

Let's do it!

Get GARDEN inspiration

From historic Oxford to subtropical Ventnor, Britain's botanic gardens are packed with planting ideas to steal, says **Tamsin Hope Thomson**



Ventnor Botanic Garden's world-famous collection of subtropical plants



Colourful warm-weather species thrive at Ventnor

VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN, Isle of Wight
Open daily from 10am-4pm.
(botanic.co.uk)

You'll love it because... Ventnor is sheltered and sunny, making it the perfect setting for a world-famous collection of subtropical plants. Stroll through the colourful South African terraces, then head to the New Zealand garden for a stunning collection of warm-weather plants.

Get inspired: Pick up tips on plants that work best in hot, dry borders – rosemary, lavender and phlomis will all put on a fantastic display with minimal watering.

Make a weekend of it: Book into The Royal Hotel, Ventnor, a 20-minute stroll from Ventnor Botanic Garden. Built in 1832, this wonderful old-school seaside hotel overlooks Ventnor's esplanade. Classic double rooms from £205 (royalhoteliow.co.uk).

Days out



The Palm House at Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens, and right, the exterior



2 ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, Kew, London

Open daily from 10am-6.30pm. (kew.org)

You'll love it because... Kew Gardens is the mothership of botanic gardens, renowned around the world for its plants, research and training. Don't miss the historic Victorian glasshouses, giant waterlilies, the arboretum complete with a treetop walkway, an interactive botanical play zone for kids and the Grass Garden, dedicated to showcasing some of the world's 9,000 species of grass.

Get inspired: Ornamental grasses are an easy way to add drama to your garden, but are extremely low maintenance. *Stipa tenuissima* or *pennisetum* will bring lots of

interest to borders and combine well with other perennials. **Make a weekend of it:** Situated right on the corner of Kew Green, and recently given a complete overhaul, **The Coach And Horses, Kew** is now a stylish pub and eatery, with 31 fresh, elegant bedrooms. Doubles from £125 (coachhotelkew.co.uk).