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On the cover:

Langwell Garden,
Caithness (page 16).

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Stephanie Mahon

2011

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Anne Gatti

The Niche
Magazine Awards
**Best Niche Lifestyle
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2010

Garden Media Guild
**Gardening Column
Of The Year**
Mark Diacono

2009

Garden Media Guild
**Gardening Column
Of The Year**
Jackie Bennett

Garden Media Guild
**New Garden Media
Talent Of The Year**
Stephanie Mahon

2008

Garden Media Guild
New Writer Award
Joe Reardon-Smith



With clever planning and planting, a beautiful garden can emerge from a challenging wet and windy climate

Once the excitement of Christmas and New Year celebrations is over, winter can seem to stretch ahead endlessly. In reality, however, it won't be very long before the first signs of spring make themselves known, and, in the meantime, we can escape winter cold by dreaming of sumptuous summer gardens.

We've filled this issue with gardens that offer pure escapism. **LANGWELL**, in the Highlands of Scotland (page 16), shows how with clever planning and planting, a beautiful garden can emerge from a challenging wet and windy climate. Meanwhile, **ABLINGTON MANOR** in Gloucestershire (page 32) and **ELSING HALL** in Norfolk (page 42) are as quintessentially English as gardens can be – billowing borders and romantic roses set in beautiful countryside. There can be more to a garden than plants, however, and at **PALLINGTON HEATH** in Dorset (page 24), ponds and lakes create a glorious setting for sculptural art of many kinds.

If it's planting insights you are looking for, discover the secrets behind the magnificent **MILLENNIUM GARDEN** created by Xa Tollemache at Castle Hill (page 81). And don't miss our features on **UNUSUAL SPRING BULBS** (page 65), the **TOP 10 EVERGREENS** for year-round interest (page 70) and the best shrubs for **EARLY SCENT** (page 74).

It is the start of a new era for *The English Garden* and I am delighted to be part of it as the new editor. Rest assured that we shall continue to celebrate the best in English garden style in the coming months. Look out for more beautiful gardens, choice plants, inspiring ideas and helpful advice, designed especially for you.


Happy gardening!


Clare

Clare Foggett, Editor

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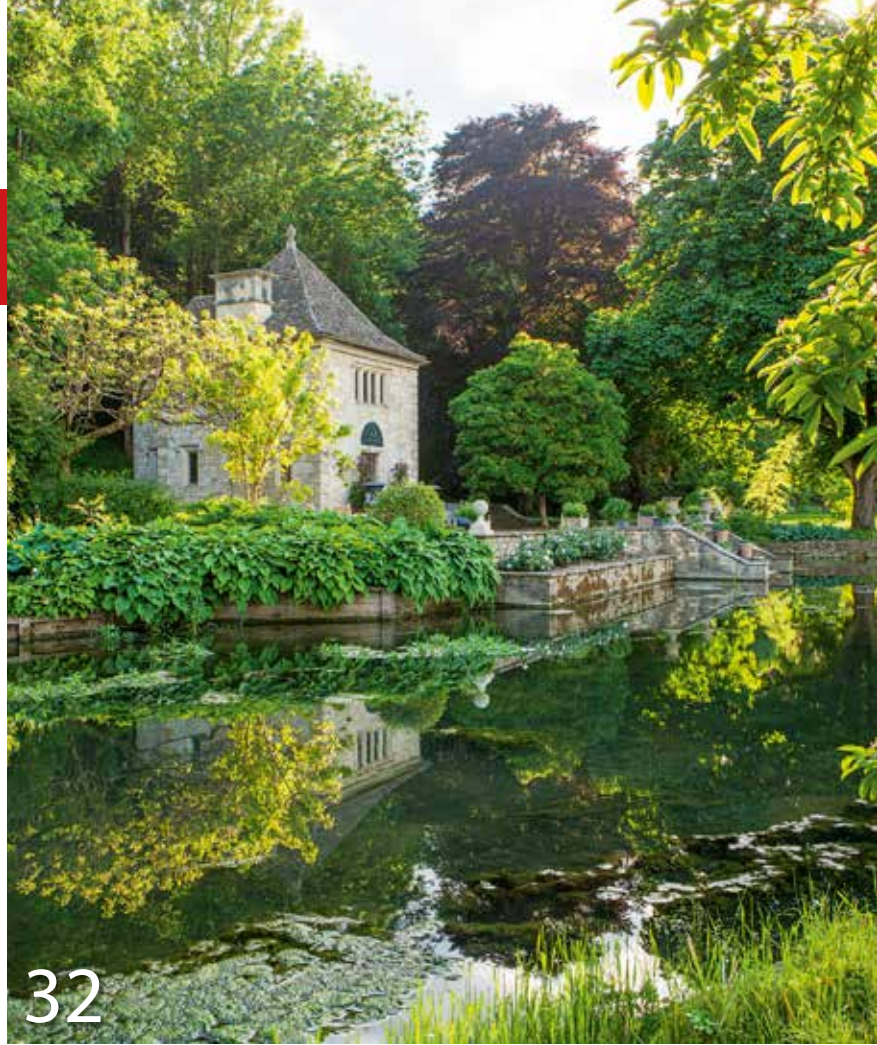
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A man with a beard and curly hair, looking down, wearing a plaid jacket over a blue shirt and dark overalls with white suspenders. The background is a blurred natural setting.

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HERE & NOW

Sue Bradley notes the lasting work of 'Capability Brown', the newest RHS garden and key events for the gardening diary

Royal Aroma



Thyme Walk is one of four candles in the new Highgrove Garden Collection. It appears alongside fresh and floral Walled Garden, spicy Carpet Garden and woody Arboretum. 200g candle, £22.50, Highgrove, www.highgroveshop.com

Five gardens by Capability Brown



● CROOME COURT

This was Brown's very first commission as an independent designer and includes a mansion house and a landscape noted for its man-made lake and river, statues and temples.

Croome d'Abitot, Worcestershire WR8 9DW; www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croome Tel: +44 (0)1905 371006.

● MILTON ABBEY

One of the finest examples of Brown's work in England, Milton Abbey is set within a 500-acre landscape at the meeting point of three valleys. It has 16 miles of walks, rides and carriage drives which are enriched by pleasing vistas of the Abbey. Milton Abbas, Dorset DT11 0BZ; www.miltonabbey.org, or email info@miltonabbey.org.

● SCAMPSTON

Scampston hall overlooks a park designed by Brown in 1782 while the park itself incorporates lakes and

natural planting using trees native to the area. Scampston Estate, North Yorkshire YO17 8NG; www.scampston.co.uk Tel: +44 (0)1944 758890.

● TRENTHAM

Brown dammed the River Trent in order to expand the lake to a mile in length. He also remodelled surrounding parkland and Trentham Hall. Pleasingly, the lake (pictured above) has been the focus of recent restoration work.

Trentham, Staffordshire ST4 8AX; www.trentham.co.uk Tel: +44 (0)1782 646646.

● SHEFFIELD PARK

Four lakes form the centrepiece of Sheffield Park, with paths circulating through the glades and wooded areas that surround them.

Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 3QX; www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sheffield-park-and-garden Tel: +44 (0)1825 790231.

Beautiful butterflies

Banish the winter gloom by mingling with hundreds of vibrant butterflies in the Glasshouse at RHS Garden Wisley from Saturday 16 January. Some 40 different species, from giant owls to delicate glasswings, will be flying between the tree ferns, palms and creepers within the structure's tropical zone up until Sunday 6 March. The butterflies are brought to the glasshouse at the pupae stage and their diet includes fruit and sweet liquids, along with tropical plants such as calliandra, lantana, justicia, pavonia and pachystachys. Various activities exploring the secret lives of insects will be on offer from 13 to 21 February. www.rhs.org.uk/wisley





MORE AT MOTTISFONT

Work is underway to add a new section to the rose garden at Mottisfont. A former car park and entrance is being transformed by head gardener Jonny Bass and his team throughout late winter. “It’s something we’ve wanted to do for a long time,” explains Bass. “We will be using plants that fall outside our traditional flowering season, such as spring-flowering cherries.”



Worsley New Hall

The grounds at Worsley New Hall in Salford are to become the Royal Horticultural Society’s fifth garden. The 156-acre RHS Bridgewater is expected to open in 2019. Before then, work will take place to restore its 10-acre walled kitchen garden – one of the largest in the UK – develop historical features such as a tree-lined garden approach, and recover terraces. The RHS also plans to build a new learning centre for schools on the site. Bridgewater is part of a wider £100 million-plus investment programme to achieve the gardening charity’s vision of enriching people’s lives through plants and to make the UK a greener and more beautiful place.

