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Shaped by the river landscape

On the banks of the Windach in Bavaria, a simple lawn became a garden that answers the river – selected among the fifty most beautiful private gardens of the year.

English translation

The Windach flows past in a gentle curve just below the garden. The little river became the landscape architect's source of inspiration: water, in its many forms, lies at the heart of her design, which holds the balance between the natural and the artistic. The garden thus settles into its rural surroundings of extensive meadows, small streams and local stone – elements the designer takes up and interprets in a contemporary way.



1 The natural riverbank on the Windach: a stream and a stairway, both of natural stone, connect the garden to the river.

Originally there was only lawn here, with a butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) in the middle. The view of the water was blocked by a green wall of pines along the public bridge. For Maryvonne Schöner it was clear from the start that this was about more than ecologically enhancing a strip of riverbank: "We can turn the garden into a space of resonance – a quiet, living answer to the river. The Windach brings an attitude with it: to flow rather than fix, to stay open rather than enclose." This principle runs through the whole design. Paths follow gentle curves, beds of perennials stretch across the site like currents. A central pond becomes the calm heart. "Nothing is rigid – everything is in relationship."



2 On the upper level, right by the house, a seating area with a terrace and a lush flower border. A wooden pergola leads to the next part of the garden.

With the pines removed, the Windach came into view – and so did the bridge and the glances of passers-by. As the work went on, the bridge became a stage and the transformation of the garden a social event, as the villagers followed it with keen interest. "What could be more beautiful than to set off such resonance through design?" says the designer. The "boundary" is now open and still offers privacy: the view towards the bridge is drawn away by a wide-crowned Japanese cherry (*Prunus serrulata*), and tall grasses form a screen like a transparent curtain. The designer turned the slope into a flowing sequence of clearly structured yet sensuous garden rooms that never lose their connection to the water.

This is where mastery of craft unfolds. In the lower part, a hand-laid natural stone stream runs gently down to the Windach, echoing the character of the river. In the upper part, an orangery marks the highest point. A herb garden inspired by monastery gardens, with a fountain, brings together usefulness, scent and stillness. A pergola links the upper garden rooms with the main garden. Gravel paths and dry-stone walls give the site its structure, and a generous stairway leads down to the river. Thanks to regional materials – shell limestone, Nagelfluh conglomerate, larch wood, river gravel – these elements blend into their surroundings.



3 The seating area opens onto a symmetrical herb garden inspired by monastery gardens, with a fountain at its centre.

Large trees with character were carefully integrated and form a protective framework. "With their finely drawn play of light and shade, they create the atmosphere that makes the garden what it is: a place that has not simply been planted, but is guided by light," says the designer. Perennials, grasses and wild plants create habitats for insects, birds and amphibians. Single, nectar-rich flowers such as *Achillea*, *Coreopsis*, *Anthemis* or *Linum perenne* feed insects. Labiates such as calamint and *Origanum* attract many species of wild bee. Ornamental grasses such as *Deschampsia*, *Molinia* and *Sesleria* structure the space, set the garden in motion and offer shelter even in winter.



4 The heart of the garden – a pond with a wooden jetty, fine paving and terraces in rounded forms – slopes down to the river, hidden behind tall trees.

Although the garden has existed for only a few months, it is already part of the landscape – thanks to a sensitive design that does justice to nature while meeting the owner's wishes. An unmistakable sign of success: only a few weeks after planting, the garden was already alive, with frogs and insects in and around the pond.



5 Waterfall and steps down to the Windach fit into the river landscape as if they had always been there.

"The garden was designed with respect for the place, the soil and the living creatures, who accepted it at once. It feels like borrowed time: as if nature had long been preparing this place itself – and was only waiting for someone attentive enough to recognise it. This garden is a living example of how quickly nature returns when you take it seriously – and how deep the effect can be when design means not control, but trust," says Maryvonne Schöner. A garden like this leads back to what is essential – it lets you understand change as part of life and shows how connection grows in stillness. And when you are there, you can feel it.

Project profile

Design
Landscape architecture and planting design: Maryvonne Liana Schöner, Schöner Landschaftsarchitektur

Construction
Landschaften und Gärten GALA GmbH; orangery: Winter-Green

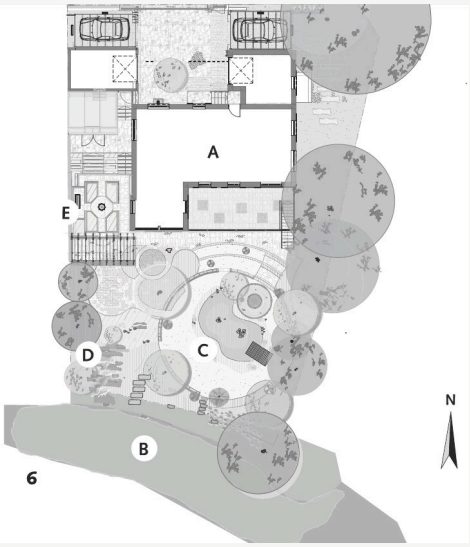
Plot size
1,400 m²

Design / construction
2023–2024 / 2024–2025

Materials
Shell limestone, Nagelfluh conglomerate, larch wood, river gravel

Special features
Riverside setting with a public bridge; stream, natural stone, fountain

Plants (selection)
Trees and shrubs: *Prunus × yedoensis*, *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, *Euonymus alatus* 'Chicago Fire', Japanese cherry (*Prunus serrulata*).
Perennials: *Achillea*, *Campanula* 'Sarastro', *Coreopsis*, *Anthemis*, *Linum perenne*, calamint, *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Dwarf Blue', *Origanum*, *Delphinium*, *Monarda fistulosa*, *Hosta* 'Honeybells', *Geranium* 'Nimbus', *G. sanguineum* 'Apfelblüte'.
Grasses: *Deschampsia*, *Molinia caerulea* 'Transparent', *Sesleria*, *Festuca amethystina*, *Stipa tenuissima*.
Herb bed: rosemary, nasturtium.
In all, some 2,400 perennials, grasses, ferns and aquatic plants and around 6,500 bulbs were planned and planted, along with roses, clematis and wisteria.



A House
B The Windach
C Heart of the garden with pond
D Waterfall
E Herb garden

6 Garden plan

Original article (in German): "Geprägt von der Flusslandschaft", *Gartenpraxis* 10-2026, pp. 22–25. Text: Susanne Wiborg, Konstanze Neubauer. Photos: Ferdinand Graf Luckner; plan: Schöner Gärten. The garden features in *Gärten des Jahres – Die 50 schönsten Privatgärten 2026*, Konstanze Neubauer and Susanne Wiborg, Callwey, Munich 2026. Unofficial English translation.