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Celebrating the essence of English style

April 2019 | Issue 170 | £4.40 | UK Edition

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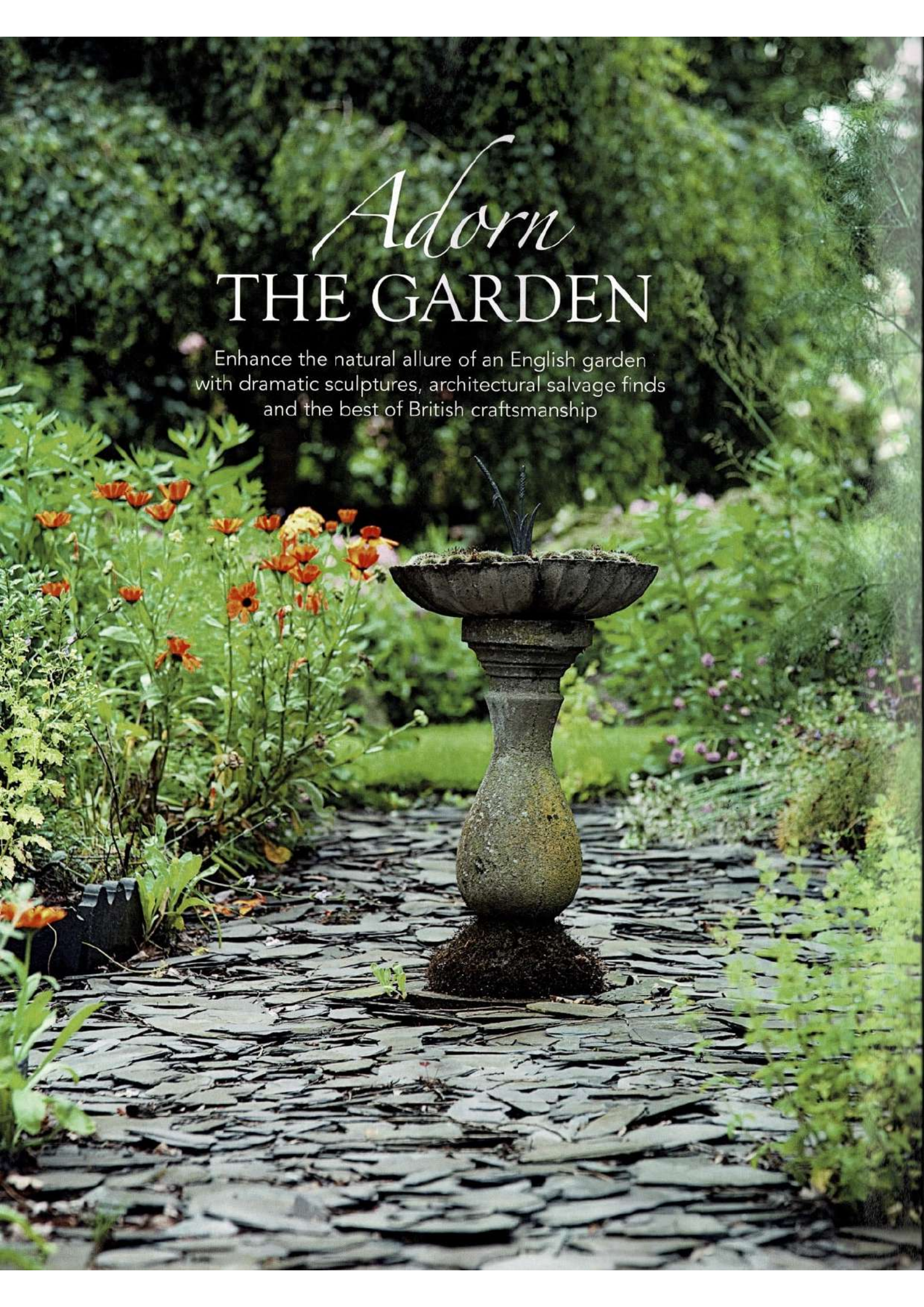
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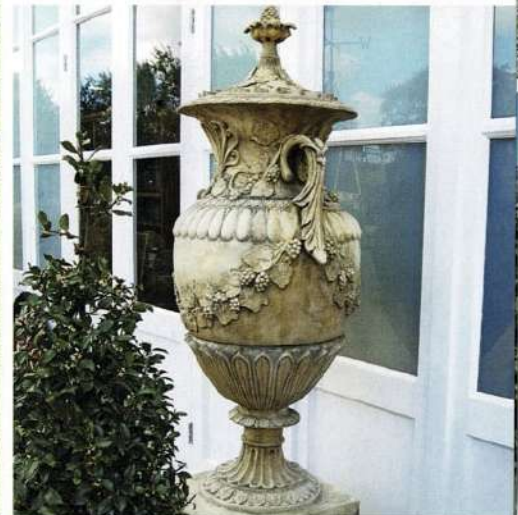
Elegant rooms in blush, peony & coral



A photograph of a stone birdbath in a lush garden. The birdbath is a weathered, dark stone structure with a wide, shallow basin at the top, a narrow neck, and a bulbous base. It sits on a bed of dark, flat stones. The garden is filled with green foliage and several bright orange flowers. The background is a dense wall of greenery.