Visit www.rhs.org.uk for more updates

Snowdrop sale

Galanthophiles from around the world will gather for a rare snowdrop sale at Myddelton House, in Enfield, north London. The site has a rich snowdrop pedigree, with two new snowdrops discovered in the garden in the past ten years. Myddelton head gardener James Hall says: “Snowdrops have a long historical connection to Myddelton House Gardens as former resident of the house and creator of the gardens, Edward Augustus Bowles was one of the greatest collectors.” Myddelton House Gardens Snowdrop Sale, 23 January 10.30am – 12noon, admission £3.50, www.visitlevalley.org.uk/gardens



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WATCH THE BIRDIE

More than 500,000 people are expected to take part in this year's RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch over the weekend of January 30 and 31. The world's largest garden wildlife survey provides valuable information about numbers of birds visiting gardens in winter. rspb.org.uk/birdwatch



Feel the buzz

Get a bee's eye view of the world at a photography exhibition at the National Botanic Garden of Wales in Carmarthenshire. In Barcode UK: Beyond the Visible, Professor Andrea Liggins celebrates the disorder of nature. Continues until spring. www.gardenofwales.org.uk

WHAT'S ON

THE GREAT BIG HOME AND GARDEN SHOW AT CLEVELAND'S IX CENTRE

Friday 5 February – Sunday 14 February
View work by the state's top landscape designers and find everything you need to improve your own garden. Cocktails and refreshments available. Adults (ages 13 and above) \$12; Children (ages 6-12) \$5. For more information, visit www.greatbighomeandgarden.com

THE VIRGINIA FLOWER AND GARDEN EXPO AT VIRGINIA BEACH CONVENTION CENTRE

Friday 5 February – Sunday 7 February
Get expert advice from

professionals regarding all your gardening needs and purchase wares from over 100 specialist vendors. Admission \$10. For information on ticket discounts and further details, visit www.vafgs.org

ANTIQUES & GARDEN SHOW OF NASHVILLE AT NASHVILLE MUSIC CITY CENTRE

Friday 12 February – Sunday 14 February
Discover the spectacular gardens, fine antiques and horticultural items on display, and meet leading garden designers. Adults \$15; Senior citizens (65 or older) \$12; Children (12 and under) may enter free. For more information, visit www.antiquesandgardenshow.com

CONNECTICUT FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW AT THE CONNECTICUT CONVENTION CENTRE

Thursday 18 February – Sunday 21 February
Explore over 300 booths filled with fresh flowers, garden equipment and accessories, and attend over 80 hours of seminars free with your ticket. Adults \$16; children (aged five-12) \$4; children under five free. For further details and tickets, visit www.ctflowershow.com

NORTHWEST FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW 2016 AT WA STATE CONVENTION CENTRE

Wednesday 17 February – Sunday 21 February

Enjoy over 300 market place exhibitors (including a vintage garden market), listen to expert seminars and view 23 full-scale show gardens. Adults \$22; Young persons (13-17 years) \$5. For further details, visit www.gardenshow.com

WISCONSIN GARDEN EXPO AT THE ALLIANT ENERGY CENTRE, WISCONSIN

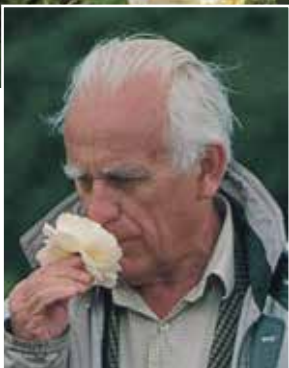
Friday 12 February – Sunday 14 February
Celebrate the latest trends in gardening, landscaping and edibles. All proceeds support Wisconsin Public Television. Adults \$7; children (under 12) free. For tickets, visit www.wigardenexpo.com

BEAUTIFUL BATEMAN'S

You won't be disappointed with your visit to the former home of writer Rudyard Kipling, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. 'This area is the first thing people see as they arrive,' says Gardens and Estate Manager Len Bernamont. The productive garden (*pictured*) is packed with an orchard, vegetable patch, soft fruit trees and a cutting border. 'The veg patch is a remnant of the Second World War Dig For Victory campaign, but is now used to grow vegetables for hungry visitors in the tearoom. All of the flowers from the cutting border are used to make the floral displays in the house,' explains Len. 'There's only one remaining apple tree from Kipling's original orchard, but a living cutting has been grafted onto a new rootstock to continue his legacy.'

It takes two full-time gardeners, one seasonal gardener and 25 volunteers to maintain the gardens. 'We dig our own compost in the vegetable patch to keep the ground fertile, and carry out a winter prune to maintain the structure of the fruit trees,' he says. Elsewhere in the garden, you can wander the manicured lawns and clipped yew hedges.

If you're in the area, why not pop in on Sunday 18 October and celebrate Apple Day? There will be plenty of tastings, with 20 different varieties, children's activities, and even a chance to make your own fresh apple juice on a traditional press. You can purchase produce from the shop and enjoy an apple-based menu in the tearoom too. Bateman's Lane, Burwash, East Sussex TN19 7DS. Tel: +44 (0)1435 882302. www.nationaltrust.org.uk



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Concealed behind high walls and surrounded by a wild Highland landscape, Langwell garden is an intimate, colourful oasis →

PHOTOGRAPHS RAY COX | WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS



RIGHT The herb garden consists of eight raised beds filled with culinary herbs including rosemary, thyme and chives. The lavender is

Lavandula angustifolia

'Hidcote'. **BELOW** The pool is fed by natural spring water piped from the Scaraben hills; it then flows out of the pond back into the nearby river. The beds opposite contain *Perovskia atriplicifolia* 'Blue Spire' and are edged by *Sedum spectabile* 'Brilliant'.

OPPOSITE Plants are planted in bold clumps so that the garden is not dwarfed by the surrounding moorland landscape.

Caithness, in the most northerly part of Scotland, is known for its spectacular open landscapes, enjoyed by visitors who come to hunt, shoot and fish. It's also known for its wild, wet and windy climate of contrasts. Winters come early and are cold and long, with only a few hours of daylight. Summers, though short, have many hours of daylight, with only an hour of two of semi-darkness.

Gardening here is definitely a challenge, which is why visitors to Langwell, situated on a south-facing slope of the Langwell Strath, are charmed by this colourful garden behind 60m walls. The garden is part of the 52,000-acre Langwell and Braemore estate, purchased by the Duke of Portland in 1857 and still in family ownership today. In the 19th century, the garden was used to grow fruit and vegetables for the household. In the early 20th century, it was laid out in a cruciform design, and the impressive borders planted. The fruit and veg-growing areas were concealed behind the yew hedges.

Although the garden is large (just over two acres), it is dwarfed by the surrounding moorland landscape. To harmonise the scale and to minimise wind damage, large plants are densely planted in bold clumps. The borders are designed to be at their peak from August onwards, but this is totally weather dependent. 'A cold late spring or a hot spell in June and July will thwart this,' says head gardener Peter Meredith.



On average, plants at Langwell begin to 'break' six weeks later than in the more temperate parts of Britain; bluebells in June are one of the charms of the far north. The long daylight hours then create a growth spurt that enables plants to catch up. This prodigious growth, along with the strong Caithness winds, mean that even the most unlikely of herbaceous perennials need staking. The herbaceous borders are cut down in November, as the garden is often frosted or under snow after that.

Peter describes the garden as 'managed but informal'. There is no attempt at a colour scheme, but repetitions of plants such as *Filipendula rubra*, *Agapanthus campanulatus*, *Sidalcea* 'Loveliness', astilbes, *Dierama* →







ABOVE The daisy border, → *pulcherrimum*, echinops, *Gentiana asclepiadea* and home to three varieties of *Anthemist tinctoria* ('Alba', 'E.C. Buxton' and 'Beauty of Grallagh') plus *Leucanthemum x superbum* and two cultivars, 'Becky' and 'Snowcap'. **RIGHT** The bold planting includes

Crocsmia 'Lucifer', *Filipendula rubra* 'Venusta', *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' and *Lythrum salicaria*. The door is a covered entrance into the garden with two benches inside. A favourite seating area to enjoy the view across the garden and the landscape beyond.

In the 40 years that he has been gardening, Peter has come to know what will grow on exposed sites. '*Rosa rugosa* does well in the most inhospitable of places. Tree lupins are reliable, and flower virtually throughout the season if split regularly and deadheaded, and monarda seems to do well too. While some hemerocallis are disappointing in the climate of the far north, *H.* 'White Temptation' does surprisingly well, flowering from July until September.'

Approximately a third of the garden is given over to fruit and vegetables, grown in cleverly concealed, yew-edged compartments. Apples, pears and plums adorn the walls, tomatoes are grown in the greenhouse, and beans and courgettes are grown in a polytunnel. The soil is acidic, light and free-draining, so needs regular liming and manuring. The garden is mainly organic; herbicides are only used on the gravel paths to hold back 'the ever-present moss' of the far north of Scotland. Peter says the garden is relatively untroubled by pests - the high walls keep the deer out, and an abundance of toads, frogs and newts in the ponds mean slugs are rarely a problem.

A sense of the surrounding moorland remains strong, however. Seasons are heralded by the sounds of arriving or departing geese, the hammering of the great spotted woodpecker, the chatter of swallows and house martins, the call of the cuckoo and the roar of rutting deer. 'Visitors to the garden love the surprise of finding an intimate and informal garden hidden behind the walls in this remote location,' says Peter. 'It's a garden oasis.'

Langwell, Welbeck Estates, Berriedale KW7 6HD. The garden is open on Sunday 26 July, 1-5pm, for Scotland's Gardens (www.scotlandsgardens.org) and also by appointment. Tel: +44 (0)1593 751237.



Top tips for exposed gardens →



Langwell garden notebook



TAKE A SEAT

This pergola, covering a bench, was made from timber from HMS Arethusa, which took part in the Crimean War. It is covered in honeysuckle and clematis.



