How The Medieval English Planned a Home and Gardens

Andrew Borde is the first writer who gave directions in English about how to plan a house and grounds. Much of his advice was practical, although often he saw fit to drag in a somewhat irrelevant quotation from the Bible, or a passage from some classic author to which we should not attach much importance. He was soon followed by Thomas Tusser with “A Hundredth Pointes of Good Husbandry,” which has been interestingly edited under the auspices of the English Dialect Society. Hill’s “Profitable Arte of Gardening” and his “Gardener’s Labyrinth” also add to our information concerning the gardens of the Tudor period.The choice of site was given careful consideration, and an unexpected importance was attached to the view. “After that a man have chosen a convenient soil and place … he must afore cast in his mind that the prospect to and fro the place be pleasant, fair and good to the eye to behold the woods, the waters, the fields, the dales, the hills as the plain ground.” In the opinion of all the early writers, the garden and orchard were always to be located as near as possible to the house, and to be considered as an integral part of the same premises.The approach to the house and gardens was through one or more courtyards, where peacocks sometimes answered the purpose of watch-dogs. “The peacock is a bird of more beautified feathers than any other that is, he is quickly angry, but he is far off from taking good hold with his feet, he is goodly to behold, very good to eat, and serve as a watch in the inner court, for that he spying strangers to come into **Go to the website** the lodging he fail not to cry out and advertise them of the house.”Doves too dwelt in the courtyard or in the garden. “A dove-house is also a necessary thing about a mansion place,” Borde says.