



“I have always loved sky and water, leaves and flowers... I found them in abundance in my little pond.”

**Claude Monet**

Claude Monet, *The Japanese Footbridge (detail)*, 1899, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly, in memory of her son John W. Mudd, and Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg



# 1

## Painter and Gardener

French artist Claude Monet (1840–1926) combined his love of nature and art by creating gardens wherever he lived. Although Monet spent much time in Paris and traveled extensively in France and abroad, he enjoyed the country most and lived for more than fifty years along the Seine River. His involvement with gardening grew over the years, from flowerbeds that brightened his first home at Argenteuil to his magnificent gardens at Giverny, which became a pleasure for the eye, a soothing place to meditate and contemplate nature, and a source of inspiration.

Monet was especially fond of depicting his own gardens. Painting them over and over again, Monet could show the ways light, weather, season, and time of day visually changed them. Through direct observations of nature, Monet captured the momentary effects of light and atmosphere on canvas.

“My garden is slow work, pursued by love, and I do not deny that I am proud of it.” **Claude Monet**

above: Claude Monet by his waterlily pond at Giverny, summer 1905 (detail), photograph by Jacques-Ernest Bulloz (1858–1942), gelatin silver print, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

In 1903, Monet added a trellis over the bridge and draped it with purple and white wisteria.

right: Claude Monet standing beside the Japanese bridge at Giverny, Roger-Viollet Agency. All rights reserved.

# 2

## At Giverny

In 1883, Monet and his family moved to a former cider farm in Giverny, a small town about thirty-five miles northwest of Paris, and lived there for the rest of his life. There at his new home, he created a spectacular garden that became the main source of inspiration for his later paintings, as well as a living work of art in its own right.

At Giverny, Monet converted part of the farmhouse into a studio and transformed the vegetable garden and neglected two-acre grounds into complex flower gardens. He carefully planned out his garden to be beautiful and different as the seasons changed, planting a wide range of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and vines so that there were blooms from early spring through late fall. With a painter's eye, Monet thoughtfully arranged plants according to color and height. He liked the flower beds to be dense and abundant, overflowing with plants. And he built arbors, trellises, and arches to carry the blossoming color up to the sky.

An enthusiastic and skilled gardener, Monet subscribed to horticultural publications, traded seeds, and collected many books on gardening, always improving and changing things. Eventually, the grounds at Giverny became too much for Monet to manage alone and required a team of gardeners. Strict about upkeep, Monet would write detailed instructions as to when and where to plant seeds and how to prune the shrubs, and he inspected the garden daily.



“My heart is always at Giverny.” **Claude Monet**

# 4

## The Japanese Footbridge



Claude Monet, *The Japanese Footbridge*, 1899, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly, in memory of her son John W. Mudd, and Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg

The water garden at Giverny was inspired in part by Japan. Monet greatly admired Japanese paintings and prints, especially the landscapes of Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige, which he saw in shops in Paris. He amassed a collection of more than two hundred prints and decorated the walls of his home at Giverny with them. Monet planted Japanese peonies and bamboo around the curving banks of the waterlily pond, evoking the feel of a Japanese garden. He built the Japanese-style arched, wooden footbridge based on the bridges he studied in Japanese prints.

Examine *The Japanese Footbridge*. Painted in summertime, it is one of a series of views made in 1899. The pond nearly fills the canvas—sky is indicated only through its reflection in the water. Pink, yellow, and white lilies float on the shimmering surface of pond, and the foliage and grasses at the banks are mirrored in the water. Spanning the width of the painting, the bridge arcs over the water with its curved reflection below.

**Imagine yourself standing on the bridge.**

**Listen:** *What sounds might you hear?*

**Look up:** *Is it a sunny day?*

**Look down:** *Can you tell how deep the pond is?*

**Take a deep breath:** *What do you smell in the air?*

# 3

## A Water Garden

In 1892, Monet bought a piece of land across the road from his house for an ambitious project—to create a water garden. Diverting a small stream, he formed a pool and surrounded it with an artful arrangement of flowers, reeds, willow trees, and bushes. The surface of the pond was covered with waterlilies, and a wooden bridge was erected over it.

Monet was fascinated by water and the ever-changing reflections on its surface. He insisted that his gardeners keep the pond scrupulously clean—even dusting the surface—so that reflections of clouds and sky, trees and shrubs would appear clearly on the water. The water garden became the focus of Monet's art for the last twenty-five years of his career. He made more than 250 paintings of the waterlily pond.



A master of the woodblock print, Hiroshige depicted the contemporary life and landscape of Japan, including famous sites like the Tenjin Shrine. In this composition, the steep arch of the famous bridge frames a tea house that borders the pond.

Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), *The Drum Bridge from the Wisteria Arbor on the Precincts of the Tenjin Shrine at Kameido*, 1856, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio, Mary A. Ainsworth Bequest, 1950

# book nook

These books about Claude Monet and his gardens can be found at your local library or bookstore.

### A Picnic with Monet

By Julie Merberg and Suzanne Bober | ages 2 and up

### A Blue Butterfly: A Story about Claude Monet

By Bijou Le Tord | ages 4 and up

### Once Upon a Lily Pad: Froggy Love in Monet's Garden

By Joan Sweeney, illustrated by Kathleen Fain | ages 4 and up

### The Magical Garden of Claude Monet

By Laurence Anholt | ages 6 and up

### Charlotte in Giverny

By Joan MacPhail Knight, illustrated by Melissa Sweet | ages 6 and up

### Linnea in Monet's Garden

By Cristina Bjork, illustrated by Lena Anderson | ages 6 and up

### A Walk in Monet's Garden

By Francesca Crespi | ages 8 and up

### Claude Monet (Artists in Their Time)

By Susie Hodge | ages 8 and up

### Eyewitness Art: Monet

By Jude Welton | ages 8 and up

### Monet and the Impressionists for Kids: Their Lives and Ideas, 21 Activities

By Carol Sabbethages | 10 and up

### The Essential Claude Monet

By Catherine Morris | ages 12 and up

# try this! activity



above: Claude Monet, *The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil*, 1880, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection

top: Claude Monet, *The Artist's Garden at Argenteuil (A Corner of the Garden with Dahlias)*, 1873, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Janice H. Levin, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art

## Monet's Flowers

**More than anything, I must have flowers, always, always. – Claude Monet**

Before moving to Giverny, Monet had flower gardens at his homes in Argenteuil and Vétheuil, as shown in two paintings at the National Gallery of Art: *The Artist's Garden at Argenteuil (A Corner of the Garden with Dahlias)* and *The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil*. Monet's favorite flowers, some pictured in these works, included: peonies, poppies, daffodils, chrysanthemums, irises, tulips, begonias, lilacs, roses, orchids, dahlias, sunflowers, gladioli, rhododendrons, zinnias, azaleas, hydrangeas, wisteria, and waterlilies.

Flowers provided Monet with a full palette of colors from which to paint.



Find all these colors in Monet's garden paintings at the National Gallery, and then find the French words for the colors in the word search below:

ROUGE, ORANGE, JAUNE, VERT, BLEU, VIOLET, ROSE, BLANC

V O M J A U N E  
E I D E U Q C K  
T S O E S T I R  
R A L L N O F O  
E B A J E V R U  
V Y P U W T I G  
B L A N C H L E  
I S E G N A R O