BOXED IN

Box-edged beds are home to annual planting - here they are filled with *Echium vulgare* 'Blue Bedder'. In the foreground is *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Langwell, you could also visit:

● **GARDEN Castle and Gardens of Mey**

The summer retreat of the late Queen Mother. She oversaw the restoration of the gardens, and some of her favourite plants remain. Thurso, Caithness, Scotland KW14 8XH. Tel: +44 (0)1847 851473. www.castleofmey.org.uk

● **GARDEN Dunrobin Castle** Victorian gardens laid out by the architect Sir Charles Barry, inspired by the palace of Versailles in Paris. Golspie, Sutherland KW10 6SF. Tel: +44 (0)1408 633177. www.dunrobincastle.co.uk

● **GARDEN Dunbeath Castle** Long, mirror-planted herbaceous borders. Dunbeath, Caithness KW6 6ED. Tel: +44 (0)1593 731308. www.dunbeath.co.uk

● **HOTEL Navidale House Hotel** A former hunting lodge to the Dukes of Sutherland, now a country house hotel, set in private woodland. Navidale, near Helmsdale, Sutherland KW8 6JS. Tel: +44 (0)1431 821258. www.navidalehousehotel.co.uk

CUTTING HEDGE

July and August are often the only two frost-free months at Langwell, and this is when the hedges - adding up to more than 1km in length in total - are trimmed. They are made up mostly of yew and box, with some privet and cotoneaster. The yew is cut in August so that any nesting birds will have moved on.



Garden challenges

CLIMATE: The biggest challenge in this northerly region is the weather. 'The garden can look beautiful one day, but the next, after a Caithness storm, it can be a horizontal herbaceous artwork,' says Peter.

Peter's top exposed garden tips

- **Get to know your garden** - soil, orientation, climate. These factors will determine which plants will be successful. You may have multiple soil types, damp areas, hot spots etc.
- **Careful preparation is key.** Cultivate, mulch or improve soil as appropriate for its type and what you will be planting.
- **Find out the ultimate size of each plant.** If you have shrubs that will become large, plant at their ultimate spacing and underplant with groundcover of your choice. The groundcover will die out as the shrubs fill in, leaving you with healthy and robust long-term planting.
- **Plant small.** Within a few years, small healthy plants will outgrow plants that are planted at a more mature stage, and will be stronger and establish much better.
- **If in doubt, buy one plant** and grow it on for a year and see how it does. Most perennials enjoy being split, and will provide you and your friends with free plants.



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A vibrant, natural landscape featuring a large, leafy tree on the right, a pond in the background, and a foreground of green grass and wildflowers. The scene is bright and serene, with a mix of green tones and some yellow wildflowers.

The art of TRANQUILLITY

This sculpture park dedicated to the work of a single artist is also a haven for
birdlife and wildflowers, as art and nature live in harmony

PHOTOGRAPHS DIANNA JAZWINSKI | WORDS AMBRA EDWARDS →

In the garden at Sculpture by the Lakes, Monique Gudgeon prefers to frame the works of her husband, Simon, with a view. The sculpture *Thoth* is placed at the head of the largest of three lakes in the garden.



At first sight, Pallington Heath in West Dorset seems an unlikely place to seek tranquillity. Power lines fizz and crackle overhead, fearsome tanks grind up and down at the nearby military training camp at Bovington, and Lawrence of Arabia met his end just round the corner.

Yet here, around a chain of former fishing lakes, Monique Gudgeon has succeeded in creating what she thinks of as ‘a modern-day Arcadia’ – a serene landscape of trees and water, billowing grasses and froths of wildflowers, a landscape calculated to inspire reflection and repose and – above all – to offer a sympathetic setting for the monumental bronze works of her sculptor husband, Simon.

‘We never set out to create a sculpture park,’ says Monique. After a succession of rented houses where she could never fully set down gardening roots, the couple were looking for a place of their own with an acre or two of land, an outhouse that might serve as a studio, not too distant from either the galleries of New Bond Street or the foundries where Simon casts his bronzes. A working fishery in West Dorset was wildly off-brief – but truly irresistible.

They arrived on a winter’s day in 2007 to a blank canvas of mown grass

RIGHT Wildflowers appropriate for damp and boggy ground abound in the land edging a recently renovated pond. Waterlilies were planted in the pond itself.

BELOW A view from the jetty on what Monique calls the Rainbow Lake.



A chain of lakes has become a modern-day Arcadia

and random willows, with no thought beyond getting a lorry-load of ‘orphan’ plants safely into the ground. The idea for a sculpture park came like a lightning bolt three months later, when they borrowed for the summer a favourite sculpture that was in storage between exhibitions. It looked so good in this wild, watery landscape, it sparked an ambitious garden plan.

Fierce winds promptly uprooted their new plantings but Monique soldiered on. Before too long

a flowery, semi-formal garden had taken shape around the house, bamboos and ferns were thriving under the trees, and she was planning an ultra-modern gravel garden, inspired by the pared-down, patterned landscapes of Spanish designer Fernando Caruncho. Like him, she enjoys the drama of massed plantings. ‘Coming here defined the type of gardener I am,’ she says. ‘I don’t like lots of different things in a bed, but much prefer big sweeps of one particular species.’

A stint working at Architectural Plants, Sussex, developed in Monique an eye for the sculptural possibilities of plants. In this garden, the plants themselves become the art – soft mounds of *Lonicera pileata* ‘Moss Green’ sculpted under the guidance of master-pruner Jake Hobson, curling ribbons of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Red Head’ snaking up to a mound topped by a pair of bronze cranes.

Art and garden become indivisible: a vista under a pergola is terminated by *Isis* – a statuesque bronze bird whose twin resides in London’s Hyde Park. A smaller version is in the Prince of Wales’s garden at Highgrove. A kinetic sculpture (Simon’s latest enthusiasm) enacts a delicate semaphore from the centre of a reflecting pool. Chains of pebbles →





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT A sculpture inscribed, 'Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best'; gravel and thrift (*Ameria maritima*) provide the setting for *Embrace*; still water and waterlilies complement *The Pelicans*; kinetic sculpture works well in water, where reflection adds to the drama of the piece.





The sculpture
Origins in one of
the smaller
ponds. Water acts
as a mirror here,
bouncing light
up and across
the piece.



→ hang like outsize catkins from the apple trees. This is an especially lovely sight in spring, when the orchard is in blossom. Inset into the paths are apt quotations, such as ‘Nothing is more the child of art than the garden,’ by Sir Walter Scott.

This use of words in the garden was inspired by the Scottish gardener-poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. He could be scathing of modern sculpture gardens, and strongly disliked the way art was often sited in the landscape. Monique is inclined to agree. ‘Just dropping sculpture into a long-established garden often seems to work to the detriment of both. The sculpture has to blend in rather than stick out like a sore thumb. It needs the right context and the right scale.’

So at Pallington, the art always comes first. Some 30 pieces are ranged round the lake, some reflected in water, some in shadowy groves; some commanding the landscape, demanding to be seen from afar; some to be discovered in an intimate space.

‘What I try to do with my planting is frame the pieces – not to distract your eye from the sculptures because they are the stars of the show. Sometimes it’s quite simple – just a matter of mowing an area of grass. Others require more of a backdrop: for

example, a pair of fighting pheasants with dramatic spiky phormiums behind them work together very well. Or there’s an ultra-modern abstract piece in a windswept area of garden where the soil is very poor. Here I’ve planted two beds of thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and they’ve done really well. In May and June the sculpture rises from a sea of shocking pink.’

She has planted more than 4,500 trees and shrubs, and worked hard to improve the ecological diversity of the site, so that real deer, owls, songbirds

ABOVE Selected sculptures in sympathetic settings, from left: *Barn Owl*, *Dancing Cranes* and *Falcon*.

BELOW A private corner on Artist’s Pool, an ideal spot for a picnic.

and waterfowl have made their homes among their beautiful representations in granite, steel and bronze. It is only fitting, after all, that work inspired by the beauty and wonder of nature should be enjoyed in a natural setting.

Sculpture by the Lakes, Pallington Lakes, Dorchester DT2 8QU. The garden is open Monday to Saturday, 11am-5pm. Tel: +44 (0)77206 37808. www.sculpturebythelakes.co.uk

Monique's top tips →





A lushly planted path below the pergola leads the eye to bronze *Isis*

Sculpture by the Lakes garden notebook

THE POWER OF WORDS

Words, carved into stone, or simply pinned to a tree, were often used in 18th-century gardens to create a particular mood. It is a device that works just as well in contemporary gardens.



FORM AND FUNCTION

Bear in mind that every element in your garden – a pot, a swing-seat, even the way a table and chairs are placed – can become a piece of everyday sculpture.

Garden challenges

LAYERING UP Watering and weeding young shrubs and trees in this large garden are two problems for Monique. Her solution is to mulch thoroughly, which conserves water and protects plants from undesirable companions.

Monique's tips for introducing sculpture

- **It doesn't matter whether it is a costly bronze** or a simple pot – placement is all. Take time to find exactly the right spot, thinking about the location of the best views in the garden, what can be seen from the house or a favourite seat, and the scale of the piece. Stick in a bamboo pole the same height as the sculpture to see if it is tall enough by itself, or needs some kind of plinth. Consider how it will look both at a distance and when you are standing right beside it – both have to please.
- **Think hard about a suitable background.** Even the strongest form will be lost among a mass of different flowers, colours and leaf-shapes: for maximum impact choose a single variety of plant. If you do want to place your piece in a flower border, either keep the planting low, or raise your piece on a pedestal.
- **A hedge – especially an evergreen one** – makes a perfect backdrop for sculpture. But be sure the top of the hedge is comfortably above the piece, rather than cutting through its middle.
- **Water gives an extra dimension to sculpture.** Not only do you enjoy the pleasure of reflections, but the sun bouncing off the water lights the art in a completely different way, changing minute by minute.
- **Consider how the vagaries of the weather** will affect both the piece and its backdrop: rippling grasses make a most attractive setting; frost-blackened or wind-battered plants, rather less so.



