

COUNTRY LIFE®

JANUARY 14, 2015

EVERY WEEK

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↑ **Off the rails** Firmly anchored railway sleepers are evenly and generously spaced to make an informal stairway by Acres Wild. The margins of *Bergenia* blur the step edges and increase the sense of casual transition

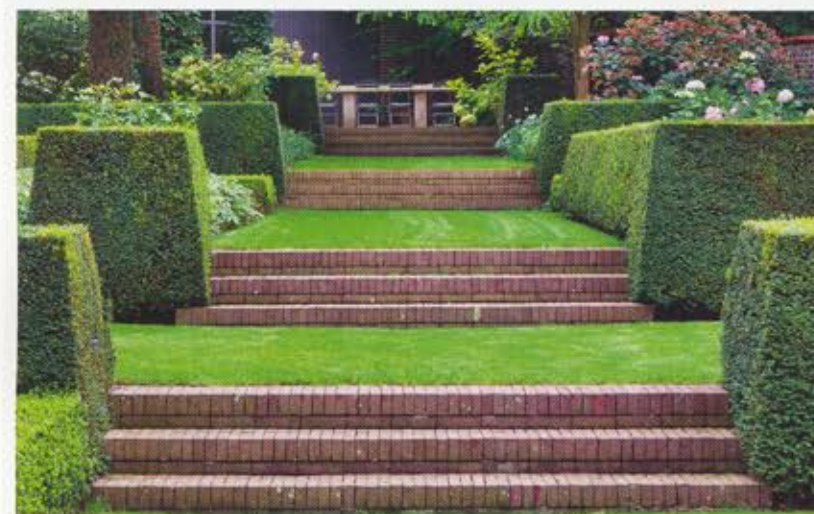
→ **Single file**
Leading a definite route through the garden without causing damage to the lawn has been achieved here with regular, short-but-extra-wide flagstones. The grassy interstices maintain a rustic country-garden ambience, yet are easy to mow



Easy risers

The way a change of level is treated can reinforce a particular look or garden mood, finds Kathryn Bradley-Hole

