

# Spanish Gardens

## Terminology



**Alcázar** derives from the Hispano-Arabic word 'Alqáṣr' meaning 'Royal House' or 'Room of the Prince' (whether fortified or not), while the Arabic word is possibly in turn derived from the Latin word 'castrum,' meaning an army camp or fort.

The **Iberian Peninsula** today consists of the countries of Andorra, Portugal and Spain.

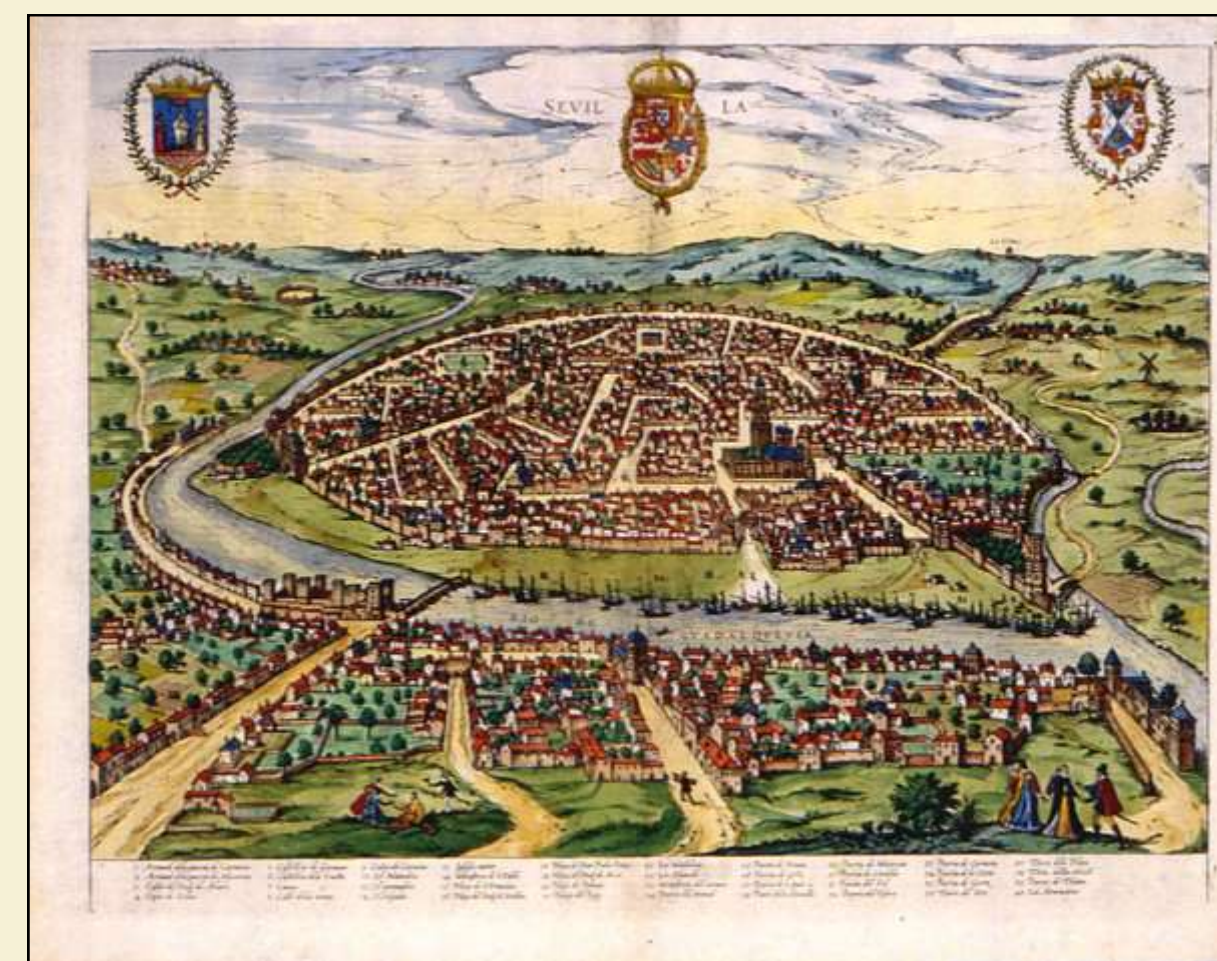


**Al-Andalus** also known as Muslim Spain or Islamic Iberia, was a medieval Muslim cultural domain and territory occupying at its peak most of what are today Spain and Portugal. The name more generally describes parts of the Iberian Peninsula governed by Muslims at various times between 711 and 1492, though the boundaries changed constantly as the Reconquista progressed.

**Mudéjar** is the name given to individual Moors or Muslims of Al-Andalus who remained in Iberia after the Christian Reconquista (1492) but were not converted to Christianity. Mudéjar also denotes a style of Iberian architecture and decoration of the 12th to 16th centuries, strongly influenced by Moorish taste and workmanship.

The **Mudéjar style**, a symbiosis of techniques and ways of understanding architecture resulting from Muslim and Christian cultures living side by side, emerged as an architectural style in the 12th century on the Iberian peninsula. Mudéjar did not involve the creation of new shapes or structures (unlike Gothic or Romanesque), but the reinterpretation of Western cultural styles through Islamic influences. Mudejar art was influenced by ancient Arabic scripts which follow repetitive rhythmic patterns.