WILDFLOWERS

Large areas of topsoil were removed from the site and sold off when the lakes were first dug out. While this is a challenge for tree planting, it creates perfect conditions for sowing wildflowers.



ALSO IN THE AREA

Other places to enjoy sculpture

- **GARDEN Yorkshire Sculpture Park** One of the world's largest sculpture parks, set in 500 acres, with works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and others. West Bretton, Wakefield, WF4 4LG. Tel: +44 (0)1924 832631. www.ysp.co.uk
- **GARDEN Tout Quarry Sculpture Park** In 1983, a group of artists and the local community set about regenerating a quarry, with more than 60 works carved into rock faces, shaped from boulders or made from shale. Portland, Dorset DT5 1BW. Tel: +44 (0)1305 826736. www.learningstone.org
- **GARDEN The New Art Centre & Sculpture Park** An intimate park which has mastered the art of perfect placement. All works are for sale, and changing displays have included the likes of Antony Gormley and Peter Randall-Page. Roche Court, East Winterslow, Salisbury. SP5 1BG. Tel: +44 (0)1980 862244. www.sculpture.uk.com

The terrace of the four-acre garden at Ablington Manor is laid in reclaimed York stone, and punctuated by sun-loving plants such as helianthemum and chives.





Romantic reverie

Ablington Manor is the essence of English romance - an historic house with a floriferous garden leading down to the river →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | WORDS VICTORIA SUMMERLEY

A blington Manor wears its history not on its sleeve, but above its imposing entrance. The faces of five monarchs - Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, Mary Tudor, Mary's husband Philip of Spain, and Elizabeth's heir, James I - are carved in stone alongside the date 1590. It is a tangible reminder of a time when allegiance to a particular faith or faction could cost you your life - even in Ablington, an idyllic Cotswolds hamlet in the Coln valley, around 10 miles from Cirencester.

The only visible sign of royal allegiance since those uncertain days is the 'Catherine Wheel', a circular pergola in the gardens at Ablington Manor. *Rosa filipes* 'Kiftsgate' and *Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' scramble up its sides, interwoven with the tiny purple and white star-shaped flowers of *Clematis x triternata* 'Rubromarginata'.

It replaced an ancient apple tree, which finally collapsed under the weight of the 'Kiftsgate' rose that used it as a support. The pergola was put in around the time of the wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton, hence its nickname.

The gardens at Ablington encompass around four acres. The back of the house faces south and slightly west, and looks out over lawns and borders that slope gently down to the banks of the river Coln.



The house looks out over lawns and borders that slope gently down to the banks of the river

On the other side of the river is the gazebo, behind which the land rises steeply to form a wooded ridge. If the word 'gazebo' makes you think of a rickety wooden structure or plastic rain shelter, dismiss this image from your mind immediately. Owner Robert Cooper's gazebo looks as if it was built by some Norman forebear, homesick for the *chateaux* and

pigeonniers of his native land. In fact, Robert designed it himself, and it acts both as a focal point and as a foil for the house. It is two storeys high, built of Cotswold stone, and has a hipped roof, which gives the building its Gallic flavour. It is big enough to use for formal dinner parties, and even boasts a kitchen and a shower room. →



ABOVE Irises and nectaroscordum line the terrace, and give way to yellow and green yew forms. The towering yew topiary beyond the sundial is jokingly referred to by Robert as 'Henry Moore's last work'. **BELOW LEFT**

The serpentine borders include a mixture of shrubs, roses and herbaceous perennials. **OPPOSITE** The manor was built in 1590. It opens onto the terrace, and then a great lawn edged with borders.







LEFT The River Coln flows past the gazebo, which was built to owner Robert's own design. It lines up perfectly with the house, meaning the buildings act as focal points of the views from both ends of the garden.

→ The soil at Ablington is typical Cotswold brash; a thin stony layer over a bedrock of oolitic limestone. It is both the delight and the despair of Cotswold gardeners, who love the fact that it is free-draining, and warms up quickly in spring, but deplore the fact that it is drought-prone, and that straight carrots and parsnips are the exception rather than the norm.

There is no kitchen garden at Ablington now, but this is nothing to do with the difficulties of growing straight root vegetables. When the Cooper family arrived here 40 years ago, the enormous walled vegetable plot was overgrown and far too big to be a practical proposition for a modern household. Half of it is now a tennis court, where roses crowd along the stone walls like spectators at Wimbledon. There is even a bed of *Lilium regale* at one end, which gives the effect of a royal box. The other half of the garden is a formal design of two wooden pergolas surmounted by twisted iron ogee arches either side of a central pool. Roses and clematis grow on the pergolas, while beds of iris and alliums are set out on either side of the pool designed by Robert and made by Cotswold Ironworks.

Robert and his wife Prudence insist that they have not tried consciously to create a romantic English garden at Ablington - although they do grow a tree lily called 'Honeymoon'. But perhaps there is something in the English DNA that makes us hard-wired to produce gardens that combine geometric formality with billowing, floriferous planting.

Perhaps it is the climate; Gloucestershire's annual 738mm rainfall is certainly a useful accomplice when it comes to making gardens that combine the delicate charm of woodland and wildflowers with statuesque herbaceous and shrub borders and the chunky topiary of yew and box.

Prudence describes her approach as 'making pictures', and as a result, Ablington is full of vignettes that provide satisfying details and corners to explore within the broader landscape of the garden as a whole. In the walled garden, for example, where clematis and roses climb the →



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

The striking foliage of the variegated tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureomarginatum'); the flowers of *Rosa* 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh' have a light fragrance reminiscent of lilac; *Iris* 'Senlac', a sultry purple-maroon variety; the fragrant blooms of the early Dutch honeysuckle, *Lonicera periclymenum* 'Belgica'; *Deutzia x hybrida* 'Mont Rose'; an unknown *Iris germanica* cultivar which Robert has had for years - it has pale-yellow flowers with rich gold beards; *Rosa* 'François Juranville'; *Iris* 'White Swirl', which Robert says he first saw used by Emma Keswick in her garden at Rockcliffe, near Stow on the Wold.



RIGHT One footbridge across the River Coln leads to a colourful 'garden barge' - a floating garden of moisture-loving plants. This is the only place in the garden Prudence indulges in hot colours. **BELOW** This pink granite memorial was commissioned by Robert's great-grandmother to mark the death of her beloved horse. It is dedicated 'to Polly, a favourite mare' and surrounded by a mass of *Iris* 'White Swirl'.



The garden is full of vignettes that provide satisfying details and corners to explore

→ pergolas on either side, there are two beds where the little maroon bobble flowers of *Allium sphaerocephalon* pop up above the yellow-and-green-striped leaves of *Iris pallida* 'Argentea Variegata'. The effect is both charming and cheeky, but Prudence refuses to take any credit for it, saying that she copied the idea from plantsman and landscape designer Arne Maynard.

One of the 'pictures' created by Robert and Prudence was installed at the urging of their new head gardener, Roland Earl. He was keen to make a wildflower garden on the west side of the garden. The Coopers were encouraging, but not convinced. 'Our experience of wildflower meadows was that they were too much effort, and never work,' says Robert.

Roland was undeterred, however, and prepared the ground carefully by spraying off any perennial weeds and grass, and sowing a mixture of grasses and flowers supplied by Cotswold Seeds.

The Coopers are thoroughly won over. The effect in midsummer is of a lacy haze of corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) punctuated by poppies and the purple-pink flowers of corn cockle (*Agrostemma githago*). What could be more romantic than that?

Ablington Manor usually opens one day a year for charity. Check www.khh.org.uk for 2016 dates.

The Coopers' top tips →



Ablington Manor garden notebook

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

The River Coln contains brown trout and grayling, and is a favourite with fishermen. Rising at Brockhampton, near Cheltenham, it joins the Thames at Lechlade. Water from the Coln supplies Ablington and the neighbouring village, Bibury, where there is a trout farm dating from 1906, founded by the naturalist Arthur Severn.



TAKE THE EDGE OFF

Here, curves beat straight lines. One of the features at Ablington are the serpentine edges where the borders meet the lawns. 'People often ask why I don't have straight lines,' says Robert, 'and I tell them that nature doesn't grow in straight lines.'

Garden challenges

LIGHT: The steep sloping woodland on the south side of the river means the sun does not come over the trees until June, making half the garden a frost pocket in winter. Specimens like *Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group grow in sheltered spots.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are in the area, the Coopers recommend the following places:

- **GARDEN Oxleaze Farm** Robert has high praise for this country garden, which reflects the landscape around it. Lechlade, Glos GL7 3RB. Tel: +44 (0)1367 850216.
- **NURSERY Miserden Nursery** A traditional family nursery run by David Robb who stocks a range of perennials and shrubs. Miserden, Stroud, Glos GL6 7JA. Tel: +44 (0)1285 821638. www.miserdennursery.co.uk
- **PLACE TO STAY The New Inn at Coln St Aldwyns** B&B and a sophisticated take on the traditional Cotswold pub. Pop-up pizza evening on Wednesdays. Coln St Aldwyns, Cirencester, Glos GL7 5AN. Tel: +44 (0)1285 750651. www.new-inn.co.uk



DEER ME

The lifelike bronze sculpture of a roe deer, which gazes out across the river from beneath the trees, is by the sculptor Hamish Mackie (www.hamishmackie.com).

