

# GARDEN DESIGN

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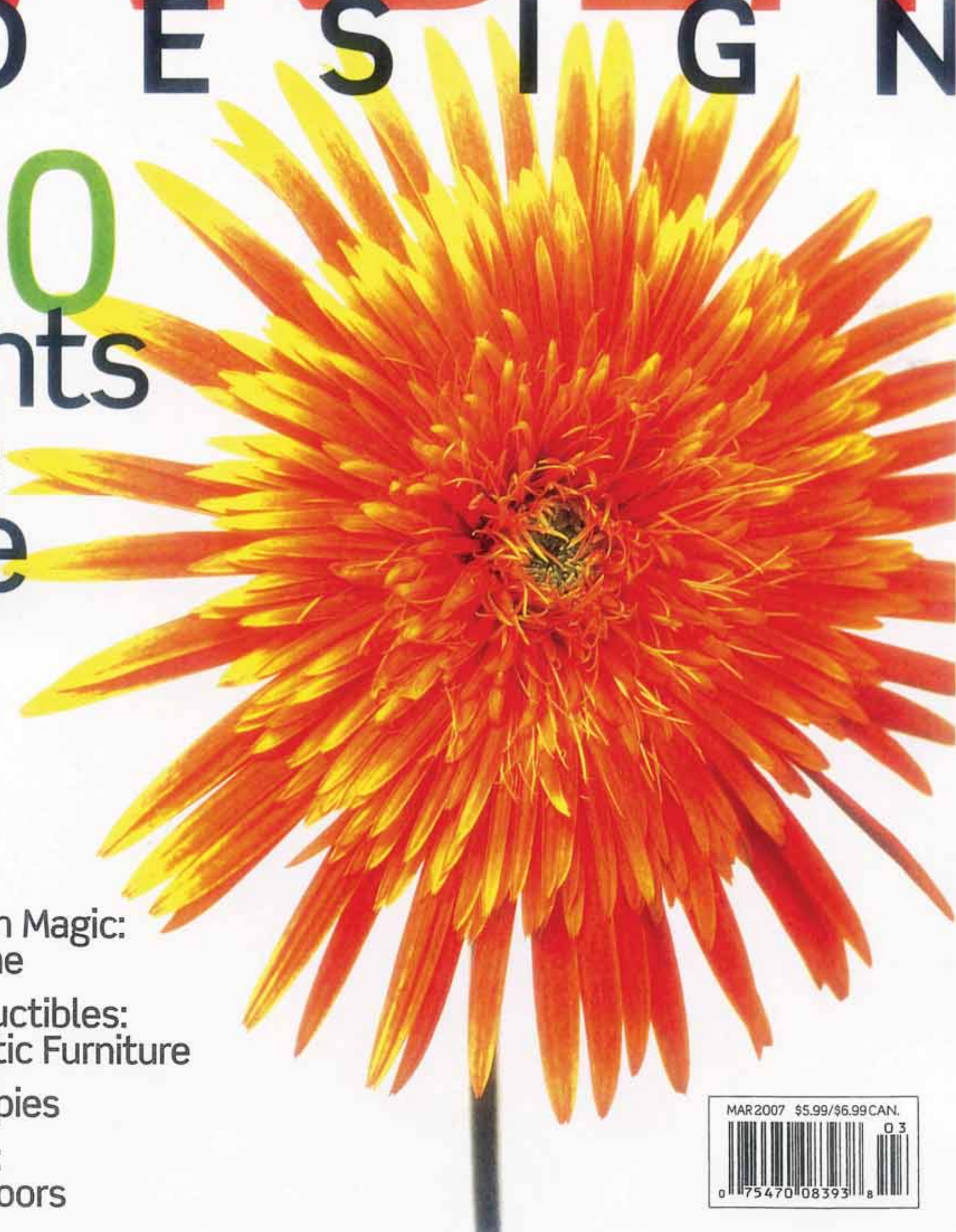
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The brick and stucco, two-story orangery at Wye House near Easton, Maryland, was completed in the 1790s. When its stabilization is complete, it will function as a greenhouse, and following family tradition, will be open to scholars and charities by appointment.



ON THE GROUNDS OF WYE HOUSE, ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE COUNTRYSEATS ON MARYLAND'S Eastern Shore, sits the oldest orangery in America. Considered state-of-the-art in its day, the marriage of its then high-tech engineering to a rare and outstanding neoclassical landscape makes it one of America's greatest garden buildings, according to Barbara Paca, a Manhattan-based landscape architectural preservationist, designer and garden historian.