The Alcázar garden in Balboa Park is patterned after the courtyard gardens of Alcázar Palace in Seville, Spain. The palace is renowned as one of the most beautiful in Spain. It is exemplary of the mudéjar architecture found on the Iberian Peninsula. Today it is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Seville 1588 — Site of Alcázar is to right of Cathedral

### History of Spanish Gardens

Spanish gardens developed incorporating principles and elements of garden design from precedents in ancient Persian gardens, Roman gardens, Islamic gardens, and the great Moorish gardens of the Al-Andalus era on the Iberian Peninsula. These gardens were created to represent paradise on earth.

### Garden Layout

Traditionally, the paradise garden is interpreted with a central cross axis, in the four cardinal directions, with long ponds or water channels where water reflects and flows, set in a walled courtyard. The quadrants often had fruit trees and fragrant plants. A clarity from the symmetrical simplicity often results.

### Hardscape Elements

Ceramic elements and tiles are often used in water features, paving, pottery, and architectural adornment.

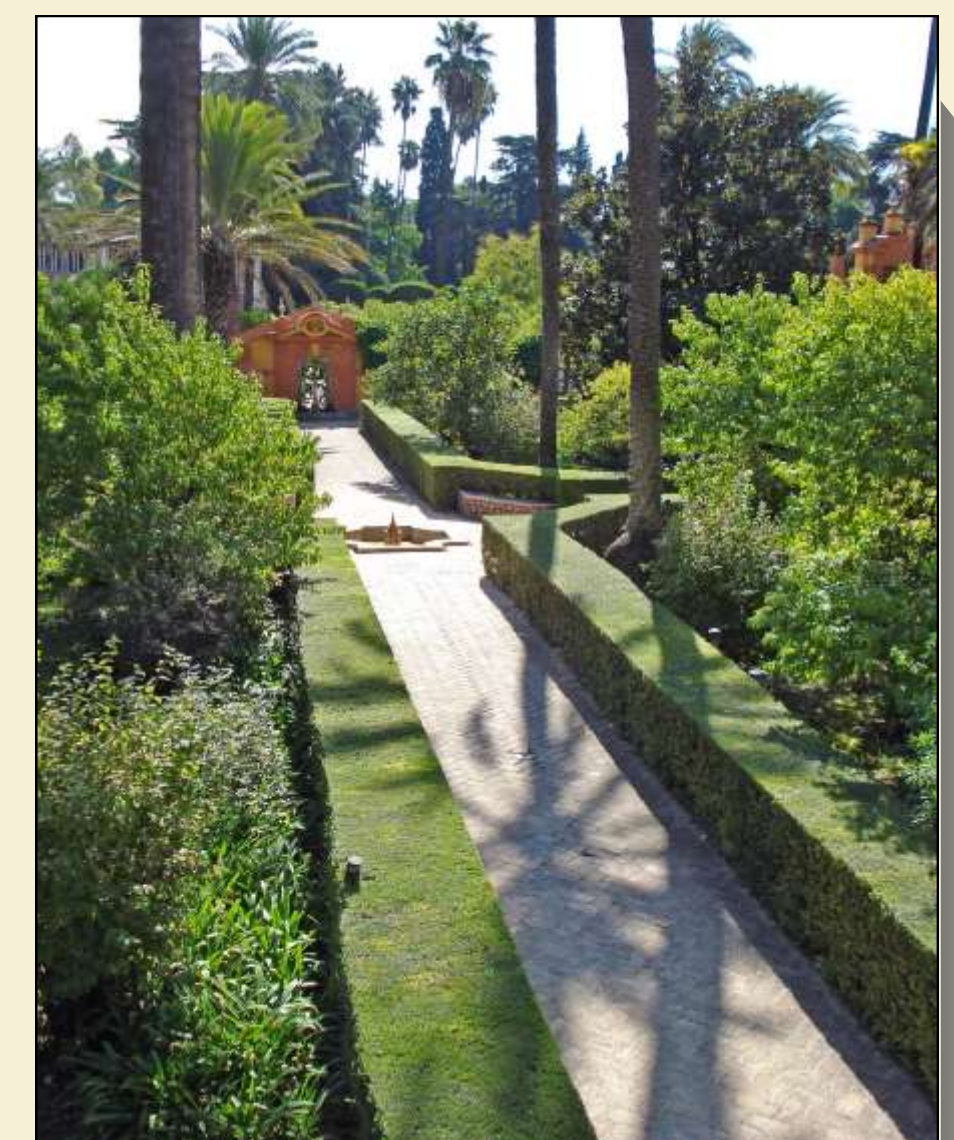
Pathways are often paved with tiles or stonework, or they may be graveled. The hot and dry climate of Spain keeps most gardens from featuring large areas of grass. Shade is often used as a design element in a Spanish garden. Trellises, pergolas, arcades garden pavilions and arbors provide places for visitors to escape the hot sun. Shaded sitting areas under small pavilions or gazebos are also common. Verandas or long shaded galleries may surround a formal garden, especially one at a large estate.

### Plants

Plantings along paths or walkways are arranged with smaller plants in front and taller plants in the rear. Plants used vary widely, but fruit trees and flowering and fragrant plants are favorites. Herbs such as lavender and rosemary are found in almost every Spanish garden.

Citrus, pomegranate, olive, cypress and other Mediterranean trees are also popular. Tropical and sub-tropical plants from Spain and other parts of the world, such as cacti, yucca, figs, palms, and bougainvillea are also common. Many flowering plants, succulents, and climbing plants can be found in a typical Spanish garden.

Thus, characteristic sensory experiences are refreshing coolness, humidity, sounds, greenery, and fragrance — creating a garden paradise that is compatible with the Spanish climate of sun and heat.



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