



# An Indefinable Garden

Photography by Gilles Lescauff & Joelle Mayer - Text by Alice White Walker

A garden defined by its indefinability, Jardin Agapanthe is the fruit of architect and garden designer Alexandre Thomas' continued horticultural inventiveness.



**TOP**  
Sand paths are part of Alexandre's signature style. There is no grass or lawn in his garden, and the result is both calm and seamless.

**ABOVE**  
In front of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century greenhouse, antique furniture is positioned for everyday use.

**S**ecret gardens do their best to stay secret. But little by little, they reveal themselves to the most curious of us. Along a quiet road in Grigneuseville, a little town north of Rouen, lies Jardin Agapanthe, a secret garden with more than two acres to explore.

Built without any significant grassy areas or lawn, visitors are able to fully appreciate the multifaceted nature of

Agapanthe's contemporary landscape design. Its strong structure is partly led by stonework - sand paths, stone walls and fountains - and calming sections of water, which combine to create a succession of different moods. Plants of varying heights - conical topiaries, towering monkey puzzles and pointed foxtail lilies - provide a multilayered backdrop for metal furniture, giant urns, decorative features and statuesque trees.

A garden of this height and size leaves room for plenty of "hidden" sections, allowing you to genuinely explore the landscape. Bridges crossing trickling water, tall wrought iron gates, thick box hedges and winding paths all lead you into the unknown.

It's hard to miss the agapanthus and allium flowers. Whether neatly divided into military-like rows or huddled together in jewel-like clusters, their violet pompoms bounce with the passing breeze.

Jardin Agapanthe is the personal garden of landscape architect and designer Alexandre Thomas. Alexandre has been designing gardens for private clients

around the world for over 25 years, and he's brought the same creativity and flare to his own. He uses Agapanthe as a living laboratory, a space where he can continually test and evolve his creations. "I like abundance. When things are too neat and tidy, I find it tiresome!" he declares.

Plants were purposely planted very close to the path's edges, taller ones folding into the walkway, unmindful of the space allotted to visitors. But even abundance needs to be tailored. Leaves are cut away here and there so that there is always just the right amount of foliage.

"Constructing a garden, not necessarily the plants themselves, is what motivates me. How to build it around water, rocks, stairs... the structure of a garden is everything."



**ABOVE**  
Vintage garden furniture on a patio outside one of the buildings

**BELOW**  
Gigantic urns, swirling topiaries and assorted plants create a unique and entertaining landscape in the garden.







ABOVE (TOP TO BOTTOM)

Purple allium heads stand tall between yew topiary bushes; Globemaster alliums are the largest in the allium family, standing up to 120cm high.

OPPOSITE

In a raised bed above the lavender garden, white epilobes highlight the stone fountain.

Like a painter approaching a fresh canvas, Alexandre has constructed his own universe, which is what makes Jardin Agapanthe so unique in style. It doesn't check the boxes of a French or English garden, as Italian and Japanese elements can be found throughout - the ornate fountains, the bright red maple bushes and the planting style itself.

“Even though I was inspired by gardens that I saw in Japan, I didn't want to recreate the same thing here. For me, this is still a Normandy garden.”

Despite its lost-in-time aesthetic, Jardin Agapanthe came to life in 1983. Nearly all the stone features or materials are reclaimed, having been carefully selected to give the impression that the garden has always existed, only recently unearthed by a scythe-bearing explorer.

Alexandre also specializes in antique furniture for the home and garden. His sure eye and knowledge of furniture design means that his clients trust his judgement for their own havens. His antique pieces are available for purchase on the website ProAntic.

“Not making everything look perfect, having a few rocks out of place on the wall or some moss where it shouldn't be... these kinds of imperfections give the perception of age.”

Creating this impression of a seemingly untouched wilderness is the crux of Alexandre's talent, and in turn, Agapanthe's magic.

The garden is open to visitors across two periods in the year. On select dates during the spring and summer periods, Agapanthe hosts guests for a special evening of music. On these nights you'll find half the garden beautifully illuminated with spotlights. Visitors can enjoy an informative guided tour before sitting down to a musical concert in this extraordinary place.

Over the years, Jardin Agapanthe has been admired by garden lovers worldwide, yet somehow it's managed to hold on to a way of making you feel like you're the first - and maybe last - person to discover it. 🌿

**Opening times:**

May to September: Friday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, from 2.00 p.m to 7.00 p.m. June to August: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, from 2.00 p.m to 7.00 p.m.

2020 evening concert dates hosted on: May 30, June 20, July 11, August 8, August 29, September 26.

[www.jardin-agapanthe.fr](http://www.jardin-agapanthe.fr)

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