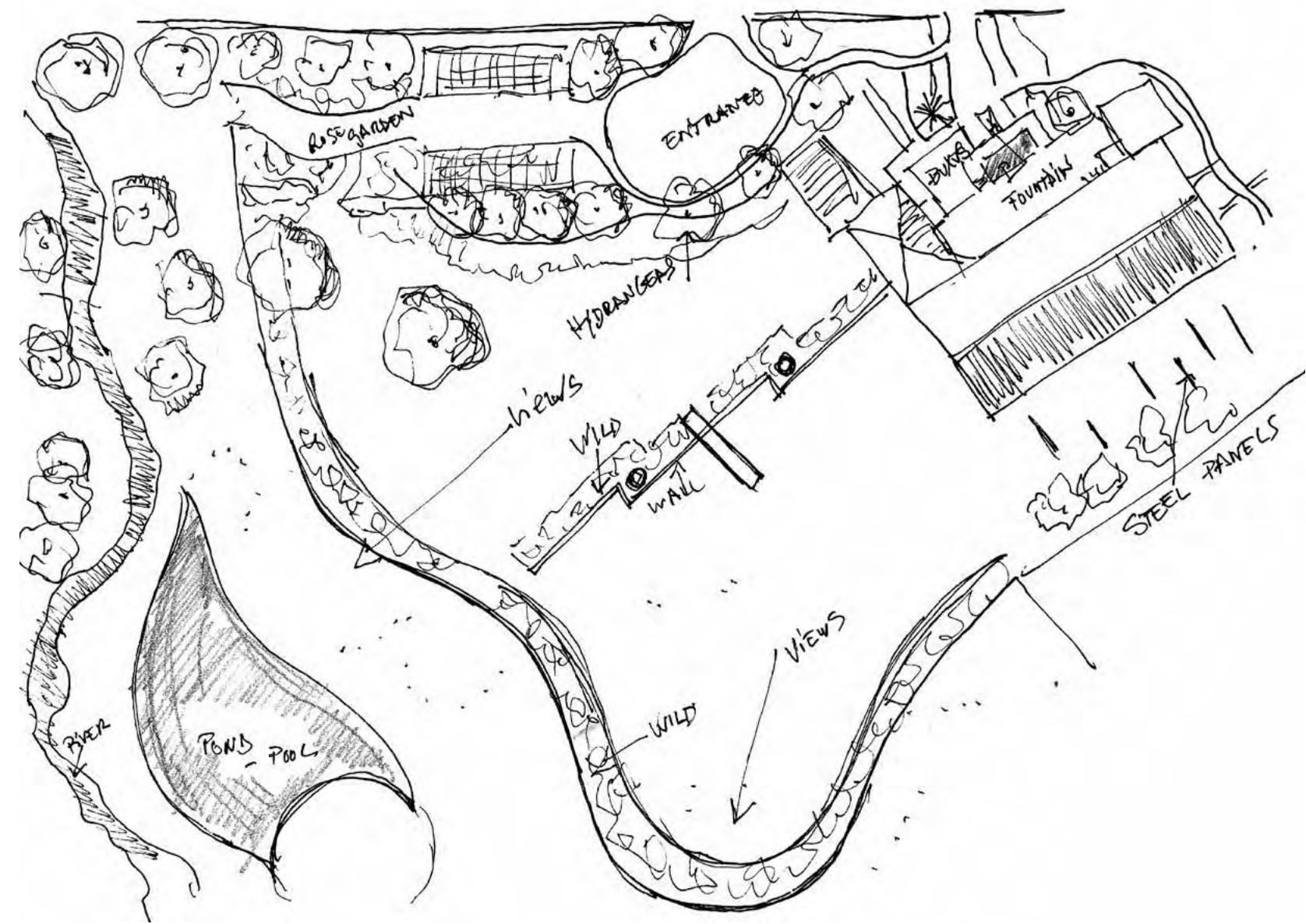
I do not think that my solution for a garden is necessarily better than the rest; it is, however, my best solution. I admire many landscape architects – and amateurs, self-taught garden designers – who make me see things that I otherwise would not.

