

Welcome to my portfolio

Liz Pepperell

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Gardens with Harry Rich



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Under glass and open for business

If you live near London, a trip to the glasshouse at Kew Gardens will give you a taste of the conservatory. Highlights at the conservatory include the Palm House and Temperate House, the gorgeous Waterlily House, and the famous Princess of Wales Conservatory. The Hive, an intriguing installation that recreates life inside a beehive, has also reopened.

Elsewhere on the 280-acre site you could enjoy the tea with flowers. Mediterranean Garden or the tranquil Japanese Landscape. There are restricted routes and one-way systems to ensure visitors and staff remain safe and, as with most gardens at the moment, you need to book timed tickets in advance, so that the number of people visiting at any one time can be limited. Visit kew.org for more information.

How to plan the perfect summer border

Choose strong background plants and an overall colour scheme, then add shape and texture

My heart sinks when anyone says they want 'high summer colour' in their planting scheme because my brother David and I prefer to design gardens that have long-lasting, subtle colour. But having said that, there's nothing wrong with including plants that perform for just a short time – they're something to look forward to and to really enjoy when they make their brief appearance. Including a few of them keeps things interesting, as long as they have a strong backbone to ensure the garden will look good even when they're not in flower. So this month, I've put together an easy-to-copy summer border that will look amazing before and after the peak of summer.

Give weight and body to the back of my fantasy border in my favourite grass, *Calamagrostis arvensis* 'Karl Foerster'. I've chosen it because its seedheads at this time of year have a beautiful purple hue to them and they'll add movement and structure to the scheme. Alongside it, a veronicastrum would be lovely – 'I' virginiana 'Lavendulturna' has the same colour tone as the grass seedheads and its spikes would pick up on the grass's vertical growing habit. Both have a good solid green 'body' and the grass is topped with its wash of purple while the veronicastrum gives a dash of a similar colour, so they make perfect partners. Although I've planned this border to be tiered, with taller plants at the back, I'll put a couple of veronicastrum in the centre too, in front of the grasses, so the whole thing doesn't look too staged.

In front of these two, *Thalictrum* 'Elin' would look very beautiful. Its pinky-purple flowers are darker than the veronicastrum and brighter than the *Calamagrostis* and its form is very different to both. It starts out with short, drooping leaves and then suddenly shoots up to head height, with tiny flowers on tall, wiry stems. It's elegant and would add an element of fine detail to the border, catching and filtering the colours behind it. Although tall, none of these three plants need staking unless they're in a very exposed position, which is a bonus.

Next to the thalictrum, I'd put *Sanguisorba officinalis* with its dark mauve flowerheads. It's as delicate as the thalictrum and the body of the plant will visually disappear into the scheme in the same way, leaving its flowers to dance above everything. In its place, I could just as easily use a flat-headed eupatorium or salvia. All would contrast well with the other flower shapes and that's what is key to a good planting scheme – first choosing your basic colour scheme and then layering up plants in similar tones, using contrasting shapes to build interest.



PRETTY *Lupinus cosentinii*, top. *Diplasis lobata*, above

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'I prefer to design gardens that have long-lasting, subtle colour'

I'll weave in spring bulbs and I might go for a different colour scheme for this – perhaps blue cornus, followed by tulips. In the summer plants begin to grow, they'll then hide the dying bulb foliage and the purple and mauve colours will start to come to the fore. Perfect! Harry runs a garden design business with his brother and they present BBC's *Garden Rescue*. Next week Frances Tophill

PICTURE PERFECT POTS

At this time of year, plants in containers come into their own – as soon as one has finished flowering, the pot can easily be replaced with something else that's reaching its peak. In *Pots For All Seasons*, author Tom Harris does a great job of showing how containers can be used to enjoy plants. Think of container gardening as painting a still-life picture, he advises, and consider the backdrop, and the colours and the textures of the plants. Even if your planting space is limited, pots let you create a vibrant scene – and if you're looking for inspiration, you'll certainly find it in this book.

