

[The Search for Perfection - Islamic Garden Design \(HD\)](#)

DW Transtel | 2017

English

30 min / episode

Episode 1 - 5

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In Islamic tradition, gardens and leafy courtyards are a foretaste of paradise. They are places to find shade and to rest, places for families and friends to gather. But the typical features of such gardens were developed much earlier: 2,500 years ago, the kings of Persia commissioned magnificent palace gardens, bursting with fragrant flowers and shrubs, cooled by watercourses, pools and fountains, and surrounded by high walls. Pavilions and trellises provided shade and dappled sunlight. The kings' engineers created underground channels to bring water from faraway sources.

These palace gardens stood in stark contrast to the arid and inhospitable landscape that surrounded them. With their symmetry and opulent vegetation, they were seen as ideal images of nature. It is no coincidence that ideas of paradise in Judaism, Christianity and Islam were informed by such gardens. Whether on a grand scale, as the imposing park of a ruler's palace, or on a more modest scale as the courtyard of a merchant's house - this kind of garden spread, along with Islam, to the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, North Africa, Spain and the Indian subcontinent. While remaining true to its basic principles, it developed in different ways in each region.

The gardens in Morocco's oases and coastal towns are often embellished with splendid architectural elements, colourful ceramics and decorative metalwork. In India, under the Muslim Mughal emperors, many impressive parks were laid out, with huge ornamental pools. One famous example is at the Taj Mahal in Agra. In medieval Spain, horticulture flourished during the era of Moorish rule: For centuries, the opulent palace gardens of the Alhambra in Granada were also an inspiration to architects of Christian rulers. And in Arabia, the planners of public parks adhere to ancient tradition to this day: Fountains and streams with rippling water, trees that provide shade, and aromatic herbs are seen as indispensable features in spaces that offer the inhabitants of densely built-up cities relief from the heat and the hustle and bustle of everyday life.