



# **Observations on Modern Gardening, by Thomas Whately: An Eighteenth-Century Study of the English Landscape Garden (Garden and Landscape History)**

*Michael Symes*

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Thomas Whatley's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770) is the first contemporary study of what has come to be known as the English landscape garden, often claimed to be the country's greatest original contribution to the fine arts. It analyses natural and built elements of the garden, suggests principles of design, and provides descriptions of major gardens of the day, such as those at Blenheim and Piercefield (Monmouthshire), together with the author's responses, aesthetic, mental and emotional. It indicates a taste for the natural and the "picturesque", foreshadowing romanticism.

In its day it was enormously influential, being regarded for many years as the definitive account, and was read widely both in England and in Europe. For today's reader its importance is twofold: the garden descriptions are the fullest we have of what they looked like at the time, and the author's views enable us to understand prevailing tastes and sensibilities.

This edition of the text is accompanied by an introduction and full commentary, covering both general considerations and specific points and topics. Contemporary illustrations have been chosen to illuminate further the gardens and places discussed.

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