Photographs by Marianne Majerus

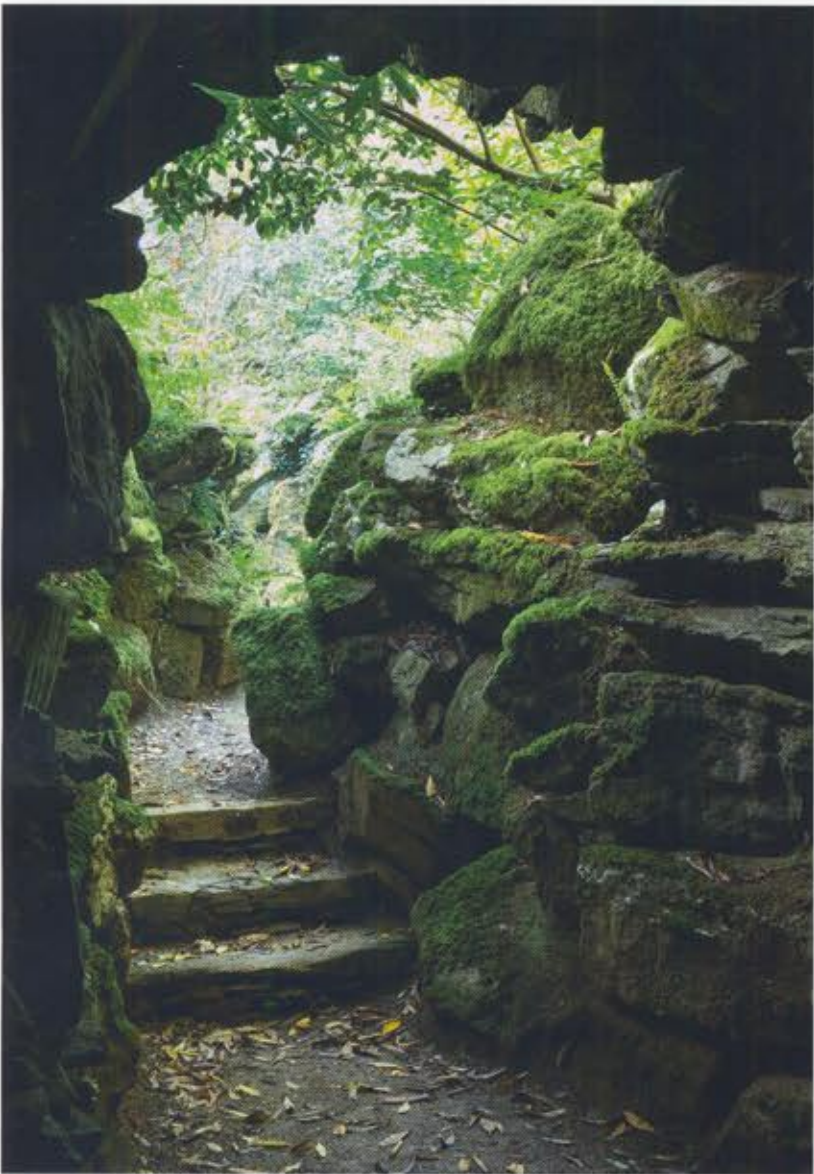


↑ **Lawn order** Measured perfection brings a pleasing rhythm. The series of lawn terraces by André van Wassenhove providing interludes between each set of steps ensures that quite a steep gradient appears to be relaxing and inviting

↑ **Bull's eye** Symmetry and precision are called for in making a statement staircase such as this one at West Green House, Hampshire, seen through an oriental-style moon gate



← **Daisy, daisy**
Erigeron karvinskianus and other diminutive plants provide a cushioning effect against the risers in stone steps by Lutyens, at Hestercombe, Somerset ➤



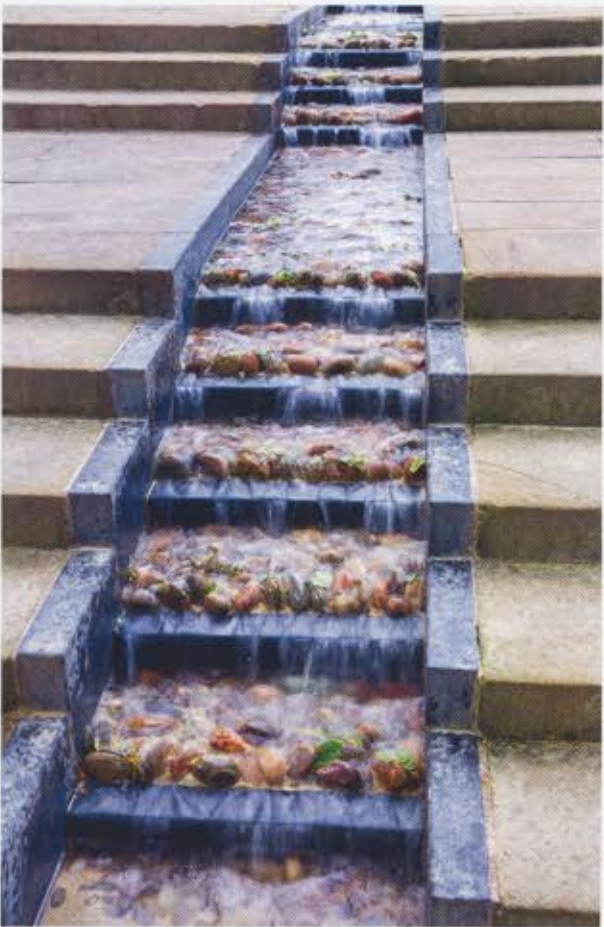
↑ **Tunnel vision** A classic grotto entrance, full of gloom and mossy dampness and, no doubt, shivering cold. It's usual to descend into a grotto, if only down a few steps, which have the appearance of being roughly hewn and not too neat