All in all, it is diversity that I find most interesting: summer-only gardens or gardens chiefly for the spring and autumn, depending on the time of the year when their owners will enjoy them – virtually none is used all year round. Some seek the sound and presence of water; others scents, or the colours of the seasons, or the architecture of greenery; some become transparent, while others have a pervasive presence; some have ancient origins, and some are brand new.

Above all, they are gardens ... just gardens.



Lines in the forest



Lines in the forest

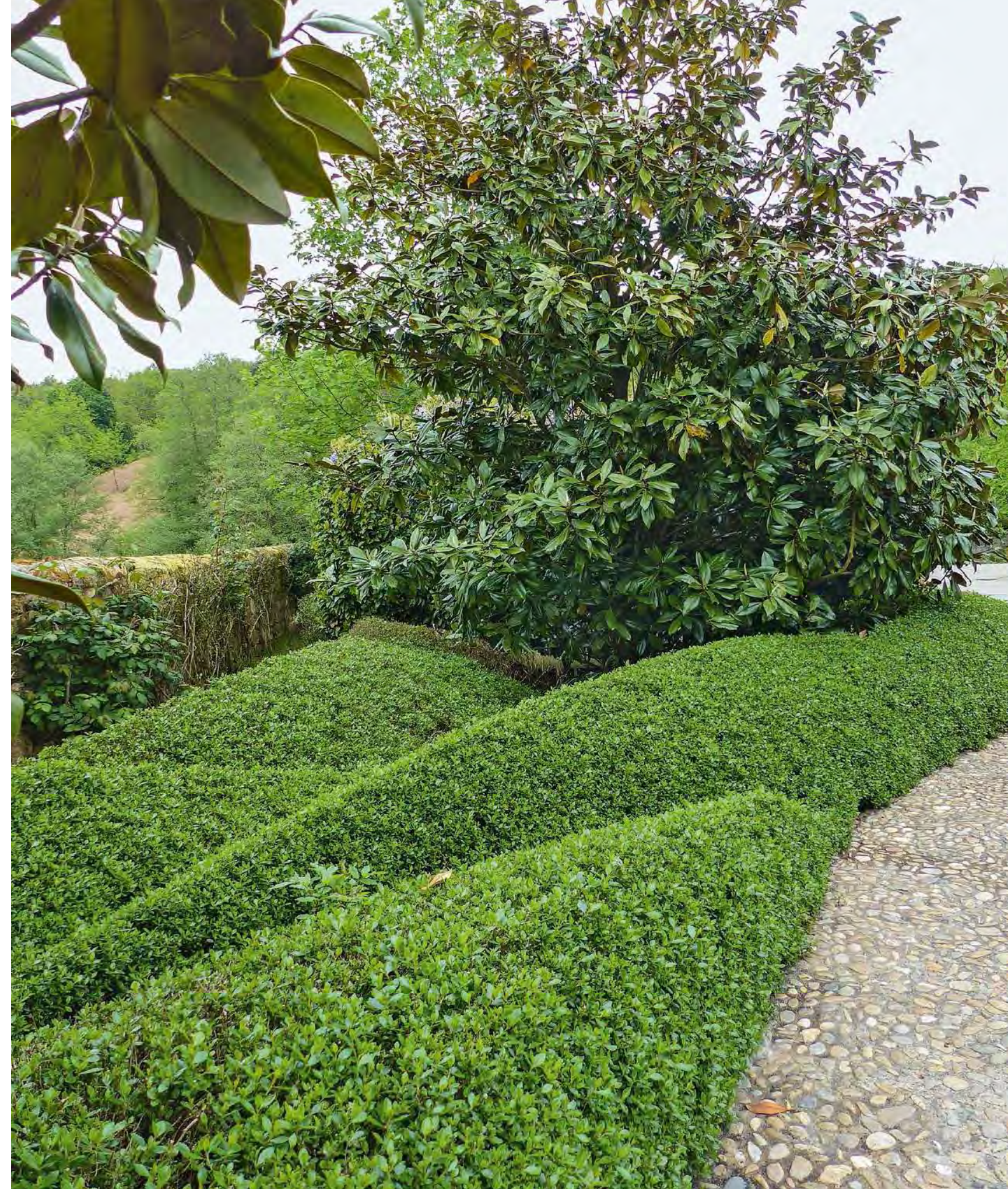
When I first arrived in this garden, it was full of walls: a space closed unto itself, devoid of views, with houses towering over it.

