



# **Gardens of Provence: And the Cote d'Azur (Specials)**

*TASCHEN, Marie-Francoise Valery*

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Enduring inspiration to countless artists, Provence is a rural paradise, a verdant, fertile environment that offers endless opportunities for those practitioners of what the philosopher Francis Bacon called ""the purest of human joys"". The art of landscape gardening demonstrates more than almost any other activity the human need to create havens of peace and contemplation. Benignly Fashioning nature, the landscape gardener responds to what is present, as well as importing dazzling exotic plants and trees to reveal an extraordinary new world of the senses. Provence then is a gardener's idyll -- a place where the extremes of ""wilderness"" and the symmetry of geometric construction come together in some extraordinary designs. These creations building on the qualities of the area -- light and a dry climate -- do not divorce themselves from their surroundings but rather create the impression that indeed the whole of Provence is one magnificent garden. Whether employing the region's evergreens, its widespread shrubbery (for topiary), its lavender meadows, its plentiful herbs and spices, or its ""desert"" vegetation -- cactus and the like -- the soil's the limit and the imagination the only perimeter fence. From the humid tropical to the unspoilt hills, From the cubist inspiration at Hyres to the Zen patterns of Erik Borja, and from the coast to the valleys, only in Provence can you say that you walk in gardens as varied as dreams, yet as sensual as life.



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