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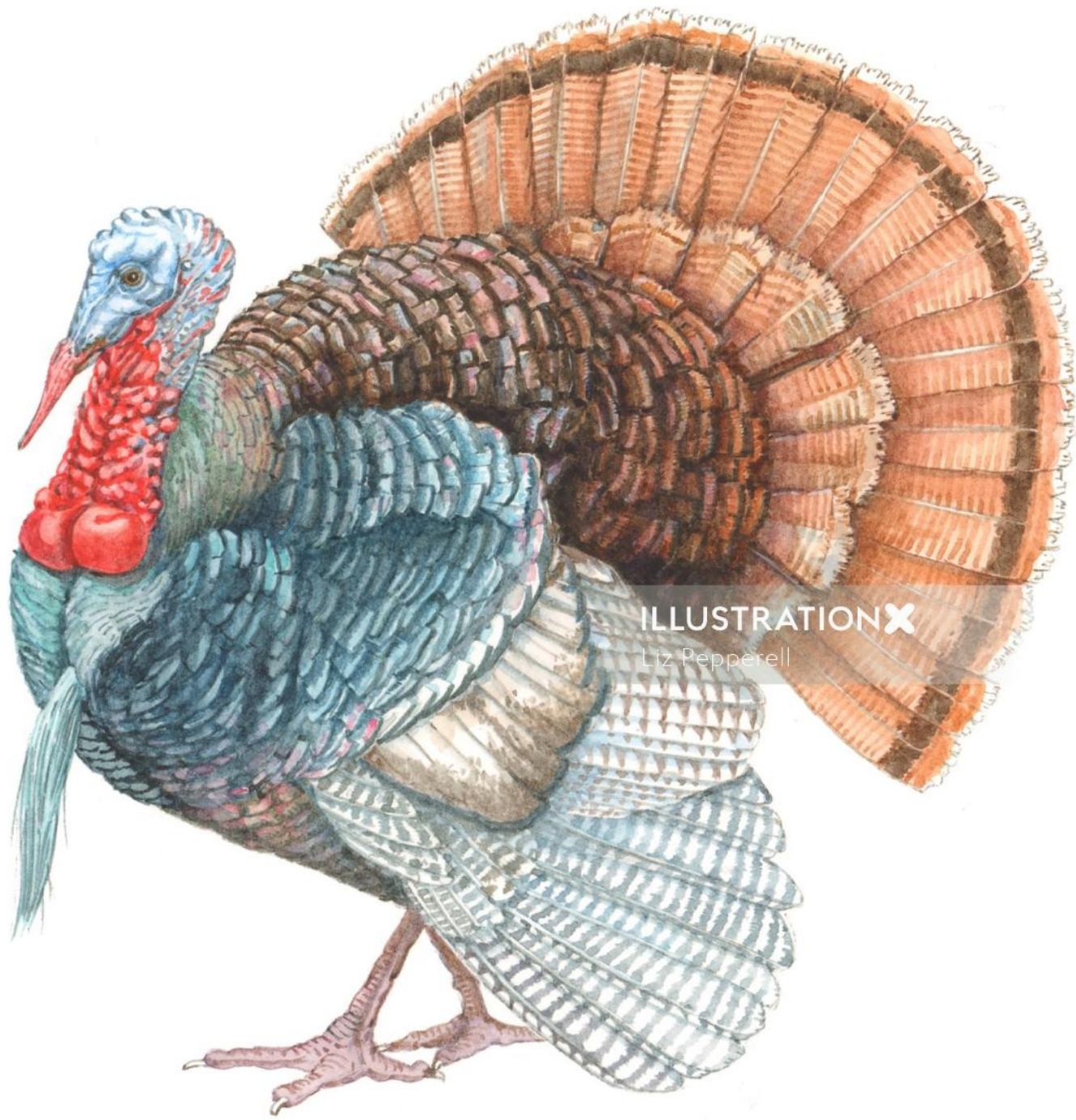
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