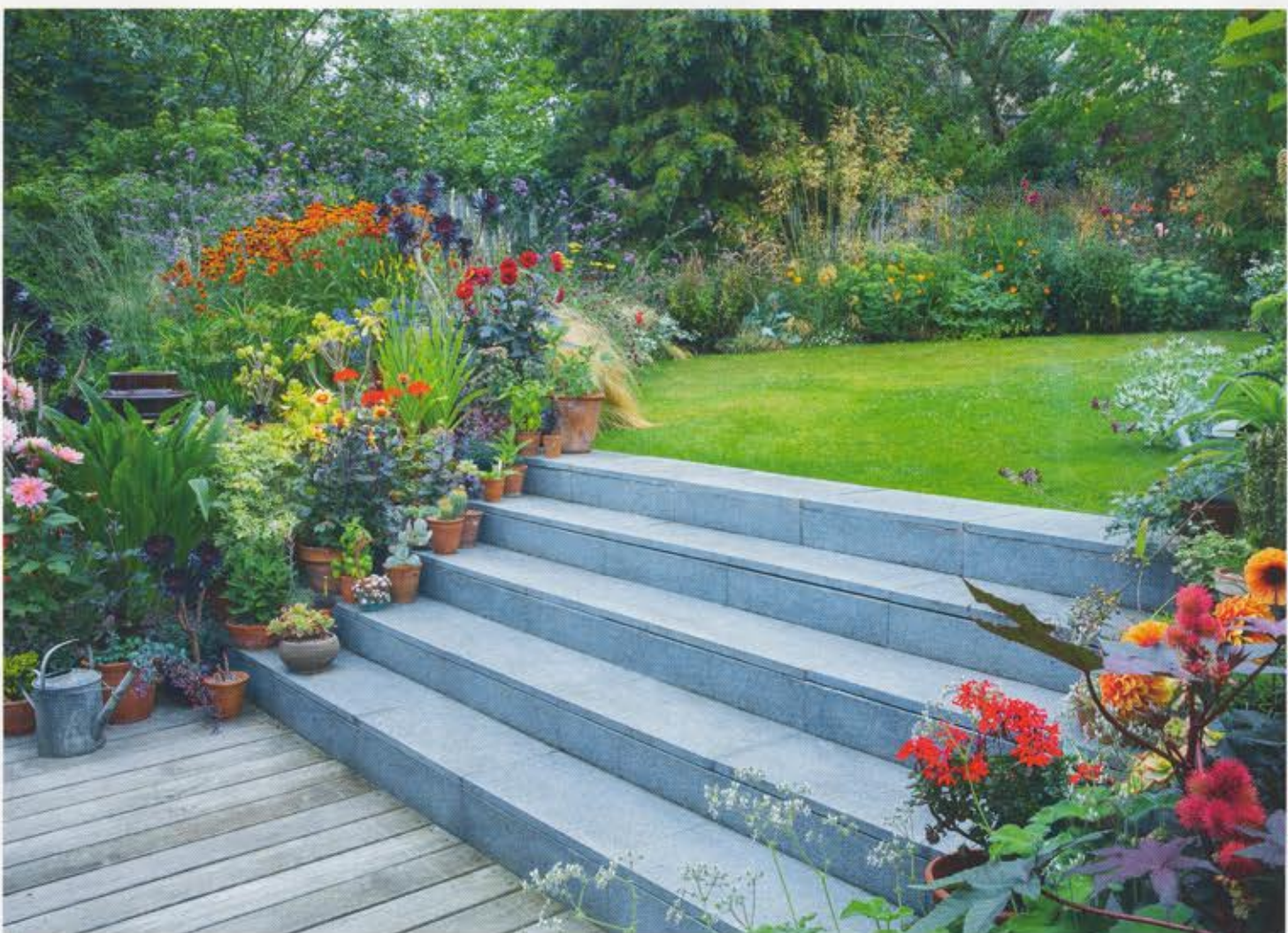
↑ **Still waters** Shallow, careful steps into an inviting pool, as seen in Luciano Giubbilei's Laurent-Perrier show garden at Chelsea in 2014



↑ **Boulder dash** A modern rock-garden setting in which Fred Flintstone could feel at home. Wide boulders are laid in a relaxed stairway among dry-garden plants including santolina, lavender, verberna and the dwarf fountain grass *Pennisetum alopecuroides* Hameln



↑ **Go with the flow** A modern water staircase in The Alnwick Garden, Northumberland, uses cobbles and contrasting dressed-stone edges to create sound effects and a sense of the hurried nature of the water



↑ **Tops for the pots** These plain, dressed-stone steps form an understated platform for a range of seasonal potted treasures in carnival colours that speak of the warmth of summer. Wisely, a watering can is kept nearby (and presumably a tap, too)



← **Cobbles together** A cobblestone infill making up the wide treads lends texture and visual interest to this stairway. This sort of treatment is frequently seen in Mediterranean lands, where long, shallow steps were ubiquitously laid for the benefit of working donkeys and mules