

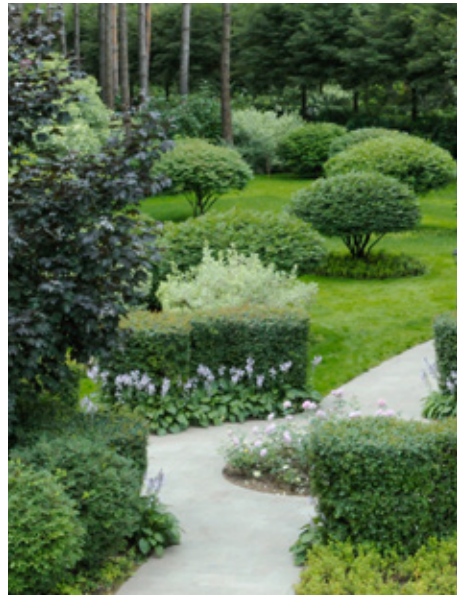
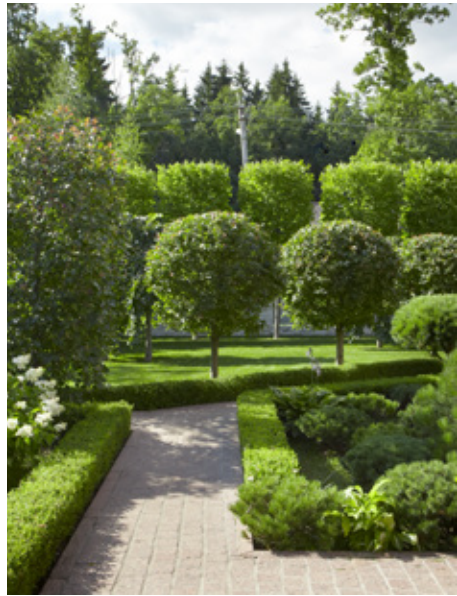
THIS PAGE A sculpture of Cupid at Orekhovno (2002-12), near Pskov in Russia. Listed by *Forbes* as one of the world's seven best gardens, it was one of Alexandre's first projects and took him ten years to complete. OPPOSITE FROM TOP For the Estate project, Il Nature pruned European lime *Pallidas* and under-planted with roses; an autumnal Japanese garden at Pine Close in Russia

# THE NEW GARDEN AESTHETIC

Best known for Les Jardins d'Etretat in Normandy, landscape architect and designer Alexandre Grivko is steeped in classicism, but through parametric modelling and other experimentation his ambition is to create the gardens of the future







OPPOSITE TOP ROW FROM LEFT Pine Close. A ‘French château’ garden at Hurtwood. Planting as architecture at Wychbury. MIDDLE ROW FROM LEFT Four Seasons in Surrey. Colour accents catch the eye. A shaped tree at Four Seasons. BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT Parametric modelling shaped Etretat’s plants. Ponds bring serenity. A meandering path excites curiosity. THIS PAGE FROM TOP Jardin La Manche at Etretat. Alexandre Grivko

Expressiveness is miserly; everything superfluous is ugly.’ It’s a Japanese proverb that landscape architect Alexandre Grivko strongly subscribes to. Moreover, drawing on the philosophy of André Le Nôtre, the creator of Versailles’s exteriors, he seeks to achieve the ultimate visual effect through minimalist architectural plant compositions and to harmonise past and future.

Indeed, Grivko’s ability to blend classical styles with contemporary trends is an important reason why the low-profile gardening guru, and his company Il Nature, are receiving mounting acclaim. Documentaries about his creations enjoyed the spotlight at the Cannes Lions International, and his designs are trumpeted in prestigious publications from *Vogue* to *Forbes*. In 2012, the latter pronounced Alexandre’s privately owned garden in Orekhovno (now open to the public) as among the seven best in the world. His discreet presence is in part explained by the clientele he attracts, a heady international mix of business tycoons, movie stars and fashion gurus.

Born into a diplomatic family, the Russian-born Alexandre inherited his green fingers from his grandfather, a military attaché and keen horticulturalist. Since abandoning his studies in economics for the career of a landscape designer and co-founding his business in 1999, Grivko has designed over 500 gardens and developed 100 large-scale projects with his team worldwide. As the *Courrier Picard* reported, he had the honour of transforming the picturesque park of Château Jonval, the source of Athos’s manor in Dumas’s *The Three Musketeers*, due to open in autumn 2019. At the Four Seasons project in Surrey, he fused the elements of formal French and Italian gardens with the freedom of the British landscape. At Hurtwood, outside Moscow, he harmoniously under-planted an allée of lime trees, 120m long, with roses. At nearby Wychbury House, a garden of little chambers delights the eye with its accurate curves, lines and proportions... It’s impossible to list them all here, but the complete illustrated edition listing all Il Nature’s projects is being prepared by a well-known publishing house. Whatever the project, Alexandre Grivko asks you to picture your house ‘as an island in a beautiful sea full of colours’.

But it is the Jardins d’Etretat (2016) that have thrust his creativity into the public eye. Here, on Normandy’s Alabaster Coast, once a hideaway of Claude Monet, he steeped the project in neo-futuristic ideas by applying parametric design principles, first boldly implemented in other media by Zaha Hadid, who took her first inspiration from the Russian avant-garde. By turning his garden into a laboratory with over 150,000 species, Alexandre tests out new plant-care technologies and the capacity for whimsical trimmed shrub compositions to become streamlined architectural forms. One wonders what the great Impressionist would have chosen to paint had he turned away from the sea and faced inland. Visit [ilnature.co.uk](http://ilnature.co.uk) □