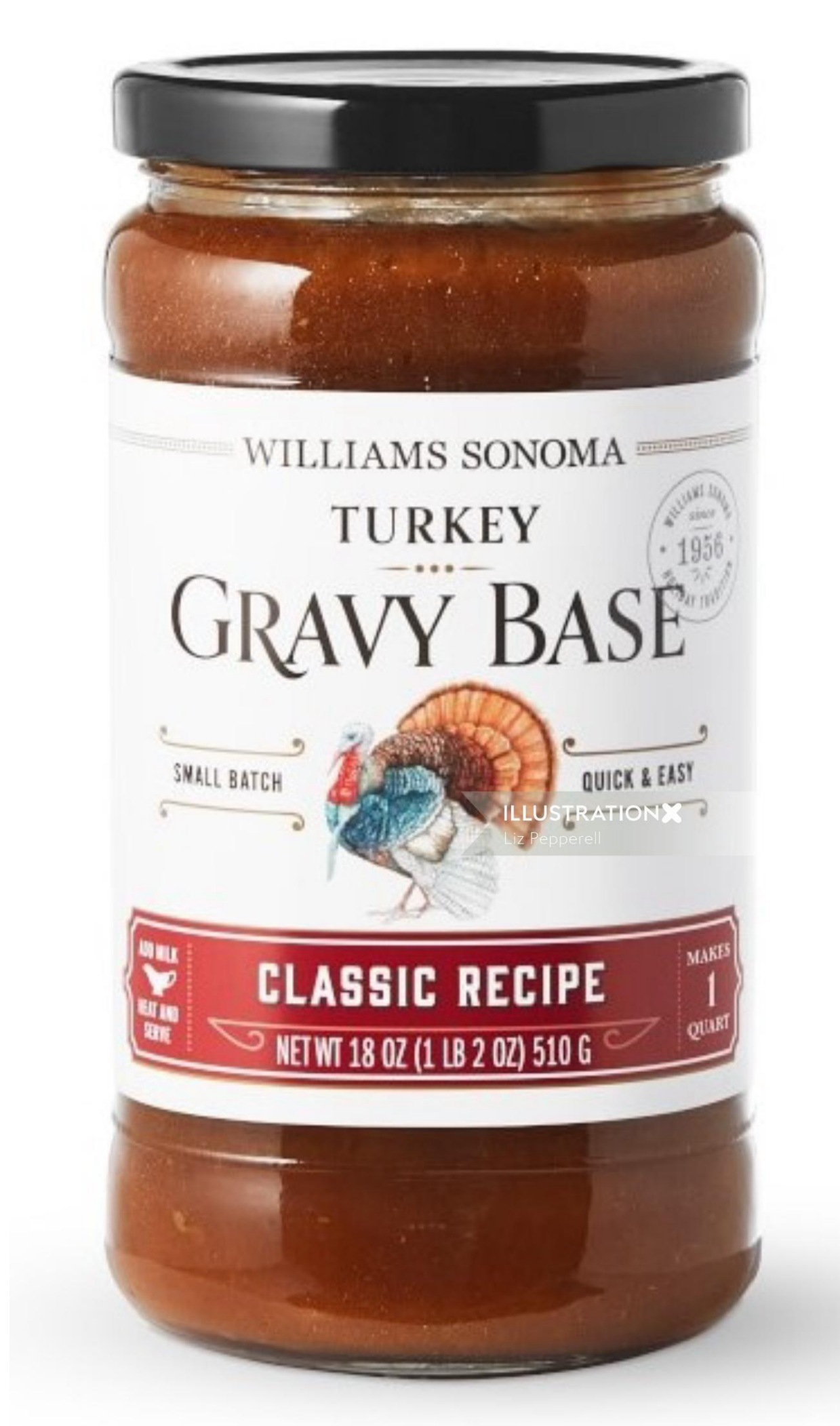
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