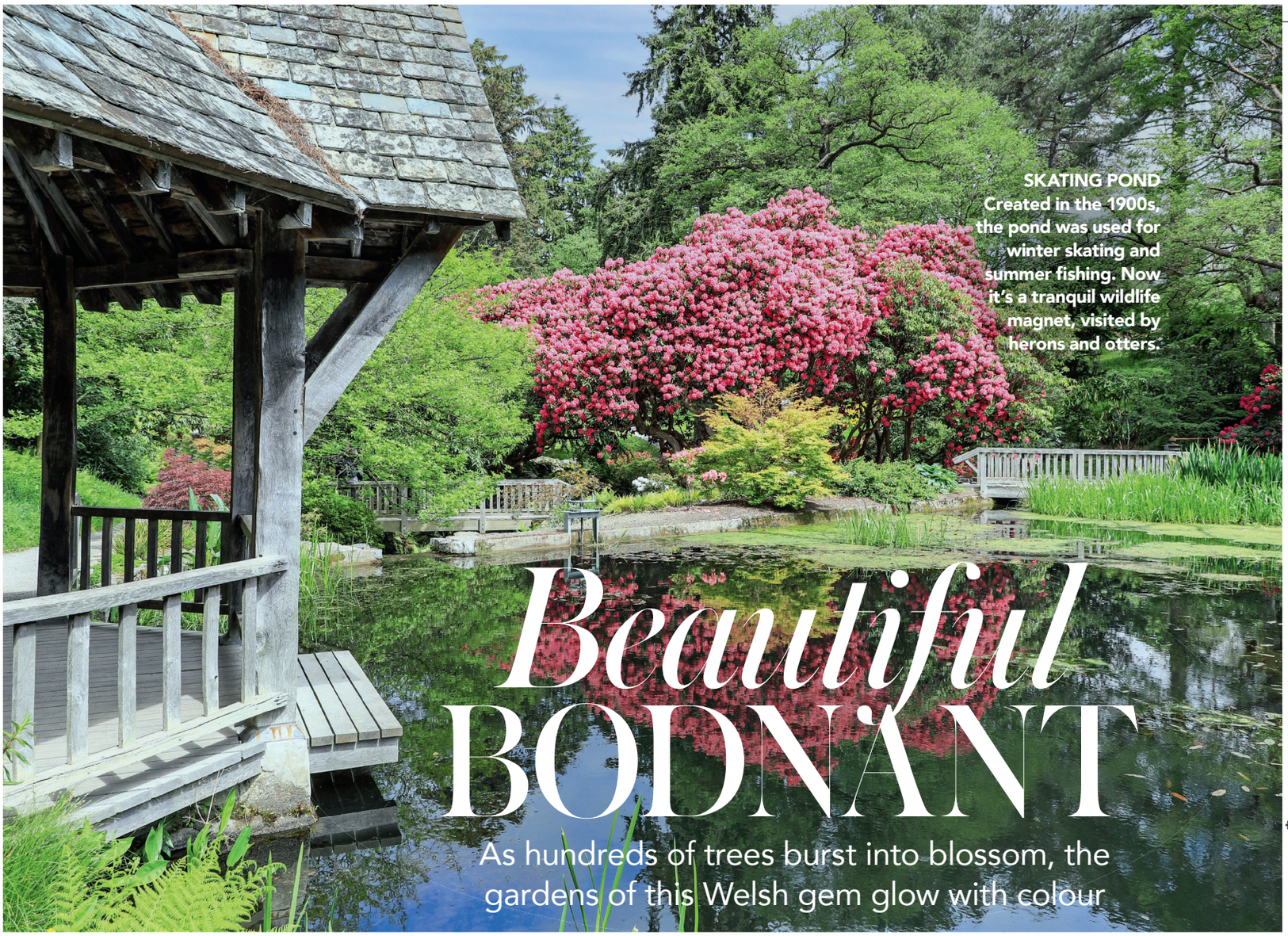


SKATING POND
Created in the 1900s, the pond was used for winter skating and summer fishing. Now it's a tranquil wildlife magnet, visited by herons and otters.

Beautiful BODNANT

As hundreds of trees burst into blossom, the gardens of this Welsh gem glow with colour



The Grade I-listed garden at Bodnant is every bit as dramatic and awe-inspiring as the Welsh landscape that surrounds it. With a mix of formal and naturalistic design, it's full of surprise and wonder, leading the visitor from manicured lawns and classical terraces to wild, rhododendron-clad hillsides, lush meadows and giant redwood trees. Spread over 80 acres and relatively remote, it has a magical, peaceful air, with superb views around every corner.

