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Italian Gardens: Romantic Splendor in the Edwardian Age

Helena Attlee

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For centuries, the cardinals, popes, and rulers of Italy have devoted themselves to creating vast villa gardens that represent their wealth and power, provide a calm refuge from city life, and showcase lavish plantings and rare flowers. Here, in over two hundred exquisite photographs—taken during the Edwardian era when these historic gardens were at their peak—twenty-two of central Italy's most ornate and spectacular palace gardens are presented.

Italian Gardens reveals the vanished magnificence of the aristocracy's landscapes in superb images from the archives of Britain's renowned *Country Life* magazine. Classic photographs of unrivaled beauty and composition display patterned grottoes, elaborate terraces, sophisticated fountains, antique statuary, and sun-dappled arbors to provide an important record of these gardens at a nostalgic moment in time, before the two World Wars provoked irrevocable changes in Italy's political and economic climate and many gardens fell into neglect. These vivid images dating from the early 1900s possess a quality of light and depth of detail not seen in modern photographs.

Discussing the history and design of each garden, author Helena Attlee brings to life the personalities responsible for such extravagant creations as the Alley of a Hundred Fountains at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, the swirling parterres de broderie of Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome, the broad terraces and majestic staircases of the Vatican Gardens, the frescoed loggia of the Villa Medici in Fiesole, and the border of innumerable citrus trees circling the Isolotto in Florence's famous Boboli Gardens. This volume introduces the intricacies and ornaments of the sumptuous gardens of Rome and Tuscany, and will transport readers to these unique, fragrant landscapes.

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