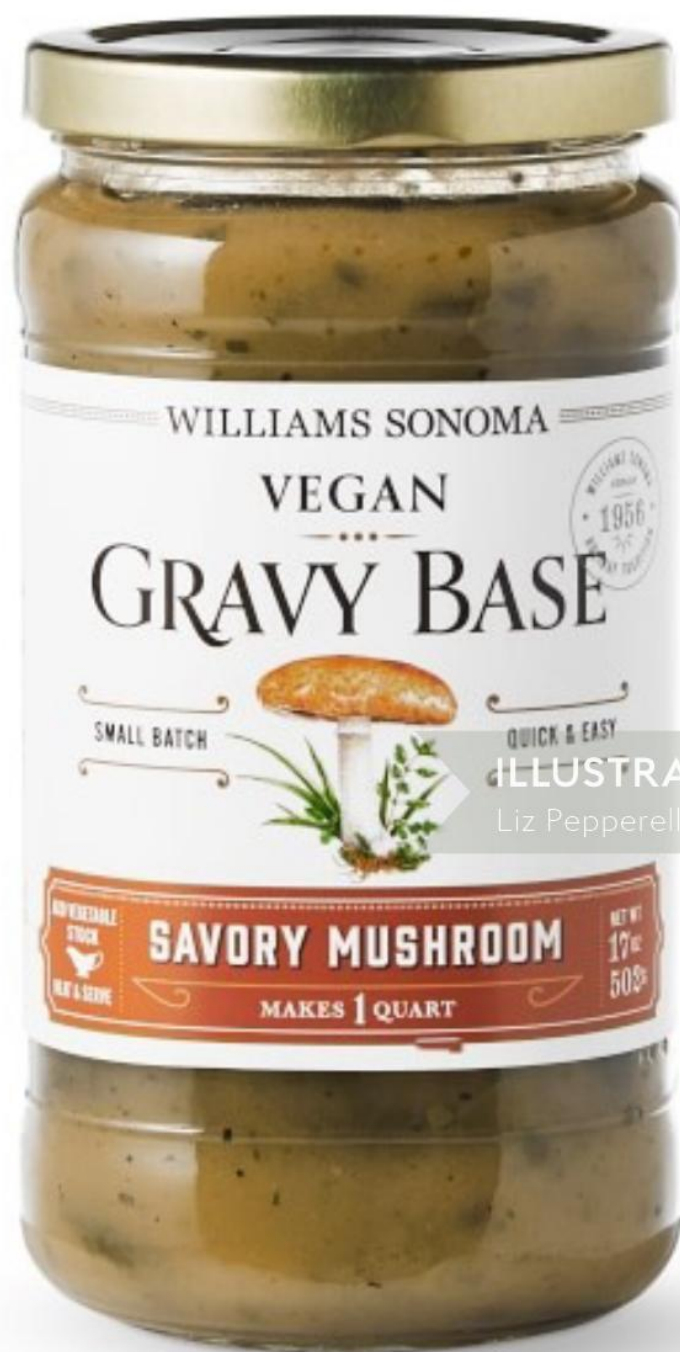
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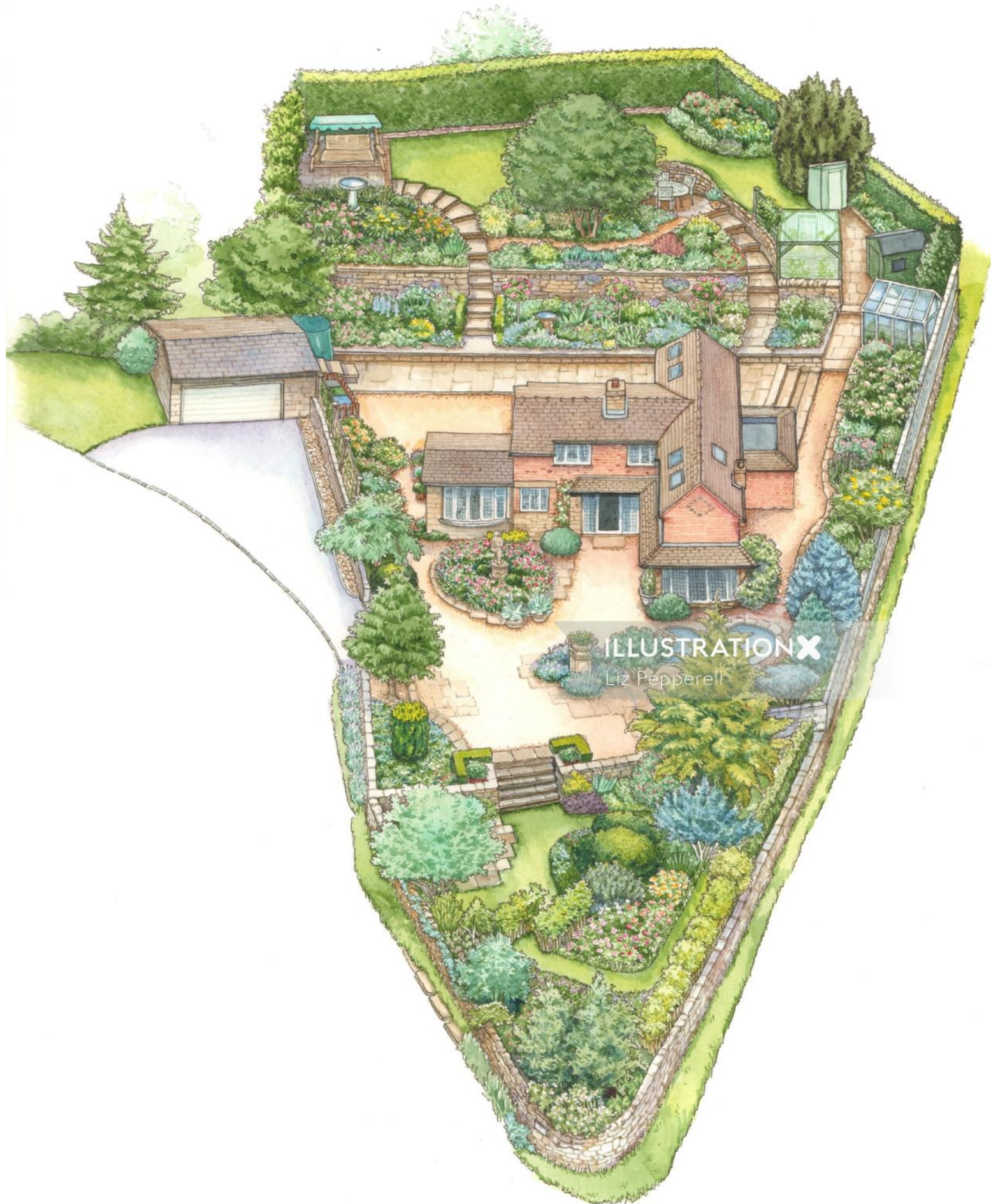