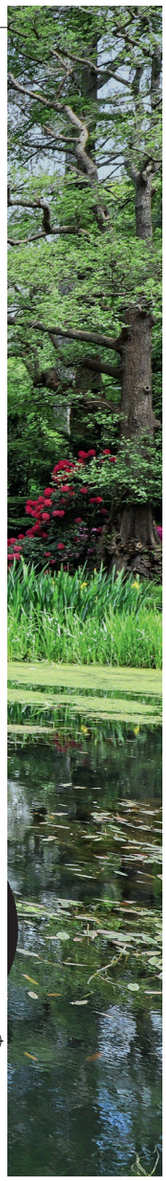
There has been a garden here since the end of the 18th century, but its transformation into something truly exceptional began with its Victorian owner, Henry Pochin. He was an MP and scientist who added the famous 55m-long, curved Laburnum Arch and planted rare conifers along the banks of the River Hiraethlyn below the house.

Pochin's descendants continued his legacy – daughter Laura (Lady Aberconway) and grandson Henry McLaren were responsible for much of the design we see today. Henry cut five terraces from the steep slope beneath the house and planted swathes of rhododendrons (many grown from seed collected by plant hunters in China) in the steep-sided Dell, where they mingle with the conifers planted by his grandfather.

There is spectacle in every season, but May sees a sensory explosion of colour and scent, when hundreds of magnolias, rhododendrons and other trees and shrubs erupt into blossom. It's also when the Laburnum Arch, thought to be the longest and oldest in the UK, achieves its shimmering, golden peak.

CANAL TERRACE
The Pin Mill was built in Gloucester in 1730. Henry McLaren bought the derelict structure 200 years later and rebuilt it as a centrepiece to the Canal Terrace.

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▲ VALLEY VIEWS
Bodnant enjoys a spectacular location above the River Conwy, looking across the valley to the Snowdonia mountain range. It's surrounded by some of the UK's oldest, rarest trees, plus acer, cherry and magnolia plantations.

▼ THE DELL
Thick with rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias, this 'wild' hillside contrasts beautifully with the Italianate terraces, ordered herbaceous borders and lawns surrounding the Estate's mansion house.





▲ LABURNUM ARCH
Made up of 64 plants, entwined to form a magnificent curved tunnel, the Laburnum Arch flowers for around three weeks in late May and early June, depending on the weather. The dangling racemes emerge green and gradually brighten to a glowing gold. >>

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Get the look

May at Bodnant sees the landscape come alive with blossom and early-summer herbaceous plants. Try this selection for a similar show



GOLDEN CHAIN

Also known as the bean tree (*Laburnum anagyroides*), this deciduous tree has rather fallen out of fashion – a pity, as it makes a fantastic specimen for a large or mid-sized garden (reaching 4-8m high in 20-25 years). Alternatively, train it over a pergola or arch. Easy to grow, it needs a sunny spot and well-drained soil.
Available from thompson-morgan.com



ALLIUM 'PURPLE SENSATION'

Alliums are classy bulbs that take minimal effort. Plant in autumn in well-drained soil and sun – they will come back year on year. Grow in pots or borders and, if the latter, team with herbaceous plants like hardy geraniums, which will disguise the allium leaves as they die back.
Available from crocus.co.uk



MAGNOLIA

Add glamour with a magnolia. Slow-growing, they bear large flowers, usually in white and pink. Many mature into big trees, but compact varieties, such as *Magnolia x soulangeana*, can be grown in pots. Plant in spring, in neutral-to-acid soil, in a sunny or partially shaded spot that's sheltered from winds and frosts.
Available from thompson-morgan.com



WISTERIA

This fast-growing climber is at its peak in late spring, dripping with lilac or white flowers. It needs plenty of space (up to 20m on a wall), and pruning twice a year. But a dwarf variety, *Wisteria frutescens* 'Amethyst Falls', will thrive in a large pot or as a standard in a border, growing to 4m. Grow in a sheltered, sunny site for lilac-blue flowers in May/June a year later.
Available from thompson-morgan.com



AZALEA

The Dell at Bodnant is famous for its rhododendrons and azaleas, and while it's hard to recreate wild woodland in a garden, Japanese azaleas are ideal for a cool, shaded corner. 'Snow Pearl' is a compact evergreen (0.75 x 1m) with white flowers. Grow in acid-to-neutral soil enriched with well-rotted compost, or containers of ericaceous compost.
Available from primrose.co.uk



JAPANESE PRIMROSE

This is a delightful woodland perennial, also known as a candelabra primrose, with rosettes of light green leaves and sturdy stems topped with whorls of flowers that look stunning when planted in drifts. 'Miller's Crimson' has tiers of red-purple blooms, held 45cm high, from May to June. Grow in partial shade, in moisture-rich, acid-to-neutral soil.
Available from crocus.co.uk

WORDS: CHRIS MORLEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, CROCUS.CO.UK, VISIONS BV

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