



WADDESDON



Eythrope Gardens celebrate 150 glorious years with first ever Open Day

16 August 2025

A rare chance to explore one of Britain's finest private working gardens

The enchanting private gardens of Miss Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922) one of the pioneering champions of horticulture, will open its gates to the public for a very special Open Day on Saturday 16 August, as part of a season of celebrations surrounding the establishment of one of Buckinghamshire's true hidden gems.

The magnificent four-acre Walled Garden, attractive glass houses, picturesque orchard and traditional English parkland beyond was once described by Gregory Long, President Emeritus of the New York Botanical Garden as "*the perfect dream of a place*". Now, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Miss Alice's creation of the gardens in the late 19th century, visitors are invited to explore this horticultural marvel in the heart of Buckinghamshire.

A passionate and knowledgeable horticulturalist, renowned for her perfectionism and innovation, Alice was driven by her extraordinary vision and determination to transform what she described as *“little more than a swamp and a wilderness”* into a bountiful garden and park, spread across 60 acres.

Although she modestly referred to it as her *“little garden”*, Alice was instrumental in creating an important resource for future generations of her family, not to mention professional plantsmen and women. The walled garden is a rare example of a large-scale working kitchen garden and potager reimagined for the 21st century, still producing abundant fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers to supply nearby Waddesdon Manor and the wider estate, including the Five Arrows hotel and The Bow pub – both in Waddesdon village.

Eythrope maintains an almost legendary status amongst gardening aficionados, not just for its beauty and variety but also as a haven for preserving traditional horticultural techniques that might otherwise be lost. The garden also stands today as a rare surviving example of a historic country house kitchen garden, many of which were dramatically scaled back or completely abandoned after the two World Wars. In contrast, since 1988 Eythrope has been lovingly restored to its original function. Much of this work was under the watchful eye of Lady Mary Keen throughout the 1990s, aided by then Head Gardener Sue Dickinson, and in close collaboration with the late Lady Rothschild (1934-2019). Together, they oversaw the ambitious project to restore the Walled Garden to its former late-Victorian glory, complete with the renovation of its glasshouses, fruit trees, topiary garden, herbaceous borders and vegetable garden, all of which would have been wholly familiar to Miss Alice during her stewardship.

Today, the kitchen garden grows a mixture of heritage and modern varieties, providing a rich seasonal harvest of vegetables such as sprouts, chard, tender stem broccoli and brassicas. Come autumn, the garden then yields a surfeit of pumpkins and gourds that are essential in October, along with other delicious goodies including Autumn raspberries and Spaghetti Marrows.

The orchard supplies bountiful quantities of apples and pears – most of which are juiced locally and sold in the Waddesdon Manor shop or enjoyed by guests staying at the Five Arrows or patrons of The Bow pub.

Other highlights of Eythrope include an impressive collection of rare and unusual plants, among them many Rothschild favourites, including wonderfully scented Malmaison Carnations, Auriculas and festooned roses along with a number of rare orchids, notably Phragmipedium ‘Jacob Rothschild’ and *Bulbophyllum rothschildianum*.

Eythrope has also partnered with the National Collection of Fragrant Heliotropes, based at Hampton Court Palace, to create a spectacular array of beautiful, vibrant flowers.

With the Open Day on 16 August acting as a curtain-raiser to Eythrope’s official 150th anniversary in November, Daniel Jones, Assistant Garden Manager says: *“Four generations of the Rothschild family have gardened at Eythrope, and in 2025 we’re celebrating the enduring legacy and influence of Alice de Rothschild, Dorothy de Rothschild, the late Lady Rothschild and Dame Hannah Rothschild with a special display in the Pot Garden. Visitors will be able to walk through four distinct ‘zones’, each reflecting the planting style and tastes of one of the four female custodians who have shaped the garden over its 150-year history. I should add that Beth Rothschild is very much following in Alice’s horticultural footsteps, too. She trained at Kew and worked alongside her father, the late Lord Jacob Rothschild, on the restoration of the gardens at the Manor in the 1990s and contributed to the development of the Walled Garden.”*

Today, Eythrope’s gardens are looked after by a team of nine skilled and knowledgeable gardeners, who were awarded ‘Master Gardeners’ at the 2024 Royal Windsor Flower Show. Inspired by the horticultural ambition of Miss Alice, they continue to uphold her legacy through their planting schemes and displays throughout the year. As an

example of this during the Open Day, visitors will encounter a bold, modern interpretation of Miss Alice's 'Mexican Garden' from the 1890's, where structural succulents have been mixed with loose, colourful tender perennials to showcase the diversity of the plant collection at Eythrope and the variety of common summer garden plants heralding from Mexico.