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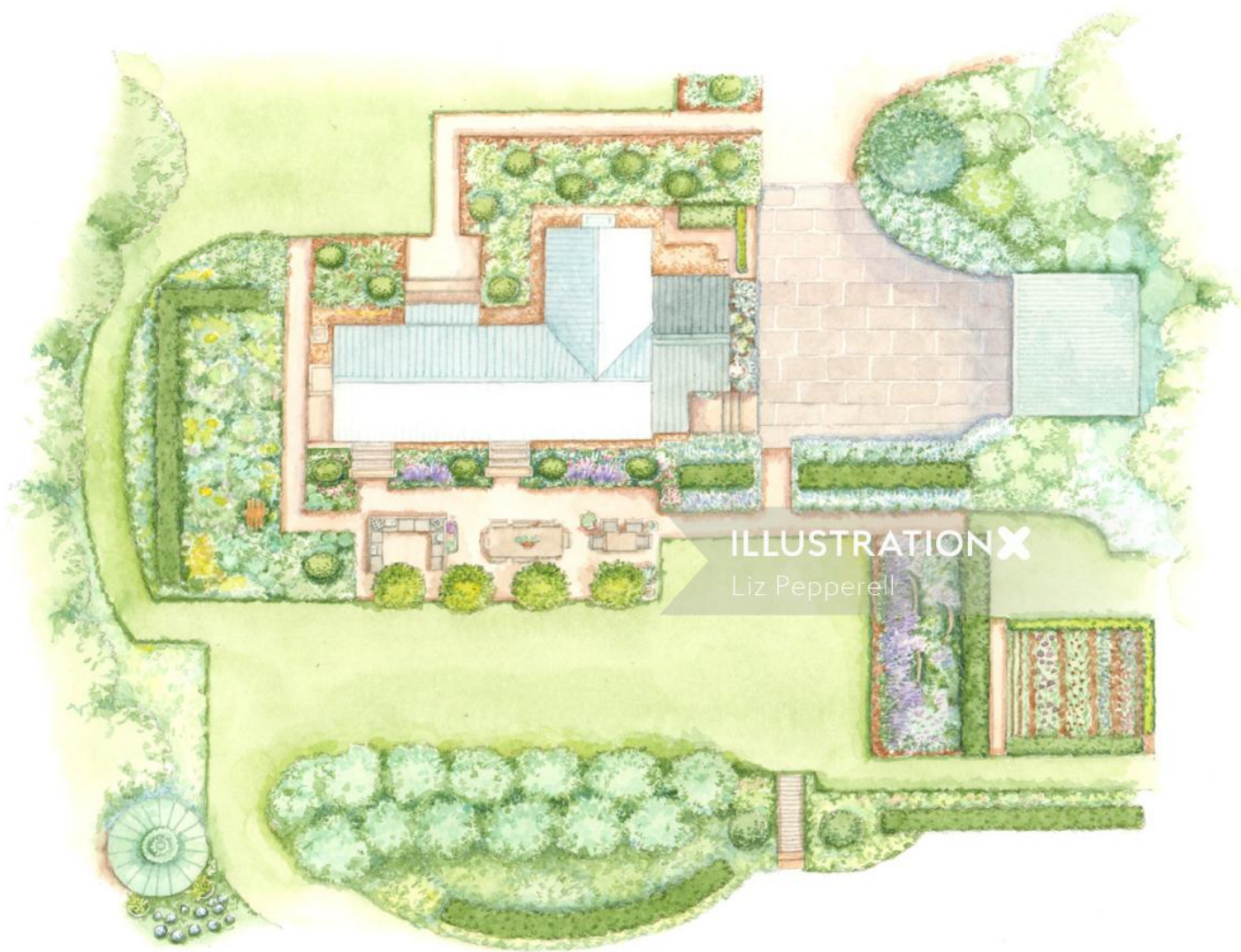
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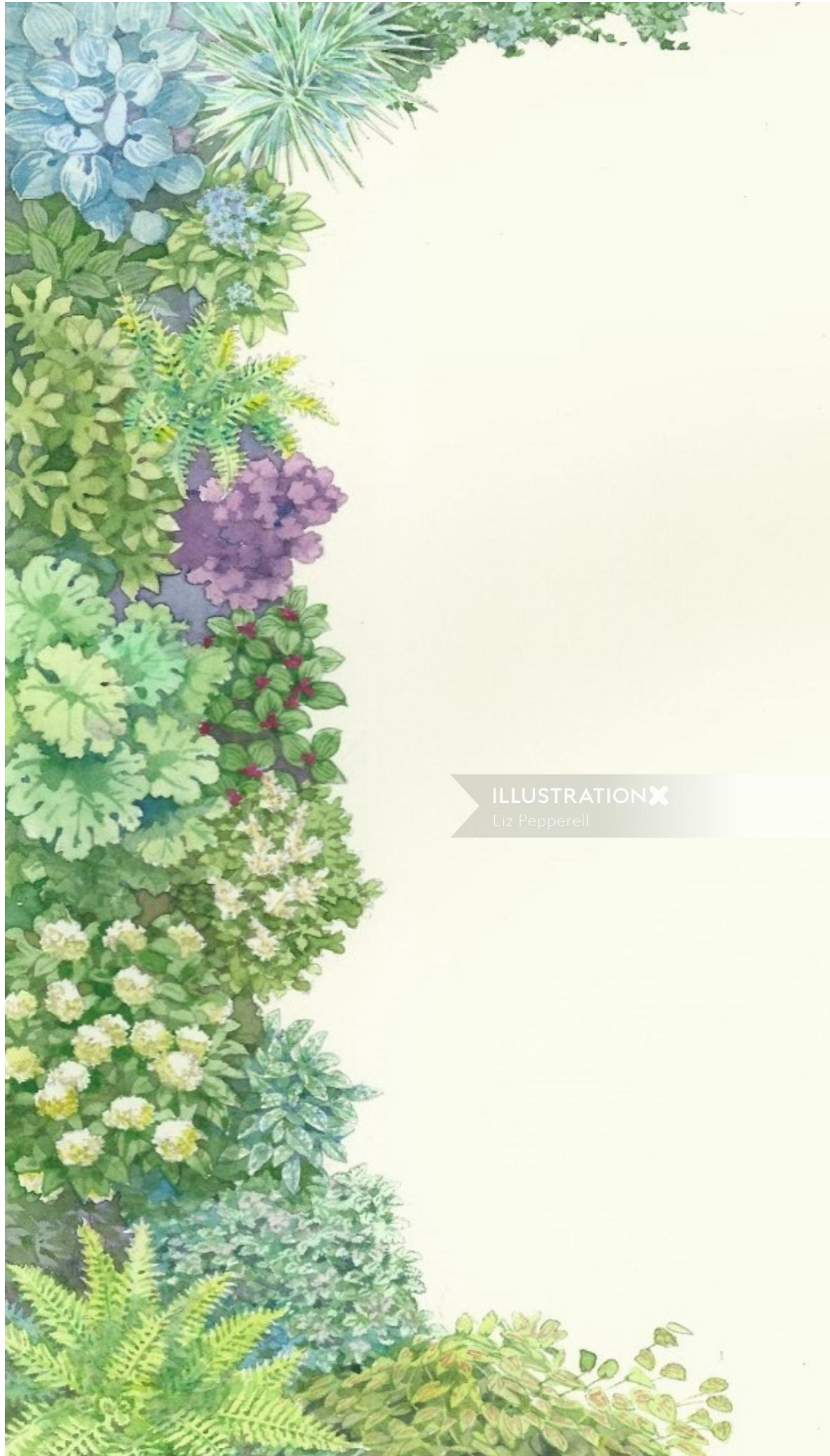
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14 **Travel** The Guardian **Travel** The Guardian Saturday 22 September 2018 15

