As Americans were engaged in a civil war in the 1860s, the first stirrings of the Arts and Crafts Movement were felt in England. Arts and Crafts was flourishing by the 1880s and continued to dominate thinking about design until the movement faded during the First World War, 1914-18.

While the movements—which did not create a specific style, but rather a philosophical approach to design—was relatively short-lived, it continues to command attention. Topics for ongoing inquiry are abundant as Arts and Crafts spawned an engaging cast of characters on both sides of the Atlantic and filtered into every avenue of design. It intertwined with significant political, cultural, and social changes and its influence is still discernable today. The earliest writing about Arts and Crafts was wrapped into architectural studies. As garden history came into its own as a distinct discipline, a few gardens of Arts and Crafts in the garden appeared, but author Judith B. Tankard contends that scholarship in this field is lagging. She stepped up with a book-length study of the topic in 2005, Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement: Reality and Imagination (New York: Abrams, 2005). Tankard's new book, Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement, published by Timber Press, is a revision of her 2009 work and the newest treatment of the influence of Arts and Crafts garden design.


In 1981, Gertrude Jekyll’s Gardens for Small Country Houses, co-written with Leonard Bevan, was re-published. Despite dating back to 1912, this practical manual of garden making continues to attract readers. It was subsequently reissued and revised in 1997, 1999 and 2005, but with the market-saving new title Arts and Crafts Gardens: Gardens for Small Country Houses (revised edition, Woodbridge, England: Garden Art Press, 2005). The book is described as capturing a time when the Arts and Crafts Movement evolved into country house architecture and found its way into the making of gardens.

Soon after the initial republication of the Jekyll-Wranger classic, garden historian Jane Brown penned Companion to Arts and Crafts with her book on the celebrated partnership of English architect Edwin Lutyens and gardener Gertrude Jekyll. The introduction to her book, A Golden Afternoon (London: Allen Lane, 1982) Brown delightfully describes her obsession in the famed Arts and Crafts garden that she collaborated on more than 100 gardens.

In the next decade, popular interest in Arts and Crafts was fueled by the publication of American Bungalow magazine began publication in 1940. Paul Duchscherer produced a trifecta of best sellers: The Bungalow: America’s Arts and Crafts Home (New York: Penguin Studio, 1995), Inside the Bungalow (New York: Nagoya, 1989) and Inside the Arts and Crafts Gardens, Outside the Bungalow (New York, Penguin Books, 1999). Soon after the initial republication of the famous works of David Stonefield wrote an article on the Arts and Crafts Gardens in California for a book accompanying the exhibition: Keeping the Landscape, The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (Oakland: Oakland Museum, 1993), “gave the garden a new definition as a harmonious component of the house.” She believes that garden design of the Arts and Crafts era cannot be appreciated without understanding the house with which it is connected. By including several full-color and home plan books in the book, she emphasizes the unity of the whole as a central feature of Arts and Crafts design.

Tankard takes pains to explain that Arts and Crafts is not a specific style of garden making or architecture, but rather a way of thinking about design and working with materials. Nothing could illustrate this point more effectively than the wide variety of gardens included in her book. The 2018 revision is substantially longer than the original edition. The first ten chapters of the two editions track the same material—although all text has been edited for the revision. In the new edition, for example, the Cotswold chapter includes the important body of scholarly work Wendy Hitchmough published briefly mentioned in the original book. The revision rearranges the final chapters and adds new chapters on contemporary gardens and the design inspiration of Arts and Crafts. American gardens are included, but Tankard discards any effort to produce a definitive study of Arts and Crafts gardens in the United States.

The scholarly and readable text Tankard presents is not to be missed, although this book is so handsomely and generously illustrated with color photographs, landscape plans, drawings and paintings that it can be appreciated simply for its visuals. Many of the illustrations used in the 2004 book are repeated, but they are much brighter and often resized, a graphic decision particularly welcome in the reproduction of the book’s text. The books layout is clean and attractive, though captions for all the illustrations strain the eye due to an unfortunate choice of font and color. This new publication has useful endnotes, a very rich bibliography and a more detailed index than the 2004 edition.