Begun in the 1740s and completed by Edward Lloyd IV in the 1790s, and now overseen by the 11th generation to occupy the house, the orangery is about to undergo a major structural stabilization that will allow it to function as a greenhouse and open for educational institutions and charities. As a way of recognizing it as what she calls "the finest building in America," Barbara Paca transformed its interior to reflect its original intent as a garden folly. Again, lemon trees thrive in handmade jardinières alongside each window; paintings have been hung; a Chippendale-style bench has been moved in; and a table has been set with fine Sevres china. "It is just as it would have been," said Mrs. Richard Carmichael Tilghman, who has long been responsible for maintaining Wye House for future generations.

The romance of the orangery began in the early 17th century, some centuries after the Portuguese first began importing oranges from India to Europe. Eventually the passion for oranges, savored for their sweetness, their medicinal properties and their rarity, gave way to the importation of the trees, and the orangery evolved in Europe as a means of keeping them frost-free. Oranges became the epitome of luxury, as the mid-18th-century portrait of Mrs. Peregrine Tilghman that hangs in the orangery so clearly expresses (see opposite). If the orange she holds in her hand were a diamond, it could not have been more dazzling.



Left: The 85-foot-long orangery flaunts a display of 'Meyer' lemon trees. Right: "Girl With an Orange," circa 1745 by John Hesselius depicting Mrs. Peregrine Tilghman, and "Young Woman in a Summer Dress," circa 1935 by Ruth Starr Rose. "Palm Vase" by Michele Oka Doner on a table next to a Chippendale-style bench from Century Furniture's Chatsworth Collection.







Below: Surrounded by 18th-century Chippendale chairs, the table is set with Sevres china, Sheffield silver and rare 18th-century gardening books. An 18th-century marble statue of the goddess Minerva overlooks the mise-en-scène. Right: An old potting table finds use under an eclectic display.







Although the cultivation of orange trees was the purported function of these buildings, it is more accurate to say that “they were built because they could be,” as the current owner of Wye House, Richard Tilghman explains. Solely the province of royalty and the rich, the orangery triumphed as a folly in the landscape and as a symbol of prestige. Inside their doors, owners would entertain guests, offering them a place to sit for a light lunch during a tour of their gardens, where they could admire the citrus, other exotic plants and various *outré* amusements. At Wye House, those included a game of billiards on the second floor, and the orangery’s hypocaust, a heating system that functioned like a form of radiant heat floors.

Paca believes that Lloyd consulted the family’s copy of Palladio’s *The Four Books of Architecture* in his library before overseeing construction of the orangery. “In the late 18th century, garden buildings were scattered about to look like a natural part of the landscape, but at Wye there is nothing haphazard about the placement—the orangery is situated directly on axis with the house,” explains Paca. “This suggests that the building was an integral part of the original master plan—and that the landscape was initially designed in the neoclassical style, long before the picturesque garden movement was in vogue.” In England, many such neoclassical landscapes were eradicated to make way for the more fashionable picturesque gardens, but in America, the earlier landscapes were for the most part left intact. The garden scheme at Wye House is exceptional in being among the first to be designed and the few to survive, making the stabilization of its orangery a reason to celebrate.

■ For more on Barbara Paca or Kessler Burnett, call 917-282-7102 or e-mail [barbarapaca@nyc.rr.com](mailto:barbarapaca@nyc.rr.com).





**where to find it** PAGE 68: Handmade white oak jardinières and 'Meyer' lemon trees from Town and Country Gardens: Call 212-358-0538 or e-mail townandcountrygardens@hotmail.com. ■ PAGE 69: Palm Vase prototype for Christofle by Michele Oka Doner, sterling silver, from Christofle Pavilion: Call 212-308-9390, or call Doner studio at 212-334-9056, or see micheleokadoner.com. Victorian paisley throw from The Cairn, call 410-822-2857. Balcony sofa with seat cushion from Century Furniture: Call 828-328-1851 or see centuryfurniture.com. Pair of 1960s black leather stools from DHS Designs: Call 410-827-8167 or see dhsdesigns.com. Watercolor drawings of garden plans from Barbara Paca: Call Paca studio at 212-358-0538 or e-mail barbarapaca@nyc.rr.com. ■ PAGE 70: Late 20th-century decorative panels used in Chanel fashion show and 18th-century marble bust of Minerva from DHS Designs: Call 410-827-8167 or see dhsdesigns.com. ■ PAGE 72: Stuffed Chinese golden pheasant, 19th-century Sevres china, late-19th-century blue Limoges underplate, late-18th- and early-19th-century Sheffield silver candelabras and candlesticks from The Cairn: Call 410-822-2857.

Clockwise from top left: A page is turned to a sepia illustration published in an essay written in the 1770s by William Gilpin, a leading English protagonist of the picturesque landscape movement. An illustration from William Gilpin's *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* set beside a stuffed Chinese golden pheasant. On the table, 19th-century Sevres porcelain. Marble bust of the Roman goddess Minerva. Right: Barbara Paca lights candles at dusk.