Llangollen North-east Wales

Spirit of the age

Henry Eliot follows in the footsteps of William Hazlitt, one of our finest essayists, who over 200 years ago rhapsodised about the Vale of Llangollen and its 'natural mysteries'

1 ne of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey," wrote the essayist, William Hazlitt, "but I like to go by myself".

Hazlitt was 19 when he first met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in January 1798. The poet was impressed by the earnest youth and invited him to visit Nether Stowey in Somerset, where he was working with William Wordsworth on what would become the lyrical ballad, the founding text of English Romanticism.

In preparation for this illustrious visit, the young Hazlitt decided to initiate himself "in the mysteries of natural scenery" and set off, on his 20th birthday (April 1798), to walk around the picturesque Vale of Llangollen. As he walked, he declaimed lines from Coleridge's Ode on the Departing Year: "Albion! O my mother land! Thy valleys, full as Eden's bowers, Glitter green with many showers". "That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence," he wrote later. "How proud, how glad I was, to walk along the high road that commanded the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr Coleridge's poem!"

This 20-mile circular route follows Hazlitt's footsteps around Llangollen, and is dotted with scenic "ruins, aqueducts, land pictures". I walked it over two days with my 1970 Penguin edition of his Selected Writings for company. I started and finished at Chirk railway station and stayed overnight at Llangollen.

A few yards west of the Chirk station, drop down to the canal towards and walk away from Chirk Tunnel through soaring beech woods. The Llangollen Canal is the most popular cranking canal in the country, with puttering narrowboats

rising along at less than walking pace. Pina Chik Martina on the left and creep through the Whitehouse Tunnel. When the canal curves left you'll start to glimpse the valley far below, as you approach the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

2 It was designed by the engineer Thomas Telford as part of the Ellesmere Canal, an ambitious project to connect the River Severn at Shrewsbury with the River Mersey at Ellesmere Port. The scheme was abandoned soon after the aqueduct was completed, but Telford's feat of engineering is nonetheless staggering: his canal drops a mere 30 centimetres over the course of 11 miles.

To honour his achievement, the entire area was declared a world heritage site in 2009.

On the far side, cross the winding hole over the footbridge and follow the branch canal west, towards Llangollen. Keep to the right-hand side of the canal and, beside the second bridge, turn right on to the Offa's Dyke Path.

The path aqueducts beneath a dismantled railway line, and wiggles away from the village of Trevor before heading up through the atmospheric pine woods surrounding the 18th-century Trevor Hall.

After a long, well-vegetated climb between the trees, you burst into the open and there's a spectacular view, with the dramatic Castell Dinas Brán directly ahead.

"You come as if at once upon the valley" wrote Hazlitt, "which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side."

Follow the road towards the castle, with the sheer lightning escarpment to the right, until you can turn left and follow the steep steps up to the ruins.

Known locally as Crow Castle, this once mighty palace was built in the 1200s by Gruffudd II ap Madoc, Prince of Powys Fadog (Lower Powys), on the site of an Iron Age hill fort. It survived only a few years, in 1277 it was besieged by the English and the castle's Welsh defenders burned it to the ground before fleeing. Brán, which means "crow", is the name of a giant of Welsh legend. Brán the Blessed was a supernatural prince, whose decapitated, talking head is said to have protected the realm from invasion. He is the Fisher King of Arthurian legend, and Dinas Brán may be the location of Castle Coebon, home of the Holy Grail.

Desired on the other side of the hill and follow the path until you get to a three-way signpost. Here there is a choice: turn left and shortcut straight to Llangollen, or right along a path that skirts the edge of the hill.

Follow this path as it drops past a wooden cross and take the left turn signed to Dinas. Turn right when you hit the road and right again on the road signed to World's End. Turn immediately left on to the Chryslan Way.

After passing some rudimentary and seats this pleasant grassy path slopes down to a signpost. Turn hard left, signed to Valley Crucis Abbey.

Follow the path across a large open field, looking out for an almost invisible right-hand turning, over a metal stile, signed to Velvet Hill.

Take this precipitous path until it reaches a road. Here it's worth a short detour right to inspect the Pillar of Eliseg.

This weathered stump, which has stood here for more than a thousand years, was once the shaft of a great Celtic cross. It was set up by Cyngen ap Cadell, Prince of Powys, in the ninth century, in honour of his great grandfather Eborac ap Gwylog. The inscription, now impossible to read, traces their royal lineage back to the Roman emperor Magnus Maximus. The cross gave its name to Valle Crucis Abbey nearby, founded in 1202. This tiny ring Catholic community was one of the first to be dissolved in the 16th century, but its crumbling walls are still open to visitors. Retrace your steps and cross the stile

on to the slopes of Velvet Hill. Follow the steep path through the bracken and straight up a grassy track. Stop for a breather and admire the view of Valle Crucis Abbey.

Arrive at a velvety sward of rabbit-splashed grass, with vistas of the Llanyllino Mountains to the west and back to Castell Dinas Brán. Turn left and follow the kinked ridge and descend to the sparkling River Dee.

When the path emerges on to a road, follow the turning signed to Corwen, then take a left-hand footpath down to the canal. You reach the towpath behind the Chainbridge Hotel. Here it's worth a short detour right to see the famous Horseshoe Falls.

4 Horseshoe Falls

This elegant weir was designed by Telford, to create a pool that feeds the canal system, and it now serves another function, because the canal supplies fresh drinking water to the area around Netwith. Hazlitt might well of visited this idyllic spot, before the weir was installed.

"I turn to thee in thought, Oylvan Dee!" he wrote. "...I thus shalt always be to see the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life itself."

Return the same way to Plas Newydd. It was the birthplace of a local entrepreneur called Exportus Pickering, who used it to avoid paying tolls.

Continue along the towpath to Llangollen. The canal passes the International Pavilion, home of the International Musical Entitled that has taken place here every July since 1947.

Take the path before the What? Tea Room, which leads down to Llangollen Bridge, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, and the centre of the town.

"How fine it is," writes Hazlitt, "to enter some old tower, walled and towered, just at the approach of night fall."