The gardeners pride themselves on showcasing the best of traditional skills, alongside modern horticultural best-practice. For example, dessert cherries are grown in pots in the Cherry House and pollinated by hand each year. In the greenhouses, the plants are cared for using modern Integrated Pest Management, where a programme of biological controls and natural predators are released to reduce the need for harmful chemicals and minimise the impact on the natural environment. In the vegetable garden, both heritage and modern varieties are grown using the 'No Dig' method, where homemade compost is added to the soil surface every year, which helps to minimise disturbance to the soil, reduces carbon release into the atmosphere and increases beneficial soil micro-organisms. Modern and heritage varieties of trained top and soft fruit are also grown at Eythrope, including an impressive arbour of cordon-trained pears and apples

The late Lord Rothschild (1936-2024), although not an avid gardener himself, took immense pleasure in the Walled Garden. He particularly loved the figs that are grown under glass in the vinery, not least perhaps because the fig trees' heritage can be traced back to a scion taken from an original specimen that Miss Alice grew at her summer villa at Grasse, in Provence.

For amateur fruit and veg' growers, the garden is a rich source of inspiration. The tomatoes and cucumbers, for example, are trained up to the apex of the greenhouses to create a colourful and immersive display that's both productive and visually beautiful.

Sustainability is also very much to the fore of the gardening practices. All beds are mulched with compost made on site and natural materials are used where possible. Hazel, for instance, is coppiced each year from the estate and used for plant supports. The majority of plants grown for the garden are also either grown from a seed or cutting and nurtured in one of five heated greenhouses.

Suzie Hanson, Gardens Manager – Waddesdon & Eythrope, says: *"Ten years ago, I took over the running of Eythrope Gardens. When I walked through the garden gates on my first day the weight of history of those that came before was not lost on me. The garden we see today is a real family affair. It has a strong lineage where each generation has added their personality and passions. In its first 150 years the garden has become a paradise for all things horticultural and to be a part of its history is a dream come true. Here's to the next 150 years!"*

Pippa Shirley, Director of Waddesdon, says: *"The Eythrope Walled Garden is one of the jewels in Waddesdon's crown, both as an emblem of Rothschild perfectionism and as a testament to Alice de Rothschild's vision and love of gardens and horticulture. For me, it's also living history, the most incredible expression of Alice's legacy, cherished and nurtured by her heirs and run by a wonderful, dedicated team whose expertise and passion she would surely have recognized. Whatever the season, a visit to Eythrope lifts the soul, and we're so glad that we're able to share this beautiful place in its anniversary year with everyone on this special Open Day."*

Tickets for the Open Day are available from www.waddesdon.org.uk and are priced at £15 for adults and £10 for RHS Members. Visitors will also be able to purchase seasonal fruit, vegetables, plants and cut flowers grown at Eythrope and light refreshments will be available.

To further honour the Gardens' 150th anniversary, on the evening of Saturday 16 August, the Manor Restaurant at Waddesdon will host a special four-course dinner inspired by the exceptional produce from Eythrope. Visitors can also enjoy guided tours throughout the summer, available every Wednesday and on the last Friday of each month. For more information, please visit www.waddesdon.org.uk.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

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The **Eythrope Estate** was bought by Alice de Rothschild in 1875, shortly after her brother Ferdinand had bought the adjoining Waddesdon Estate. Alice had come from Frankfurt to act as a companion to Ferdinand after the death of his wife, but she was keen to have her own establishment. She rebuilt the existing house at Eythrope, and created a garden famous in its own day, which she used as a day-time retreat, always returning to Waddesdon Manor to sleep. Working with her long-time head gardener, George F Johnson, she pioneered a number of new techniques, including 3-dimensional carpet bedding. Today, the Walled Garden is managed by the Rothschild Foundation with public access by guided tour.

Waddesdon Manor was built at the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the style of a French early 16th-century château. Baron Ferdinand was an inspired collector, and the house was designed to showcase his exceptional collection of English and Dutch paintings, French 18th-century furniture, Sèvres porcelain, and other decorative arts. When Ferdinand died in 1898, he left Waddesdon to his sister, Alice, who also was a great collector. Upon her death the house passed to her great-nephew, James de Rothschild, who inherited a substantial part of his father Baron Edmond's great collection. In 1957, to ensure its future in perpetuity, Waddesdon was bequeathed to the National Trust. The Rothschild family continues to run Waddesdon through a family charitable trust, the Rothschild Foundation. Until February 2024, it was under the chairmanship of Jacob, 4th Lord Rothschild. His eldest daughter, Hannah Rothschild, is now the Chair. More at <https://waddesdon.org.uk/about-us/press/notes-for-editors/>

For more information on Waddesdon Manor and its events and exhibitions, visit www.waddesdon.org.uk, like Waddesdon Manor on Facebook, follow @WaddesdonManor on Bluesky and X and @waddesdonmanor_nt on Instagram.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Tracy Jones at Brera PR - tracy@brera-london.com / 01702 216658 / 07887 514984 / www.brera-london.com