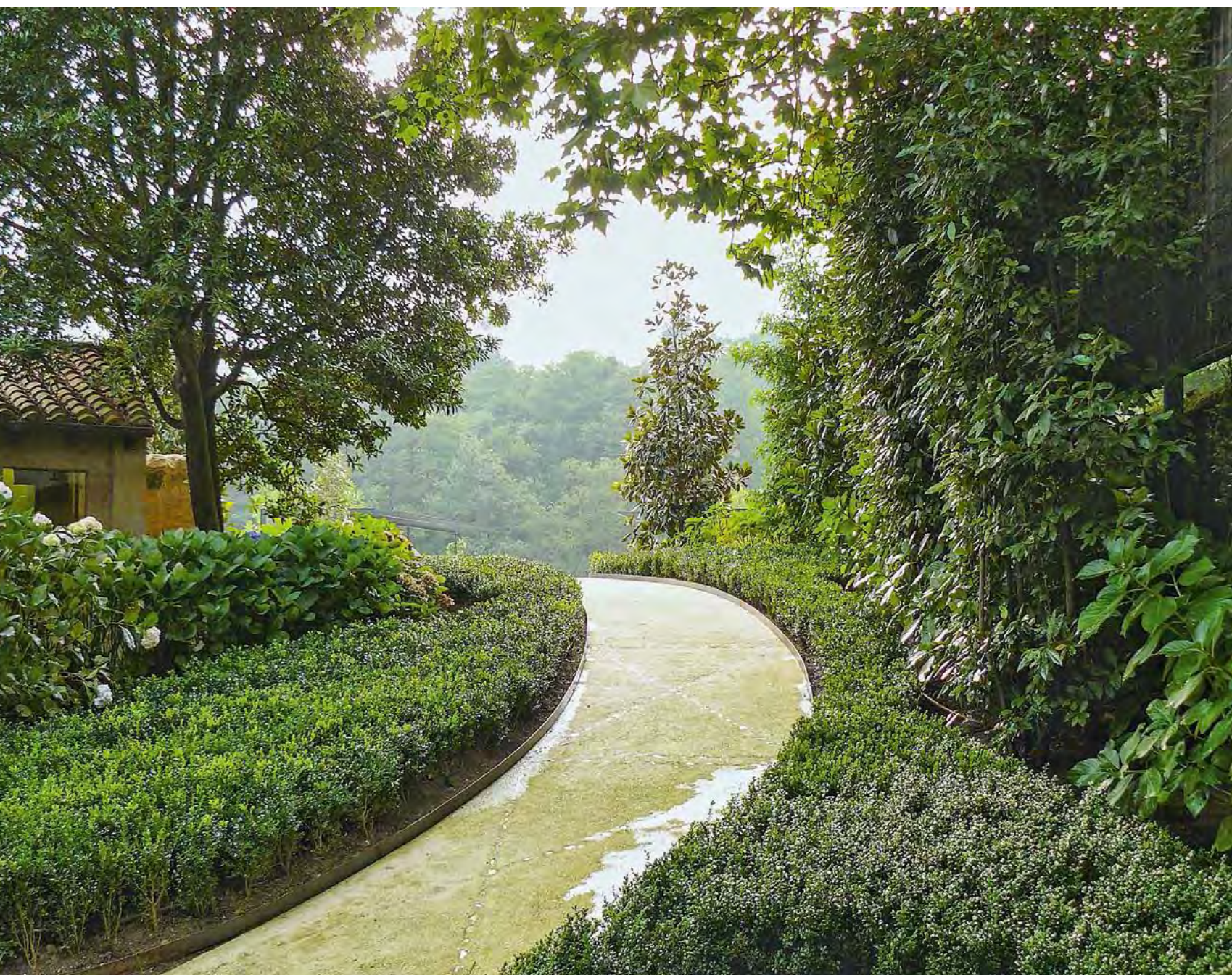
However, the hillside, the river and the mellow landscape invited soft, curving lines. I can still recall the first sketches where the hillside was turned into an array of water-filled terraces, each leading into the next, blending with the sea in the distance. In the end, I made only one large terrace on two levels surrounding the house. The array of water sheets became only one, following the brook with a marked, lagoon, or flame-like shape.