I recommend staying at Gales Hotel and Wine Bar on Bridge Street (Gales Bar, gales@llangollen.co.uk), an establishment that Hazlitt knew as the Lion Inn. While you eat, why not read extracts from Rousseau's Reveries of a Solitary Walker? In the morning, walk up Castle Street and take the left-hand branch of Hill Street, which weaves southeast towards Plas Newydd.

6 Plas Newydd

This eccentric, half-timbered, chocolate box of a house was once home to the "Ladies of Llangollen", Lady Eleanor Charlotte Butler and Sarah Penrhyn. They were young Irish women who defied the aristocratic families by running away and setting up house together in Llangollen in 1790, where they lived for more than 20 years.

They dressed in men's cravats and top hats, shared a bed, covered every inch of their walls with carved oak, and became a

rather unlikely tourist attraction, receiving visits from the Duke of Wellington, Sir Walter Scott, Josiah Wedgwood and many others. Hazlitt may well have visited them for tea, William Wordsworth certainly did. He wrote a sonnet about their "low-roofed Cot", describing them as:

Sisters in love, allow allowed to climb
Even on this earth, above the reach of Time!
Leave Plas Newydd and turn right down Butlers Hill. Cross the brook and turn up Black Street. Take an unmarked ramp on the left and curve up the steep road until you reach a footpath on the right.

Take this path and stop to examine the useful board, which maps the paths through Pen-y-Coed. Keep taking left-hand turns until you are on a broad path that descends gently beside a dry-stone wall and emerges on to a road.

Turn right along this road, passing the 19th-century Tyn Dwr Hall on your left. It

curves around until it meets a crossroads. Ignore the left-hand footpath sign and head up the rubble track at right angles. After a strenuous climb, take the left-hand fork and follow this track as it curves around the hillside. The Vale of Llangollen gradually disappears behind as Shropshire spreads out ahead.

When the path meets a road junction, take the road straight ahead and follow it down through woodland to a T-junction, then turn left. After half a mile the road turns sharply left, but continue straight ahead, on a National Trust path that leads to Chirk Castle.

7 Chirk Castle

This medieval fortress was built in 1295. It guards the entrance to the Esting valley and was part of a defensive line of English castles built along the Welsh Marches. Today it is owned by the National Trust, though non-members can use the permissive paths that cross the property.

The castle itself has spectacular staircases and interior decorations that span seven centuries. One highlight is a stretch of wooden water pipe that once formed part of the New River system, maintained by Sir Hugh Myddelton, the 1st Baronet. This music pipe brought fresh drinking water from the River Lea to London in 1613. It's also worth walking past some well-preserved remnants of Offa's Dyke to visit the "Oak at the Gate of the Dead", a thousand-year-old tree that marks the site of the bloody Battle of Criccieth.

Take the road that skirts the north side of the castle and, when it turns left, cross the stile directly ahead and continue past the woods on your right.

After two kissing gates, the path forks: take the left-hand option, across the field, which leads down to a road.

At this point, you could make a short detour right to see the spectacularly fluted wrought-iron gates commissioned for Chirk Castle in 1712. Either way, take the footpath almost directly over the road, which leads across a field and right, through the woods beside the canal, until you reach the north end of Chirk Tunnel again.