Robert and Prue's gardening tips

- **Grow what you know** and what likes your soil. There are several things that are really impossible to kill in our garden, and they include hostas, persicarias, alchemilla and snowdrops.
- **Plant tulips in the rough.** We have started planting the tulips we lift from the borders each year in the rough grass on the south side of the river. If you want them to naturalise, you have to plant them really deep - 25cm down if you can. Don't worry about colour-co-ordinating them - they look better if the effect is of a spangled carpet, as if someone has emptied out a packet of boiled sweets.
- **Think carefully before making a wildflower meadow.** The romantic image belies the work involved! And it is important to prepare the ground properly. For advice and seed mixtures, try Cotswold Seeds - www.cotswoldseeds.com



IMAGE/HUGO RITT-SON-THOMAS

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Old-fashioned roses mix with delphiniums and *Phlomis fruticosa* on the terraces of Elsing Hall, a moated, walled 10-acre garden in Norfolk.

A fresh approach

Two new gardeners have taken on the much-loved garden of Elsing Hall, and gently updated it →

PHOTOGRAPHS ANNE GREEN-ARMYTAGE | WORDS JACKIE BENNETT



ABOVE Looking across roses and delphiniums (including ‘Kazanlik’ roses in the foreground) to the moat and gardens beyond. **BELOW** Elsing Hall seen from the far side of the moat on the east side. Black swans swim in the reflection of the house, which was built during the 1470s.

Garden visitors don’t like their gardens to change, it seems. When Patrick Lines and Han Yang Yap left Hong Kong in 2006 and chose a moated manor house in Norfolk as their home, they didn’t realise quite what a special place Elsing Hall held in the hearts of those who knew it. The garden had been tended by Shirley Cargill since 1982, and every Sunday in summer

visitors would trickle through the gates to see this quintessentially English garden, with its old-fashioned roses and romantic air of slightly faded grandeur.

Initially, Patrick and Han Yang had not intended to open the garden at all. After renovating the house and moving in a year later, they were shocked by how quickly a ‘romantic’ garden can become unruly. ‘We had first seen the garden in autumn when

everything seemed calm,’ says Han Yang. ‘Then when we returned in June, we really looked at the garden for the first time. It was pretty daunting - the pink geraniums and the roses had taken over!’ Planted more than 20 years ago, the collection of 400 or so roses had been running wild. ‘Shirley didn’t believe in pruning,’ says Patrick. ‘It was lovely - but that was her style. At first there was a lot of pressure on us to maintain that style.’

Han Yang and Patrick met in Hong Kong, where they both worked for 13 years. Having lived in apartments, they had absolutely no gardening experience. Feeling they were out of their depth, they asked horticulturist Ian Stanton for advice. Ian recommended two ex-students from Norfolk’s Easton College, Robin and Ali Mahoney, who came to work at Elsing for one day a week.

The roses were tumbling forward away from the walls, obscuring the plants beneath. At first, Ian suggested tackling every third rose, reducing their height and training them back to their wire supports. ‘In the end, we decided to just go for it and tackle them all at once,’



says Patrick. ‘Ian’s best bit of advice was that we needed to simplify the garden - removing some of the island beds to make the garden more suited to our lifestyle.’

Soon, Patrick and Han Yang were spending every spare moment in the 10 acres of garden. It is not hard to see why they fell in love with this 15th-century moated hall, with its ancient defensive moat. The house had a makeover in 1852 by the Norwich architect Thomas Jekyll, who rebuilt the south front and added the Elizabethan-style chimneys. Around this time, the moat was widened to



As their confidence grew, Patrick and Han Yang introduced more bearded irises, delphiniums, tulips and peonies

become almost lake-like on the south front. A lawned terrace was also added, and extends out over the water.

The moat had become badly silted and overgrown with reeds, and had lost that magical ability to reflect the house. One of the first things Patrick and Han Yang did was to

dredge it. The mud was piled up and turned into a raised viewing area - a chance to get a raised viewpoint over the moat and the house. This mound was then planted with a spiral of *Lonicera nitida*. ‘We thought about box, but it takes so long, and lonicera looks just as good when it’s clipped,’ says Patrick.

Elsing Hall has an unusual sloping walled garden, with three brick walls, the fourth side being a medieval fish pond. Clearing some of the roses revealed beds and new planting opportunities. As their confidence grew, Patrick and Han Yang introduced more bearded irises, delphiniums, tulips and peonies, as well as camassias to fill the gap in May before the roses start to bloom. ‘It has been about finding the plants that we like,’ says Patrick. Within the walled garden, they →

ABOVE *Crambe cordifolia* and *Angelica archangelica* give height to a border of *Papaver orientale* ‘Patty’s Plum’, foxgloves and pink-and-white *Salvia sclarea* var. *turkestaniana*. **BELOW LEFT** Old roses including ‘Albertine’ climb the hall. **BELOW RIGHT** The moat has a rowboat and a landing stage.





ABOVE The front of the terrace, with an old rose, possibly *Rosa* 'Sophie's Perpetual', in the foreground, underplanted with *Campanula latifolia*.

BELOW Patrick and Han Yang have cut 64 yews to different heights to create a uniform effect in the formal garden.

→ have worked with the existing trees - the knarled old Bramley apples are hard pruned each year to retain their wonderful shapes, and the unusual decorative trees planted by the Cargills are treasured: a white Judas tree, a Japanese apricot, *Cornus mas*, albizia and *Parrotia persica*.

Beyond the walled garden, a stone arch, rescued by the Cargills from the Peterborough Corn Exchange, leads to an avenue of ginkgos, which turn buttery yellow in autumn.

Next door is the lime tunnel, which is cut back hard at the top each year to create the shape of a cathedral roof (rather than the usual pleaching method). This leads to the formal garden with its clipped yews. Always aware of vistas, the pair opened up new views by cutting through the established hedges, to offer glimpses of a sculpture or the sheep grazing beyond.

When they arrived at Elsing, Patrick and Han Yang could not have imagined the

gardening journey they would be making. Now, eight years on, they describe the garden as their 'main occupation'. 'Making a garden is like making a monumental sculpture that will sit in the landscape,' says Han Yang. 'Eventually, you just hope that you will end up with something that you are 100% satisfied with.'

In the centre of the walled garden stands an old and bent medlar tree which has almost disappeared under the growth of a 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' rose. When asked which plant will be sacrificed for the health of the other - the medlar or the rose - there is not a moment's hesitation. 'We'll keep the rose. It looks so amazing, even if it's just for two weeks a year.' The spirit of Elsing Hall and the fleeting summer moments that roses can bring are still working their magic.



Elsing Hall Gardens, Hall Road, Elsing, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 3DX. In July, groups are welcome to visit by prior appointment. To book a visit (groups of 20 or more), call +44 (0)1362 637866. To find out more about the garden and openings, visit www.elsinghall.com

Elsing Hall garden notebook



A RIGHT RAMBLER

Choosing the right rose for the right position is vital. Here, a rambler called 'Francis E. Lester' has been planted to grow over the wooden arbour on the bridge. It is strong growing (to about 5m) but not as rampant as 'Paul's Himalayan Musk'. A rambler is a good choice for an arbour, as the stems are flexible and can be trained over the roof.

Tips from Han Yang & Patrick

- **When planting new roses**, we follow rose grower Peter Beales' advice - if you have to take out a rose and want to replant in the same place, dig all the soil out, put a cardboard box in the hole and then plant the new rose in the box, with new soil. We have had no problems with rose diseases so far.
- **Give roses a good layer of manure** every year - we use well-rotted horse manure from a local stable. We keep it for a year before use. It's a back-breaking job, but worth it.
- **Pull out pink or muddy-coloured foxgloves** if you want only the pure-white ones - they won't always come true, but it seems to stop some of the crossing between the pink and white ones.
- **Don't always assume things** you see in other gardens will work in your own garden - tree ferns, for example, might look wonderful in Cornwall, but the lack of rainfall and the cold drying winds of East Anglia will make it difficult for them to be happy.



MARVELLOUS MOON

At the bottom of the walled garden, a new section of wall includes a moon gate - a traditional element in Chinese gardens. It has a practical purpose too, which is that the wooden shutters on either side can be closed at night to keep rabbits out of the garden.