The hillside; wild flowers; the entrance; the boxwood shrubs that give an impression of order; ferns; a water sculpture; a garden that opens up as though an entrance hall, while still concealing the rest of the house. An orchard which eventually became a spice and flower garden, and the undulating grounds with wild meadows. The northeasterlies batter the garden once or twice a year, leaving the orange trees burnt and leafless and bringing down larger trees, yet each time it revives with courage, eager to burst out in spring.

Like others in this book, this garden is many people's labour of love. Its owners were the backbone and driving force behind everything; with them we laid out the lake and the trees, and we defined each and every detail, while the interior designer was always taking us one step further. The contractor turned sketchy suggestions into precise drawings ... and I stood at the end, drawing and learning from all of them.

A dish cooked by twenty hands, where each added their ingredient.



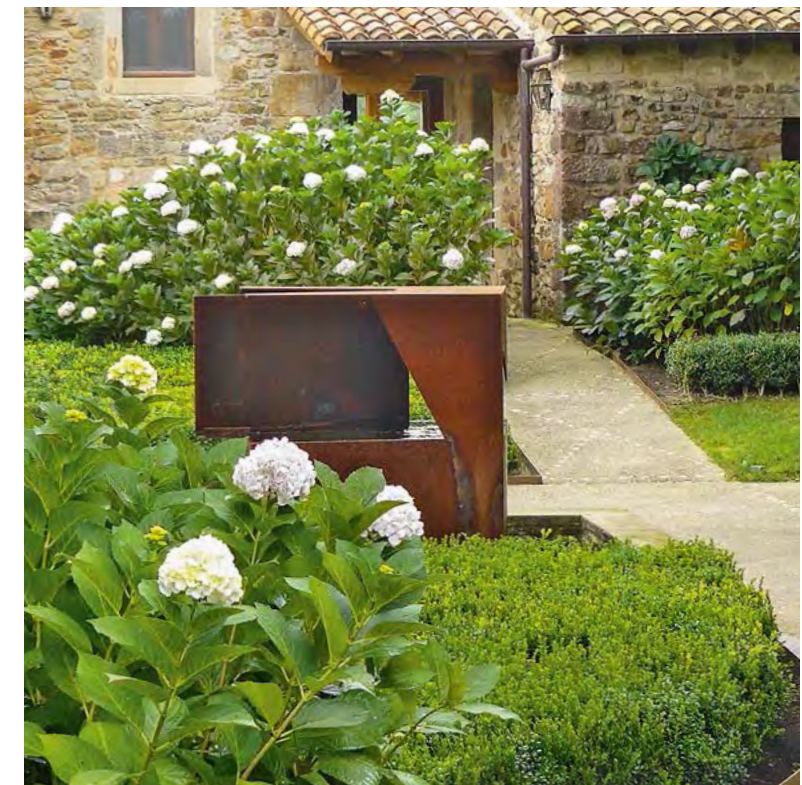


Previous pages: waves of escallonia and magnolia trees.

In the entrance court, the softly undulating contours of the patches of boxwood and hydrangeas form a highly structured green architecture, while enveloping a modern fountain – the source of a cascade of sheets of water.



Water is discovered as one advances through the garden: it appears and disappears, as though a natural spring. An evergreen structure of boxwood, ferns and hydrangeas is its companion throughout the seasons.





Architecture and nature are fused into each other. The undulating terrain allows for the interplay of volumes and shapes, of light and shade, to offer varying perspectives of the garden – to create sculptural features that change throughout the year.

