

Gertrude Jekyll's Garden at Lindisfarne

The walled garden at Lindisfarne Castle is one of the smallest and most remote gardens that legendary gardener Gertrude Jekyll designed, but today it ranks among the most visited. A property of the National Trust since 1944, Lindisfarne is perched on a tidal island three miles out from Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northumberland. The setting is incomparable and the vividly colored flowers in the tiny garden sparkle against the gray stone and the somber skies.

Lindisfarne Castle was once a private retreat for Edward Hudson, proprietor of *Country Life* magazine. In 1902, he discovered the abandoned Tudor castle on Holy Island, near the former Benedictine priory made famous by the Lindisfarne Gospels, and asked the architect Edwin Lutyens to assist him in remodeling it. The derelict castle literally grew out from the rock and the climate was rather forbidding, but Hudson could see the possibilities. Hudson and Lutyens had a wonderful time fixing it up, but according to guests, who included Lady Emily Lutyens and Queen Mary, the interiors were austere and inhospitable. In the end, though, since Hudson spent most of his time in London, it proved an impractical folly, and he eventually sold it in 1920. Today Lindisfarne is a destination for thousands of visitors who travel great distances to enjoy the castle and Jekyll's remarkable garden.

In May 1906, Jekyll, who rarely left home, accompanied her friend Lutyens across the sandy causeway in order to discuss possibilities for a garden with Hudson, their mutual friend. Hudson dreamed of an elaborate water garden in the valley and sheep pastures surrounding the castle and wanted to turn the old walled garden across the field into a tennis court. As



The walled garden at Lindisfarne Castle.

work progressed on the castle and the budget escalated, Hudson realized that the best thing to do was to revive the old walled garden and forget his plans for making an elaborate new garden. In 1911, Jekyll drew up two planting plans for the walled garden after Lutyens rebuilt two of the walls and readjusted the path grid so that the enclosure was visually aligned from the windows in the upper battery of the castle.

Jekyll took as her inspiration the wildflowers growing among the rocks and in the local village. One plan was for the first year and was composed primarily of vegetables and annuals, while the second one was for a more permanent planting of perennials, annuals, small shrubs, and roses, with only a single border assigned to vegetables. This

charming garden, which is roughly 75 feet square (but really an irregular trapezoid), was broken into long borders along the sides and five small island beds in the center. The western border is filled with hybrid tea and Bourbon roses, the northern border with showy perennials, such as hollyhocks, sunflowers, Japanese anemones, and gladioli, while the eastern border was devoted to fruits and vegetables. The island beds contained Jekyll's signature gray-foliage plants, including hundreds of *Stachys byzantine* and *Sedum telephium*, which were mixed with campanulas, cornflowers, sweet peas, centaureas, delphiniums, and other blue and white flowers. The effect was pure Jekyll, from the gray foliage to the contrasting cool and warm flowers that set off the gray of the local stone used in the walls and in the paving.

Castle

By Judith B. Tankard



The garden encountered problems right from the start, the major one being the lack of a source for water—the original well had been mistakenly paved over during construction. Also, many of the plants that thrived in the warmer soil in Jekyll's native Surrey failed to survive the windy and salty Northumberland climate. Today these problems have been resolved

and this garden, whose configuration remains unchanged since it was designed 100 years ago, has been lovingly restored. Since Lindisfarne is now open all year, Jekyll's original plant palette, designed for July and August bloom times, has been enriched to include spring bulbs and early flowering plants to extend the season. It is a true testament to Gertrude Jekyll's vision of a garden. 🌿

Adapted from Judith Tankard's 2011 book, *Gertrude Jekyll and the Country House Garden* (Rizzoli). To order the book, see page 14.

For information on visiting Lindisfarne, call +44 (0)1289 389244; www.nationaltrust.org.uk.



Visitors walking in the walled garden at Lindisfarne Castle.

Gertrude Jekyll 1843-1932

Gertrude Jekyll was one of the most important garden designers of the twentieth century. A prolific writer and a hugely influential plantswoman, Jekyll's legendary theories on color, planting, and design still resonate with today's gardeners.

Gertrude Jekyll was born in London, but spent most of her life in Surrey, where she lived at Munstead Wood. As a young woman, Jekyll set her heart on becoming a painter, which provided excellent training for her later life as a gardener. She was also the author of over a dozen books and hundreds of articles on gardening for *Country Life* and other magazines. In 1900, Gertrude Jekyll introduced Edward Hudson to the young architect, Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), and Hudson in turn commissioned several houses from him in addition to Lindisfarne Castle. Jekyll and Lutyens collaborated on several dozen country house commissions, including another castle garden, Castle Drogo (NT) in Devon. While many of their gardens have disappeared, perhaps their most famous extant commission is Hestercombe Gardens (www.hestercombe.com) in Somerset which was designed in 1904. In addition to Lutyens, Jekyll collaborated with numerous other architects and had many of her own private commissions. At Barrington Court (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-barringtoncourt), Somerset (NT), her 1917 scheme for an elaborate series of walled enclosures—one of her largest commissions ever—was not completely implemented. Several of these areas, including a new garden of white and cream flowers with silver foliage, have been planted in the Jekyll style. In recent years, a number of her private gardens have been carefully restored, such as the Manor House at Upton Grey (www.gertrudejekyllgarden.co.uk) in Hampshire, which welcomes visitors. Munstead Wood remains one of the finest examples of Jekyll's ideas about home and garden design, mainly because it was her own personal domain. 🌿