Adorn THE GARDEN

Enhance the natural allure of an English garden
with dramatic sculptures, architectural salvage finds
and the best of British craftsmanship



The tradition of displaying artwork and antique finds in a garden setting stems back to the Mesopotamian courtyard gardens of 1800BC where trophies and treasures were displayed amongst the shrubs and trees. These objects were highly prized, intended to demonstrate prowess to guests, celebrate skilled workmanship and simply for the inhabitants to spend time enjoying the intricate detail and imagery.

Little has changed over time, with the tradition strongly evident in many historically significant English gardens. Many of Henry VIII's palace gardens were known to have heraldic sculptures displayed at head height on striped wooden poles. Bold and bright in design, there was no doubt that these were intended to impress the owner's status and heritage firmly upon the minds of courtiers and visitors.

The picturesque-style gardens of the eighteenth century, popularised by William Kent and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, took a slightly less colourful but equally ostentatious approach by placing Greek and Roman-inspired temples strategically within carefully planned parkland. The trend continued in the nineteenth century with the emergence of lofty towers, windswept platforms and Gothic-inspired follies appearing in many country house gardens. Wistful and enchanting – compared to their neater and more imposing classical predecessors – they were often created in ruined form to illustrate a sense of wild abandon.

In English gardens today, ornaments and sculptures, whether specifically commissioned or favoured for their unique characteristics, are still placed and displayed with care, communicating the passions and taste of the homeowners to family and guests alike.

SCULPTURAL FORMS

Whether woven willow or a traditional bronze bust, investing in a sculpture for the garden is very much a personal matter, as Devon-based willow artist Katherine Miles explains: "Choose the sculpture that you love the most – something that brings a smile to your face each time you see it."

It may be a chance discovery or the result of extensive research, nonetheless finding a piece that evokes a positive and emotional reaction is paramount. Victoria Westaway, who creates woven willow, steel and bronze wire sculptures, agrees: "It's important to remember that a sculpture is likely to be with you for a long time, so choose a piece that connects with you and gives you pleasure every time you gaze upon it."

Finding an artist online is an efficient and relatively straightforward way to commission an artwork, but perhaps a more pleasurable experience is to visit a specialist garden or exhibition. The Sculpture Park in Churt, Surrey has over 600 large pieces dotted along a two-mile trail that winds through woodland and water gardens. Representing a variety of established and emerging international artists, it is possible to find options to suit all tastes and budgets. ▶

TOP LEFT Distinctive and dramatic, this equine bronze by renowned sculptor Nic Fiddian-Green sits beautifully within this garden setting. *Still Water Bronze, £POA, Sladmere Contemporary*

TOP RIGHT Introduce some delicate detail with an intricately layered artichoke. *Zinc Artichoke, from £165, A Place in the Garden*

ABOVE An ornate urn, whether original or reproduction, makes a perfect focal point for an elegant courtyard or terrace. *Swedish composition stone lidded urn on pedestal, £1,800, LASSCO*

OPPOSITE A garden ornament can create a sense of drama when sited in secluded areas of the garden.



ABOVE An armillary sphere placed at the end of a pathway or at the centre of a courtyard is the very essence of timeless beauty. *Bronze Armillary Sundial, EPOA, David Harber*

Yorkshire Sculpture Park has an ever-changing programme of artists exhibiting throughout the year and is ideal for garnering inspiration and possible contacts. Fairs such as the Affordable Art Fair in Battersea also feature outdoor artwork for sale.

To gain an idea of how effectively sculptures or larger installations can work within a landscape, visit one of England's many world-renowned gardens. Run by the National Trust, Stourhead in Wiltshire has endless classical temples and grottoes to explore. Painshill Park in Cobham, Surrey, boasts a huge array of Gothic follies, ornamental bridges and ruins, whilst Painswick Rococo Garden in Gloucestershire provides a theatrical experience. With temples, Gothic screens, classical seats and dramatic vistas to explore, it proves an ideal place to glean ideas for the garden at home.