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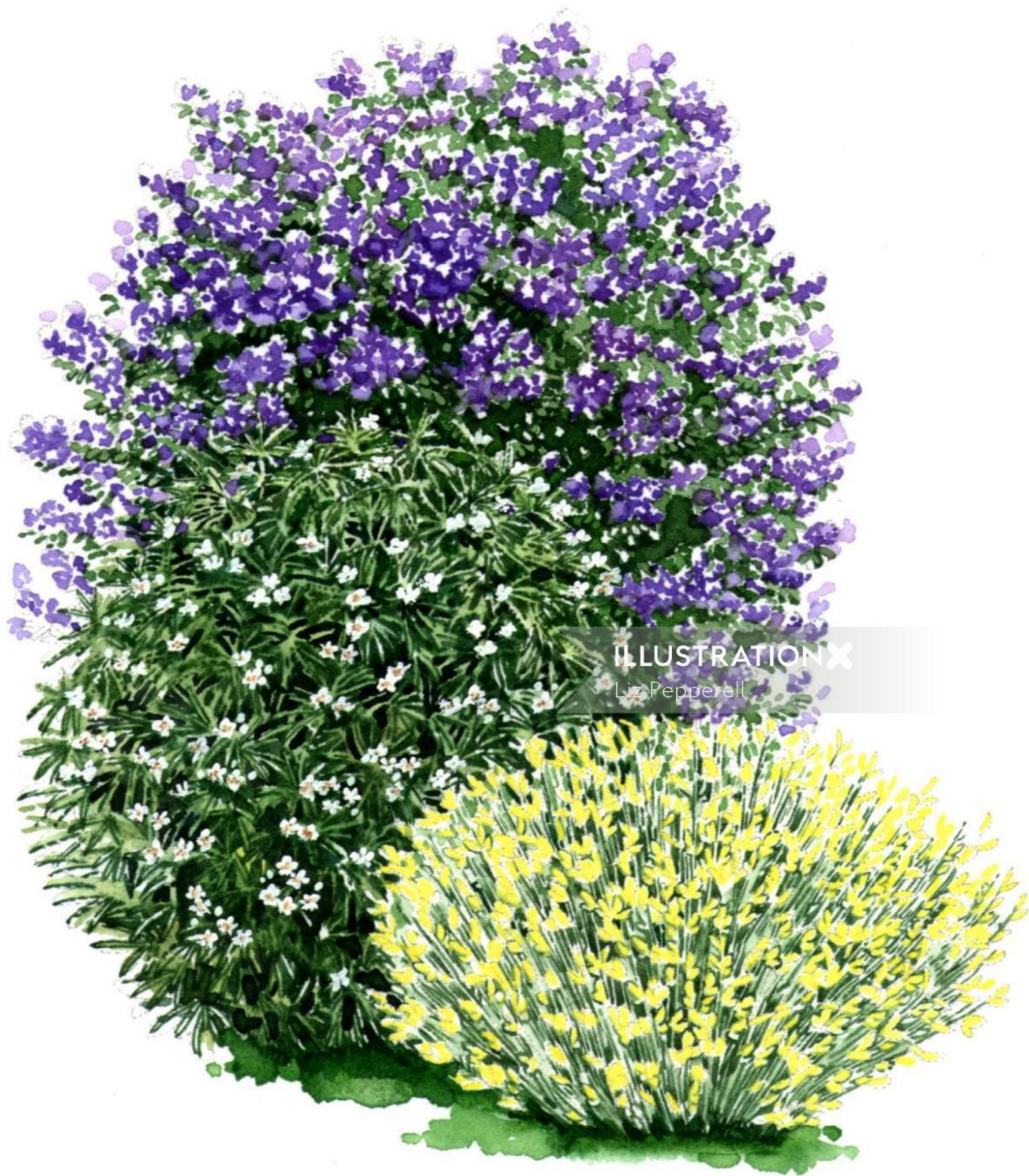
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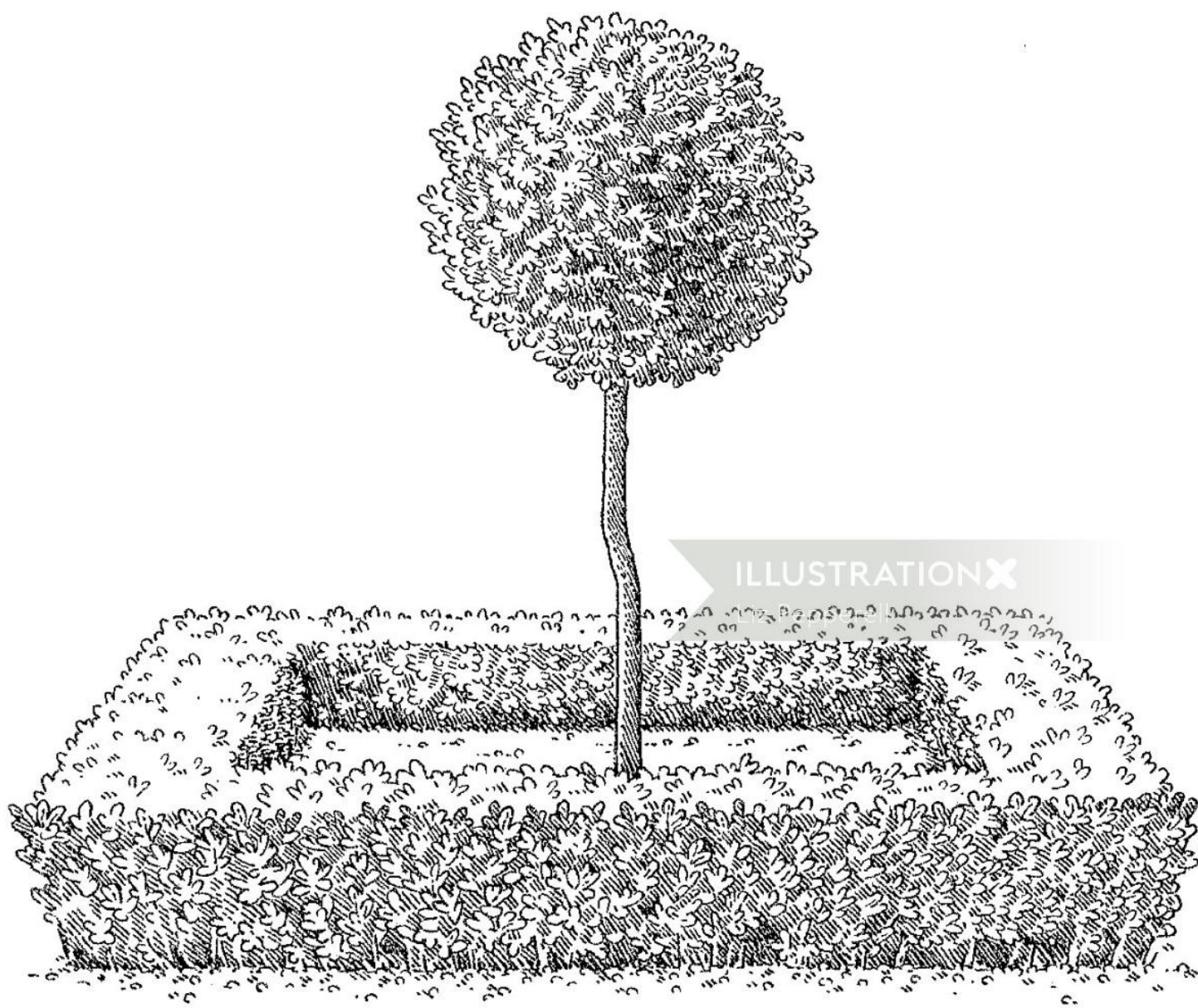
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