

News release

February 2016

## ***Celebrate Year of the English Garden in the Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park***

- ***From Jane Austen's beloved garden to the creativity of a 'cut-price Capability Brown' from Gilbert White***

In celebration of one of England's greatest attractions and to mark the 300th anniversary of 'Capability' Brown, Visit England are promoting 2016 as the 'Year of the English Garden'. There are gardens and open spaces a-plenty in the **Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park** – a stretch of wonderful countryside nestling between the cathedral cities of Winchester and Chichester. Take a break visiting the quintessentially English gardens of some of our literary greats – like Jane Austen or the naturalist Gilbert White, historic house formal gardens or wonderful botanic gardens. And choose from a range of interesting garden-related events and activities.

**Jane Austen** loved the garden of her home in Chawton (now the **Jane Austen's House Museum**) and visitors can experience it much as it was in Jane's day.

Summer is a delight with a profusion of flowers, such as cornflowers, poppies and marigolds as well as roses, daisies, hollyhocks and other heirloom blooms. The museum celebrates Jane's green fingers by holding garden events each year.

<http://www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk/> Jane's brother Edward owned **Chawton House** (just up the road from the Museum). As well as the house, visitors can enjoy its beautiful, Capability Brown-inspired parkland, shrubberies and a walled kitchen garden made by Edward Austen. New for 2016 will be a new herb garden in honour of Elizabeth Blackwell, whose eighteenth-century 'Curious Herbal' was a delightful guide to different plants and their uses in medicine. <http://www.chawtonhouse.org/>

The historic home of the eighteenth century writer and naturalist **Gilbert White** is open for all to see and includes **acres of magnificent garden and parkland** with wonderful vistas over the Hampshire Hangers and South Downs. Gilbert White's garden was one of the passions of his life and it played a key part in his important research into the natural world. Creating wonders on a low budget he has been described as a '**cut-price Capability Brown**'. The garden is full of features that are unique to his naturalist studies and a visit gives a unique glimpse into his life and work. [www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk](http://www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk)

**Two National Trust properties** boast glorious gardens and make for a great day out for any age. At **Hinton Ampner** take a stroll through over 500 years of history, from Civil War battles to a devastating fire. The grounds are a masterpiece of 20th century design, with a fine 12 –acre garden and newly opened 1,600 acres of parkland. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hinton-ampner> And perched high on the South Downs ridge **Uppark** commands views as far south as the English Channel. The intimate gardens are being restored to their original 18th-century design, with plenty of space in the adjacent meadow and woodland for exploring. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/uppark-house-and-garden>

The **Petersfield Physic Garden** is a delightful example of a 17<sup>th</sup> century garden, designed for growing plants known for their healing properties. [www.petersfieldphysicgarden.org.uk/](http://www.petersfieldphysicgarden.org.uk/) Another historic gem is the **garden at the Allen Gallery, Alton**, opened originally as a Botanical Garden in 1778. Its sundial is mounted on a piece of stone from the old London Bridge, rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of London! <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/allen-gallery/allen-garden.htm>

Gardens on a different scale can be found at **Staunton Country Park**. Its hothouses (the largest on the South Coast), ornamental lake, magical follies and other unusual treasures are testament to original owner Sir George Thomas Staunton's work as an Orientalist, politician and patron of horticulture. Visitors can explore the splendid Victorian Walled Garden, sensory garden and Golden Jubilee Maze as well as

ancient woodland and landscaped parkland.

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/countryside/staunton.htm>

Quirky events of all kinds make the most of the area's gardens – try the **Unusual Plant Fair, outdoor theatre, nature talks, workshops** or even **Gilbert's Games and Country Fair** with its a traditional 18<sup>th</sup> century games at Gilbert White's House, **gardening workshops, bee-keeping sessions, seasonal walks and jazz** at Hinton Ampner, **Daffodil Afternoon Teas** at Langrish House Hotel, a **Mediaeval Falconry Display, Antiques Valuations**, or **Jazz and Beer** at Uppark, and **May Day celebrations** at Jane Austen's House to name just a few.

For further information about staying in the Hampshire part of the South Downs National Park, visit [www.easthants.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/tourism) and the award-winning Tourist Information Centre in Petersfield can help with details - email [petersfieldinfo@btconnect.com](mailto:petersfieldinfo@btconnect.com)

Ends

**For further information please contact Rachel Shimell on 02380 732981 or email: [Rachel.shimell@gmail.com](mailto:Rachel.shimell@gmail.com)**

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **The South Downs National Park**

Uniquely combining a biodiverse landscape with bustling towns and villages, the South Downs National Park covers an area of over 1,600 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to more than 110,400 people. Recognised as an area of outstanding beauty, the South Downs is also home to a multitude of vibrant working communities steeped in history and traditional English culture, from the ancient cathedral city of Winchester in the west to the bustling market town of Lewes in the east. [www.southdowns.gov.uk/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/)

#### **East Hampshire**

The area of the South Downs that spills into East Hampshire - around Chawton where Jane Austen lived – has quite a different feel from the rest of the new National Park. Hidden away between the cathedral cities of Winchester and Chichester, its steep wooded hills and hidden valleys of watercress farms, lavender fields, vineyards, hop gardens and trout-filled streams, together with its picture-perfect villages and peaceful market towns, make it undoubtedly one of the loveliest parts of rural England. [www.easthants.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/tourism)

#### **Year of the English Garden**

In celebration of one of England's greatest attractions and to mark the 300th anniversary of 'Capability' Brown, Visit Britain is promoting 2016 as the Year of the English Garden with a PR campaign and travel trade activity. The campaign will spotlight and celebrate the country's fabulous gardens and events to inspire additional or extended overnight visits during 2016. <https://www.visitengland.com/biz/about-us/campaigns-and-opportunities/year-english-garden-2016>