SEEKING EXPERTISE

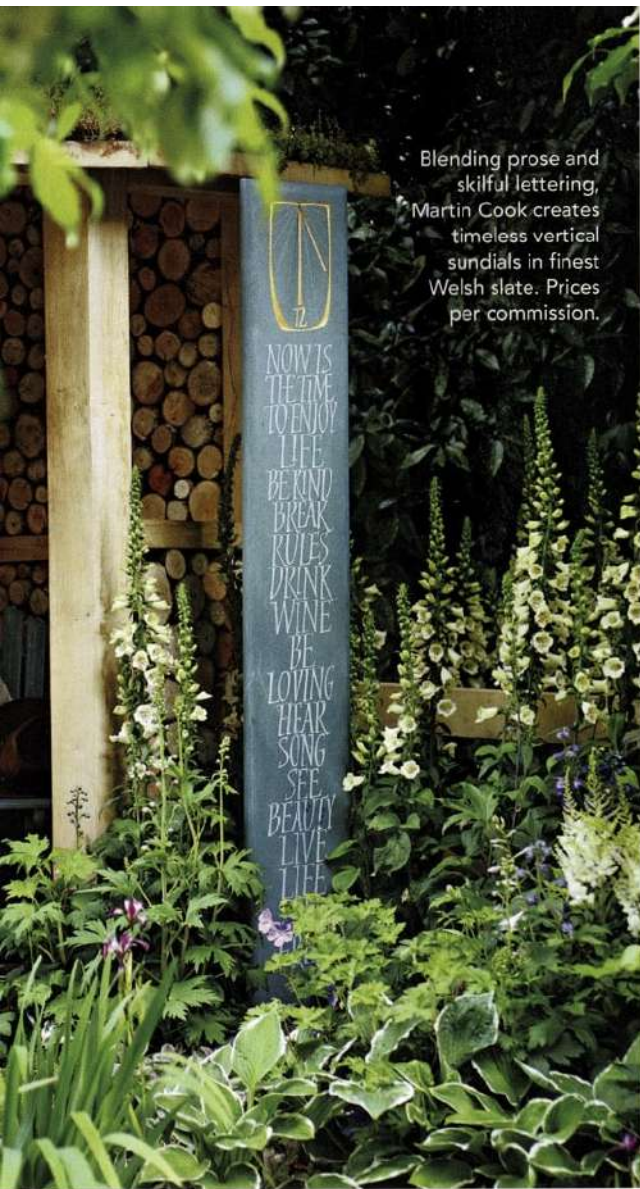
When seeking to buy or commission a feature for the garden, look for seasoned advice at the earliest opportunity. Most experienced artists have first-hand knowledge of where their pieces are best positioned, and can offer ideas that may not be obvious at first. "I often get approached at the planning stage by garden designers and private clients to design a sundial

or standing stone to go into a specific space," explains stone carver Martin Cook. "But one of my strengths is to be able visualise a piece in a completed garden too, without it looking like an afterthought. For instance, I made a beautiful standing stone that is now in Alan Titchmarsh's garden and which looks like it was always intended to go where it is, however, the truth is that Alan saw it, liked it enough to buy it, and then we found the right spot for it."

For some artists, experiencing the location before coming up with a concept is essential. "I'm interested in how a family use a house and outside areas, and design accordingly," says sculptor Brian Alabaster.

PLACEMENT & SCALE

Personal connection is key when it comes to choosing a garden ornament, but consideration of where in the garden to position it is also vital. A potential site may be obvious – a courtyard without a centrepiece or a secluded corner that awaits a striking feature – but it is worth reviewing all the possible options. "Choose a piece that will work in the setting and convey the desired atmosphere," Westaway advises. "In an elegant setting, you could choose a placement such as a central parterre, the end of an avenue of trees or to enhance



Blending prose and skilful lettering, Martin Cook creates timeless vertical sundials in finest Welsh slate. Prices per commission.



a particular viewpoint. Selecting a piece that evokes a calm and gentle perspective will add to the overall serenity of the space, whilst a bold and courageous work can really make a statement, adding drama and dynamic energy."

"I would usually advise on positions a little way off and not too central, with some planting between the house and the sculpture, as this often allows glimpses from different viewpoints," says Alabaster. "As a rule, standing figures look well on lawns or meadows, but sitting or lying pieces benefit from being raised on walls or benches."

Think about whether a piece has a relevance to the site: an ornate armillary sundial would be lost amongst trees but would suit a neat courtyard. Equally, choosing combinations to achieve deliberate contrast can prove dramatic and memorable: a carved slate monolith can be bold and beautiful amongst delicate meadow grasses and flowers, whilst intricate filigree metalwork sits elegantly amidst clipped box.

Take time to consider the effect different materials will have in a particular spot in the garden. For example, reflective and pale surfaces such as Portland stone, marble or zinc may dazzle in direct sunlight, detracting from any detail or intricate form, but in

a shady corner they can bring the space to life and make a delightful contrast.