TAKING FLIGHT

Introducing a contemporary piece of art or sculpture can be an inspired move, even in a very traditional garden. In the centre of the formal yew garden, Rachael Long's metal ospreys have been raised up on a bare tree trunk so they can be viewed against the sky - adding a surprising vertical element. Find out more about Rachael's work at www.rachaellong.net



GARDEN CHALLENGES

PESTS & PICK UP:
Rabbits and deer are an ongoing problem here, and mature trees such as poplars shed a vast amount of leaves in autumn, which must be collected.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting Elsing Hall, Patrick and Han Yang also recommend:

- **GARDEN Houghton Hall** Has amazing artworks and Lord Cholmondeley and the team have created the most unbelievable walled garden. King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 6UE. Tel: +44 (0)1485 528569. www.houghtonhall.com
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- **HIDDEN GEM The Bishop's House Gardens in Norwich** 'The gardener has given us lots of good advice,' says Patrick. Open on select days for charity. Norwich, Norfolk NR3 1SB. Tel: +44 (0)1603 880853. www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/bishops/norwich/gardens/
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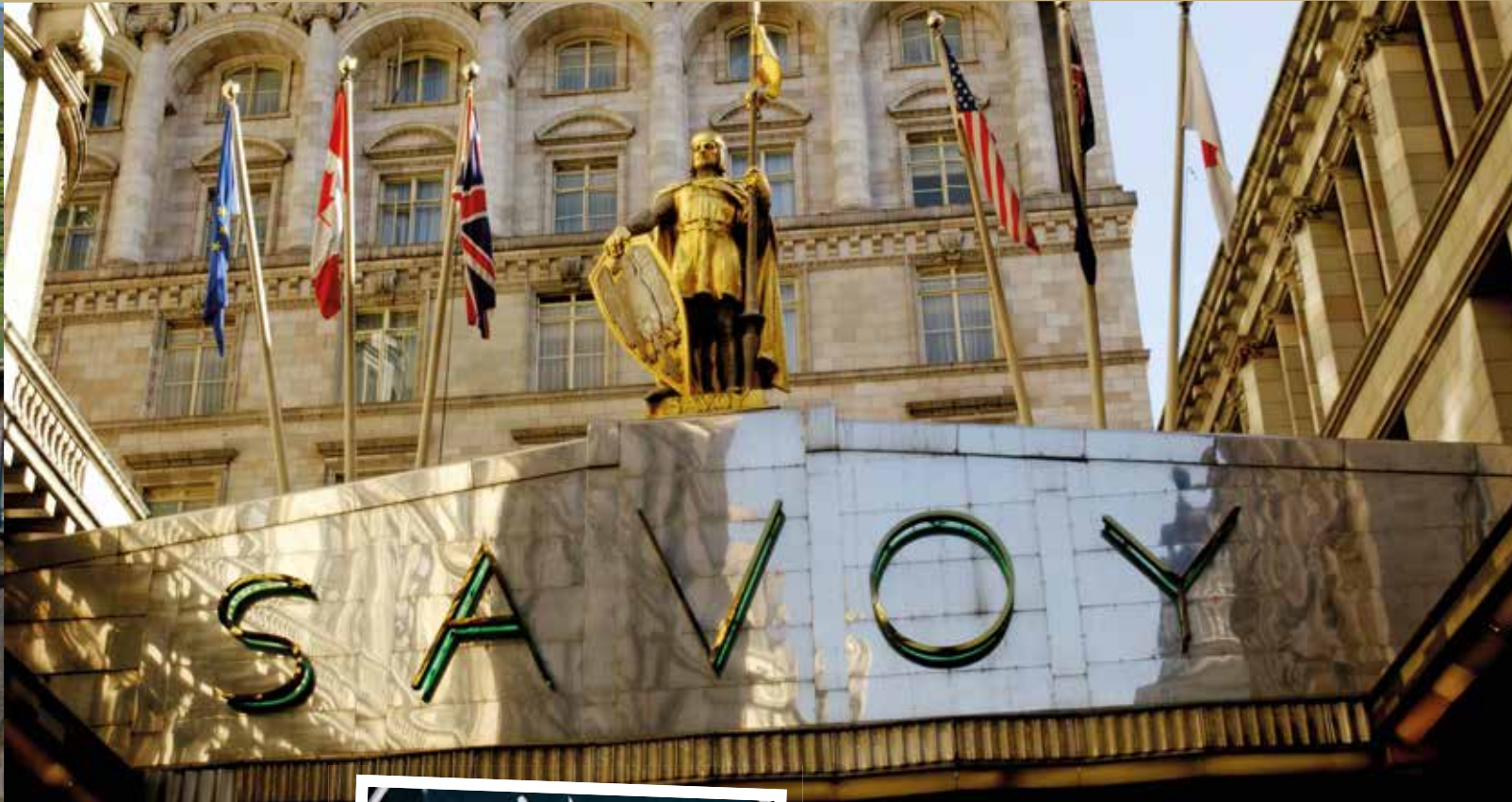


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Clockwise, from top left: Lindeth Howe Country House Hotel, part of the Classic British Hotels group; The Savoy; afternoon tea at Mews of Mayfair; our winner will be chauffeured around for the day; moated Leeds Castle; a romantic bolthole with Sykes Cottages.



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PLANTING *perfection*

The sweeping double borders of the Millenium Garden at Castle Hill
in Devon were a triumph for designer Xa Tollemache →

PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE | WORDS STEPHANIE MAHON



Before its redesign, the area in front of the house at Castle Hill in Devon had a great lawn with a swimming pool and a thin, narrow border that curved towards the property. Nell, Lady Arran, wanted to create a summer garden here that could rival the spring woodland garden, so she called in her friend and garden designer Xa, Lady Tollemache.

'I went out into the garden and did sketches of what it might look like,' explains Xa. 'I felt that the border coming in towards the house was contrary to the natural flow of the garden, and was completely wrong. I wanted to sweep it away in an arc and create a big floral 'shoulder' moving away from the house.'

The estate is a Grade-I listed park, so it was important to create a garden that had the strength to come against the house, but not dominate the landscape. 'It had to have strong enough features to dictate a nice design and line without taking away from the bigger picture.'

When Xa had done her initial drawings, Nell showed her an old painting of the garden showing the original planting of trees in exactly the same movement that Xa had sketched. 'It was obviously meant to be!' she says. 'It was just the energy, how the contours showed me what I felt would be right. I told Nell I would only do the garden for her if she filled in the swimming pool and

ABOVE The herbaceous perennials used were 'chosen largely to keep a soft palette of creams, whites, silver, lilacs and blues,' explains Nell, Lady Arran, 'which read so well against the house. Pale pinks and dark red are good too.' The season starts with bulbs and aquilegias, then peonies and roses, with a summer show of favourites such as phlox, *Campanula lactiflora* 'Pritchard's Variety', daylilies, *Persicaria polymorpha*, *Verbena bonariensis*, agapanthus and sedums. Extra height is offered by clematis including 'Perle D'Azur' and 'Polish Spirit' on supports Xa designed for her own garden.

torched the little wooden hut beside it. So she threw the hut into the pool and filled it in! Then I started work.'

As inspiration for the structural planting, Xa chose a magnificent *Quercus ilex* growing at the bottom of the garden. She picked specimens of this tree, known as holm oak, as punctuation marks for the scheme, and had them clipped into domed trees to echo the copper domes of the house, creating a link by tying them into the park and the architecture.

Another striking feature of the sweeping double borders is the edging of lavender that flows down the space. 'I thought in a mad moment that we should edge with lavender,' explains Xa, 'which was crazy, in Devon →





ABOVE The domes of the house are reflected in the domed shape of the clipped *Quercus ilex* that form the backbone of the borders, sweeping away from the house in an arcing line. Rows of *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso' form the front edging along the path. Xa also used dark-leaved dahlias such as 'Twynning's After Eight', sweet Williams, *Echinacea* 'Ruby Giant', salvias, achillea and echinops in the planting scheme. Nell feels Xa has reinterpreted a design that was actually in place here in 1730, which had curving avenues of elms, but 'made it far more interesting, besides respecting the 18th-century structure'.



LEFT At the top of the borders, by the house, are low box-edged beds that give a clear view of the curving shape of the scheme. These beds contain annuals such as *Nicotiana sylvestris* and cosmos, and perennials including leucanthemum daisies and veronicastrum. They are backed by another row of lavender. A larger pair of clipped *Quercus ilex* in the lawn repeat the shaped specimens along the border, and offer a counterpoint to the Giles Rayner water sculpture.

→ with 45in of rain. But there is a lavender called ‘Grosso’ that is more wet tolerant and keeps its grey colour, so I used it in double row on either side. It did so well in the first few years that we took one row out. Nell still has a problem losing them, especially at the bottom where it is dampest, but it’s such a feature of the garden that she keeps taking cuttings and replacing them.’

Within the borders, there is a mix of shrubs, perennials and annuals. At first, Xa used shrubs like escallonias and hebes, but ‘they grew like topsy, and soon got top heavy, so we took them out’. They decided to add more silver weeping pears to the scheme to soften the planting and give height and lightness. While they are waiting for them to grow in, Nell and head gardener Louisa are growing annuals such as nicotiana to fill gaps. ‘The garden is open into autumn, so the annuals provide that extra flowering season. It is time consuming to grow them, but once they are in, they make the garden zing from late summer to autumn,’ says Xa. The Millenium Garden, as this space is now called, has given Castle Hill a summer garden to follow the spring woodland garden, and ‘reads perfectly against the house from all directions,’ says Nell. ‘We love it.’



ABOVE The line of the garden is dictated by the *Quercus ilex* trees, and Xa also reinforced their presence with an under-hedge of clipped *Osmanthus x burkwoodii* that circles around each trunk. This backbone to the curving double borders gives onto the great lawn and wraps around the magnificent cedar (see pg 51).

Castle Hill, Filleigh, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 0RH. Open all year - see www.castlehilldevon.co.uk See more of Xa’s work at www.xa-tollemache.co.uk

Lady Arran’s favourite border plants

Nell loves the scheme Xa created for her, and picks out four particular plants that work well together in the colour palette and can withstand the Devon climate.



***Veronicastrum virginicum* ‘Album’** is a hardy perennial with sculptural, whorled foliage, from which emerges tall flower spikes of white flowers from June to September. Will grow in most soils in full sun or part shade. Grows to 1.2m in height, with a spread of 50cm.