Scale can also have a significant impact and must be considered before any commission or purchase is made. "It is a matter of personal taste, but getting the scale right is always important," says Heather Jansch, a renowned equine sculptor who uses driftwood and bronze to create her pieces. "A simple way to decide on approximate size is to photograph a six-foot-tall friend standing on the spot you are considering. For a vertical sculpture, one person is fine. For a full-size horse, two smiling six-footers are needed with their arms spread wide at shoulder height and fingertips touching. Once you have a vague idea of scale and the sort of sculpture you want, most artists and galleries are happy to make a site visit and advise on installation."

Alex Puddy, owner of Architectural Heritage, advises: "If you are planting around a sculpture or reclaimed item, think what it will look like in five years' time – plan for the future, and if necessary, put it on a plinth."

Preparing the site requires some forward thinking. "It is necessary to prepare the ground in advance. You can't put a heavy statue in a waterlogged spot as the ground will shift," says Kate Walker, head of

TOP Sculptor Heather Jansch uses driftwood, often cast in bronze, to create her life-size sculptures.

ABOVE MIDDLE A classic touch to flank any walkway, this cast-stone pergola is a perfect support for fragrant climbers. Pergola L900, EPOA, Haddonstone
ABOVE RIGHT Plan planting carefully around a statue and consider scale. Eighteenth-century antique lead statue of Diana of Versailles by English sculptor John Cheere, £38,000, Architectural Heritage

marketing at Chilstone. "You need level or reinforced ground. Put a pedestal on paved ground, not directly on turf. The exception is for statues you want to be engulfed by plants, but even then it's best to set the statue on a durable, level surface."

SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONS

Commissioning a romantic folly, classical temple or stone pergola takes serious thought, research and patience to achieve perfect results. Fortunately, there are a number of specialist companies on hand in the UK that can provide the expertise and highly prized skills required to ensure the finest results. One such company, Somerset-based Redwood Stone, has been specialising in Gothic-inspired follies since designing and building a full-scale folly to frame the Gold Medal winning Best In Show at the RHS Chelsea Flower show in 1991. The team creates designs that can be custom-built whilst appearing to have been in situ for centuries.

As with any garden ornament, location is perhaps the most important factor, as Tim Redwood, owner of Redwood Stone, explains. "You need to choose the right place for maximum impact and enjoyment, and location is something we are regularly asked to help with. A lot will depend on the garden itself: maybe a moody Gothic ruin if you have a shaded area needing a focal point; maybe something to make a swimming pool area far more interesting; or – one of my personal favourites – a 'thunder-watch' platform we created for a client, overlooking the South Downs."

With design ideas finalised – bespoke and off-the-peg solutions are available – the process is relatively straightforward. Site visits and computer-aided design (CAD) drawings then lead to the construction stage where stonework is moulded in the workshop and assembled on site.

Planning permission is not usually required, as most follies are considered to be Class E structures and fall within Permitted Development, but it is wise to check with the local planning authority before proceeding.

ESSENTIAL DETAILS

When purchasing large, bulky and often heavy pieces, delivery should be an important consideration and the supplier can usually help. "Our stone is heavy and needs to be transported on pallets," Walker continues. "As long as the lorry can access your home it is fine. Otherwise you need a lorry with a crane."

"Salvage companies will provide a quote and arrange delivery for you," explains Pru Woods, co-owner and director of English Salvage. "Usually, delivery will be to kerb side and the buyer will need to arrange transportation and installation from there. For especially delicate and high-value items, we'd always advise using a firm of specialist antiques movers. Most sellers will have movers they use regularly and can safely recommend."



Most artists are also adept at dealing with such issues and may be able to recommend specialist art movers and talk through the logistics of installing a sculpture. "Access should be one of the first considerations. Large sculptures need to be installed by specialists and often need vehicular access," explains Jansch.

If moving house, many large garden features can be relocated, but it is essential to discuss this with potential buyers during property negotiations.

Seek advice from the company or artist that installed the piece, as they can often manage moving and re-siting the item, and will have appropriate insurance. "For larger, heavy and high-value items, specialist removals companies are available," says Woods. "Taking an inventory and photographing pieces before they are moved is advisable, just in case something is damaged in transit."

Finally, do make sure a site has been chosen at the new property before moving day and that the removals people position it correctly and safely. ■

TOP Constructed of carved stone and reclaimed, handmade bricks, this Gothic-style folly creates a romantic focal point. *The Ruin*, £4,395 (excluding delivery and construction), Redwood Stone

ABOVE LEFT An elegant centrepiece on a stone plinth. *Vine Urn*, £354, Chilstone

ABOVE RIGHT This bronze pheasant will inject life into any country garden. *Bronze Pheasant 2017*, £15,200, Hamish Mackie