***Penstemon heterophyllus* ‘Heavenly Blue’** is a long-flowering variety that is great for attracting bees and butterflies. Likes a well-drained soil in full sun or part shade. Makes an excellent cut flower. Grows to a height of 80cm with a spread of 50cm.



Romneya coulteri, also known as the Californian tree poppy, has a powerful scent and a spreading habit. With glaucous grey-green leaves and large poppy-like flowers, it creates a display from July to September. Hardy down to -10°C. Grows to a height of up to 2.5m.



***Perovskia* ‘Blue Spire’** has whitish-grey stems and grey foliage with mauve-blue flower spikes in late summer. Good for coastal gardens, but may require support in windy areas. Plant in full sun in well-drained soil. Grows to a height and spread of 75cm.



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The front garden is planted with *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety', *Laburnum x watereri* 'Vossii', *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima', and hellebores.

CAPITAL GAINS

The north London garden of Linnette Ralph offers a sublime escape from the bustle of the city

PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS | WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS

It's not often that you see a plant-packed, well-tended front garden – and when you do, it's a sure sign that the back garden will be pretty special too. That is certainly the case with Linnette Ralph's North London home.

When she moved in 24 years ago, the back garden was a typical London set up: a long, narrow garden (25m x 6m), with a lawn and a climbing frame. Then, in the mid 1990s, a friend of a friend who had trained as a garden designer came up with the layout that remains to this day: a terrace in front of the house, a circular →

lawn surrounded by planting, and a path that leads to raised beds at the back. It fulfilled Linnette's criteria for a place to gather to eat, somewhere for her children to play, and raised veg beds.

Since then, the layout has stayed much the same, apart from the back part of the garden, which had a revamp in 2012. Some 'horrible' inherited fir trees were replaced by a potting shed and a silver birch, plus a second seating area. Linnette has also added a second path, which almost winds fully around the circular bed beyond the lawn.

The planting, on the other hand, has changed many times. Linnette even replaced the lawn with gravel at one point, having been inspired by a garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show – but she missed the grass, and reinstated it. The gravel was edged with lots of tiny box plants, which have subsequently become fat box balls dotted around the garden, echoing the circular theme. They also provide interest and structure in winter, as do the numerous shrubs and trees, which include a rowan, multistemmed silver birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*),

Prunus serrula and a fastigate flowering cherry, *Prunus serrulata* 'Amanogawa'.

It's the perennials that Linnette enjoys fiddling about with. 'I'm always splitting, dividing and swapping. I used to have a bit of everything, but now I like to have repetition – over the years, I've learned that works better.' She also favours plants that offer a long season of interest, or more than one season of interest: 'In a small garden, all the plants have to earn their keep.'

The four raised beds at the back of the garden are Linnette's playground. 'It's out of sight, so I can do anything there.' Although two of the beds were originally intended for veg, with one for fruit and another for a cutting, in reality they are often full of plants that Linnette has divided or taken cuttings of, and self-seeders that she has dug up, waiting for a new home. 'I am constantly changing this poor garden,' says Linnette. It looks all the better for it.

Linnette's garden, which is located near Alexandra Palace, will open for the NGS on Sunday 12 June, 2016. For more information, visit www.ngs.org.uk.



▲ AL FRESCO DINING

One of Linnette's priorities was to have an outside eating area near the house. She inherited the crazy paving with the house. It is now largely covered with an ever increasing amount of plants in pots.



WORK AND PLAY

The garden is divided into two main sections: a circular lawn, and the 'working' area at the back, with a small picket fence between. The fences (1.5m tall with 60cm of trellis) are clothed with climbers, including pyracantha, ivy, a climbing hydrangea and a Virginia creeper; the left side is clothed entirely with *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. Linnette likes variegated plants, and has five dogwoods (*Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima'); they are also repeated in the front garden.



▲ THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS

The border between the two main parts of the garden is filled with some of Linnette's favourite plants – alliums, *Nectaroscordum siculum*, *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus*, *Iris sibirica*, grasses, hardy geraniums and *Alchemilla mollis*.

'I am constantly changing this poor garden – but it looks all the better for it'



◀ FOLLOW THE PATH

Some of the best garden paths are textural and meandering. This one is laid with a mix of stone, pebbles and scattered gravel. *Fatsia* (berries below left) a hydrangea and *Viburnum opulus* 'Compactum' are underplanted with ferns, geraniums, *Alchemilla mollis* and Japanese anemones, all of which conspire to soften this gentle garden artery. →



▲ **MAKES SCENTS**

At the back of the garden, some inherited fir trees were cut down and replaced with a potting shed and a dining area. It is backed by a scented *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. One of the raised beds, formerly a cutting patch, has been planted with more bee-friendly plants, including scabious and chocolate cosmos.

*The raised beds are Linnette's playground.
'It's out of sight, so I can do anything here'*

► **PERFECT PLOTS**

Linnette's raised beds are reminiscent of those in Mr McGregor's garden. She intersperses herbs with flowers and grows marigolds as pretty companion plants. A fruit bed is home to strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb and a gooseberry.





▼ **HI-HO SILVER!**

In the back of the garden, Linnette recently planted a multi-stemmed silver birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*). It is underplanted with ferns, foxgloves and lily of the valley.



◀ **A FRAGRANT MIX**

Originally intended to be a herb bed, Linnette explains that this space is 'now more mixed planting interspersed with herbs'. Among rosemary, sage and thyme grow sweet peas on homemade supports, aquilegia and *Verbena bonariensis*.

PLANT PROFILES



▲ **UNUSUAL EUPHORBIA**

The diminutive *Euphorbia hypericifolia* 'Silver Fog' is a tender perennial that flowers for months with very little attention.



▲ **SCABIOUS**

Scabiosa 'Butterfly Blue' flowers for several months in summer and is extremely popular with bees in Linnette's garden.



▲ **MEXICAN DAISY**

One of Linnette's favourite plants, *Erigeron karvinskianus* appears throughout the garden and self-seeds readily.



▲ **IRIS**

There are several clumps of *Iris sibirica* 'Caesar's Brother'. They are earmarked for a plant stall when the garden opens for the NGS in 2016.

ARABIAN ADVENTURE

Tom Mitchell braves danger in the mountains of Morocco to find a rare peony

ILLUSTRATION HELEN CAMPBELL



Tom Mitchell studied biology before working as a City banker. He now runs Evolution Plants near Bradford on Avon, where he sells many new varieties of plants he sources on his expeditions abroad. www.evolution-plants.com

How do you know where to go to find all these plants? This question comes up frequently at the end of talks I give about my plant-hunting exploits. As much as I'd like to claim that it's a combination of superior intellect and a finely honed instinct for the chase, the answer is typically more mundane. I ask someone. The trick is knowing who to ask. One of the most generous providers of plant-hunting intelligence that I know is Kurt Vickery; brilliant plantsman, professional photographer, amateur psychotherapist and a good friend.

Kurt has twice visited the Rif Mountains, which rise from the Mediterranean coast of Morocco to a maximum elevation of almost 2,500m. On his second trip, he had seen in flower a magnificent colony of a peony species that is exceedingly rare in cultivation, though not particularly so in the wild.

Paeonia coriacea has vivid pink flowers, borne briefly

- and to many humans, peonies are the loveliest of all flowering plants. Their fragile, fleeting, tissue-paper-thin petals are saturated with pigment, surrounding a central boss of carpels and golden stamens, which wave in the breeze like the tentacles of a sea anemone. Many are as fragrant as roses, inviting one to kneel and inhale their perfume. Occasionally I find honey bees asleep or dead in their sensual embrace. And what better place to die, if you're an insect, than cossetted in the petals of a peony?

I decided to visit the colony that Kurt had described, with the aim of collecting seeds. And so, last August, I found myself in a hotel in Chefchaouen, a Berber town in the Rif Mountains, with Cubist houses painted white and chalky blue, and with a bazaar of cobbled streets lined with eating places and hawkers of pigments, orange juice and souvenirs. Kurt had been vague with his directions. 'Just head to the top of the town. You'll find a road that goes up into the hills.

Soon we left all signs of human occupation behind. There was no indication on our map of the road we'd found

in early spring over pale-green, fragrant foliage. It occurs across the Strait of Gibraltar in Spain and Portugal - though I've never seen it in either country - as well as in North Africa, and, like most wild peonies, it is the subject of pointless nomenclatural strife among taxonomists competing to have the last word. There is, of course, no last word in the endless, Baroque epic of evolution, but some purists insist that *P. coriacea* is just a regional variant of the widespread *P. mascula*.

Flowers were designed by natural selection for the eyes and tiny minds of their pollinators, or for the wind, not to delight human sensibilities. But human minds respond to them too - happily for us gardeners

Drive until you get to the abies and you'll find the peony there.'

It took us a little while to locate Kurt's road, but eventually we were winding uphill through a series of switchbacks, though pine forest. We stopped and collected seeds from the abundant asphodels and cistus, before pressing on higher. Soon we had left all signs of human occupation behind. There was no indication on our map of the road we'd found. I was travelling with Hannah Gardner, fellow adventurer and plant fanatic and, while I concentrated on negotiating the perilous hairpin bends, she provided a running commentary.

We passed a woman on a donkey, with two young



Paeonia coriacea

Helen Campbell is an award-winning, Cotswold-based botanical artist and tutor. www.helencampbellart.co.uk

children walking alongside her. Hannah went suddenly quiet. After a minute or two, she asked: 'Did you see what that woman just did?' I'd been watching the road, and hadn't. 'She did this,' said Hannah, drawing her forefinger across her throat in an unmistakably life-threatening gesture. 'Oh,' I said. 'What do you think we should do?'

This close to our goal, we couldn't possibly turn back, and so we pressed on, following a dry river valley in which oleander was flowering abundantly. The day was enervatingly hot. The windows were wide open, and soon a pungent scent intruded. We found ourselves driving through fields of cannabis, exactly at the point of harvest.

The few farmers we passed stared at us slack-jawed, and we did our best to look like tourists, terribly lost, on our way to the souks of Marrakech. Eventually, we left the cannabis fields behind, and the road climbed ever higher. Our game little hire car

finally refused a corner on the rugged dirt road, and so we got out and walked. It was Hannah who cried 'Peonies!', spying the extensive colony, in scrub, below the road.

Our timing was perfect. The stout stems of the peonies were bowed down with the weight of ripe seed pods, and we quickly filled a big bag with them. Growing with the peony were plants of a splendid honeysuckle, *Lonicera implexa*, also festooned with ripe, red, fleshy fruit.

For me, this was a perfect moment. We had come - lovers, and lovers of plant diversity - to find a rare plant, with the aim of introducing it to wider cultivation.

We had found it, thanks to the help of a like-minded friend, and subsequently we have distributed it to dozens of enthusiastic growers who will ensure that, whatever the fate of the wild populations of peonies in Morocco, it is secure in cultivation. ♦



Bring your garden indoors

With a few simple steps and a little extra heating to keep out the cold, a greenhouse can be a plant-filled paradise all year round

A greenhouse can be the gardener's best friend in winter. Temperatures in even an unheated greenhouse, such as one by Hartley Botanic, can be as much as 5°C higher than outside, making this the perfect place to overwinter tender plants, not simply so they are out of the cold but also to protect them from rain. It is often not the cold that kills tender plants, but a combination of cold and wet.

Summer bedding plants are expensive to buy, so if you can keep them going from one year to another, so much the better. Tender perennials such as fuchsias, marguerites and pelargoniums will keep going nicely in a greenhouse – and will often go on to perform better in their second and third years

provided they aren't overwatered. They will be happiest at a temperature of about 7°C, so, if the greenhouse is unheated, cover them with fleece during cold snaps.

And a greenhouse is so useful for peaches and nectarines because you can usually ward off peach-leaf curl by bringing the plants under glass from October until May.

A warming feeling

Hartley Botanic structures can also double as warm and dry potting sheds in winter, while larger models can be used as a glorious, plant-filled glasshouses. With the correct heating in place, you can be sure of a plant-filled paradise all year round, whatever the weather.

Tender-flowering plants such as stephanotis, brugmansia and many

houseplants, will appreciate temperatures in excess of 18°C – much as humans do.

The right environment

Water plants in a Hartley Botanic greenhouse only sparingly until spring, and be sure to clear condensation by opening vents briefly on sunny days. While an unheated greenhouse offers a good deal of protection, you can raise the internal temperature by fixing UV-stabilised bubble wrap to the glass for extra insulation. Heating the greenhouse, will increase the range of plants that can be housed. A constant temperature of about 13°C is ideal for tropical plants like amaryllis, poinsettias and orchids.

Hartley Botanic 781 933 1993;
www.hartley-botanic.com

Fritillaria uva-vulpis is an easy-to-please fritillary, which will grow in most soils.



SPRING WITH A TWIST

This autumn, in addition to tulips and daffodils, why not plant some more unusual bulbs?
John Hoyland suggests beautiful plants to light up your garden next spring →



LEFT *Bellevalia pycnantha* produces a striking dark-blue carpet of flowers.

BELOW *Camassia leichtlinii* is a great choice for heavy, damp soils.

*In February, when little else is flowering,
Iris tuberosa is a treasure*



In bulb catalogues and on garden centre benches there are two spring flowers that dominate: the tulip and the daffodil. While this duo are the linchpin of the garden in spring, there are many other bulbs with beautiful flowers that are reliably perennial and easy to grow.

Plants in the fritillaria family have a reputation for being fussy and for needing lots of attention to flourish - but, as in all families, some members are more easy-going than others. *Fritillaria uva-vulpis* has drooping purplish-brown flowers with a silvery sheen and a narrow mustard rim. It will comfortably establish itself in most soils that get a regular autumn mulch.

The grape hyacinth, *Muscari armeniacum*, is an attractive plant when grown in pots, but in the ground it can be invasive and often produces more foliage than flowers. If you want a dark blue carpet that will not get out of control, consider *Bellevalia pycnantha* (also sold as *B. paradoxa*) which has a similar flower but grows much taller, to about 20cm. The pyramid-shaped flower spike is packed with inky-turquoise buds that open slowly and develop into blackish-blue bells. The golden-green interior of the flowers adds to the intensity of the colour.

Drifts of *Camassia leichtlinii* produce a similar blue haze to bellevalia. A metre tall, this is a majestic flower that prefers the heavy, damp soils that most other bulbs find difficult. It is a tough plant that will confidently naturalise in long grass. If you have heavy soil, you should also grow leucojums. The most often-seen is the summer snowflake, *Leucojum aestivum*, whose pretty white bells dangle from 50cm tall stems in April. Far more delicate is its earlier-flowering cousin, *Leucojum vernum*. At just 20cm tall, it can be mistaken for a snowdrop that has wide, fat flowers with a green tip to each petal.

Scillas, relatives of the common bluebell, will quickly colonise lighter soils under the dappled shade of deciduous trees and shrubs. Short forms such as *Scilla siberica* and

IMAGE/ALL GAP PHOTOS - FROM TOP
JONATHAN BUCKLEY TOMMY TONBERG

3 BRILLIANT BULBS FOR SHADE

Most bulbs like growing in full sun, but some great types are adapted to growing in shade:

- 1 *Erythronium 'White Beauty'*** Dog's tooth violets like humus-rich soil in full shade. 'White Beauty' is enchanting from the moment its delicately marbled leaves appear. Creamy-white blooms brighten gloomy areas in early spring. Reaches 15cm.
- 2 *Uvularia grandiflora*** A woodland plant from North America, where it is known as 'merry bells'. In April, its arching stems are covered with fresh, apple-green leaves that contrast with the yellow, bell-like flowers. It needs cool shade that does not dry out during summer.
- 3 *Triteleia 'Rudy'*** Triteleias are happy in light shade if the soil is well-drained. The loose, open umbels of funnel-shaped flowers give the plant a light and airy feel. Striking 'Rudy' has dozens of white flowers that have a violet stripe on each petal.



Scilla bifolia are widely available, but for something more distinguished, search specialist nurseries for *Scilla hyacinthoides*. With dozens of pale-blue star-shaped flowers along its 80cm tall stem, it is an imposing sight.

For a sea of blue in short grass, choose *Chionodoxa forbesii*, which has sprays of dark blue flowers that have a white eye. Visit Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in March and you will see expansive colonies of them in the lawns. It is a breathtaking sight.

In February, when little else is flowering, *Iris tuberosa* (often now sold as *Hermodactylus tuberosus*) is a treasure. Commonly called the widow iris, its translucent jade-green flowers have black edges. It needs a well-drained situation and revels in chalky soils, where it will creep around to establish large colonies. It grows to about 20cm tall and will continue flowering into April. The flowers have a strong scent →

ABOVE, FROM LEFT The early flowering *Leucojum vernum* is often mistaken for a snowdrop; at 80cm tall, *Scilla hyacinthoides* is an imposing sight; *Chionodoxa forbesii* creates a sea of blue in short grass.

TOP BULB-GROWING TIPS

- **With most bulbs**, it is obvious which way is up. If you are not sure, plant the bulb on its side: the stem will find its own way up.
- **Big, fat and firm** are the watchwords when buying bulbs. Reject any that are squishy, soft or showing signs of mould.
- **Don't remove foliage from bulbs** until it has completely died away: it is the foliage that feeds next year's flowers.
- **The biggest destroyer of bulbs** is the squirrel. Chicken-wire, placed over the freshly planted bulbs, will deter them.
- **For sheer flower power**, bulbs are some of the cheapest plants available, so don't stint on the quantities you plant. Even in small gardens, massed plantings of a limited number of varieties is always most effective.





I first came across ipheion in an abandoned garden, where thousands of its pale blue stars sparkled magically

→ which is barely discernible outside on cold days, but bring a few stems indoors and their perfume will be released.

Ornithogalum and ixia also make good cut flowers. *Ornithogalum thyrsoides* flowers for weeks, its narrow spikes packed with waxy white flowers on stems 60cm tall. It is known to florists as chinchinchee, and if picked in bud will last for weeks in a vase. The flower spikes of *Ornithogalum magnum* have a looser, airier feel with dozens of star-like white flowers circling the stem. Both need well-drained soil and plenty of sunshine. I have seen *O. magnum* naturalised in a grassy meadow, where it looked spectacular.

Ixia are often sold as mixed colours to be grown as cut flowers, but many named varieties in a wide range of colours are available. *Ixia* 'Blue Bird' has pale flowers with a dark-purple eye that are produced from wiry stems. The flowers, usually about 20 on each plant, appear in succession, so the

plant looks good for about a month. To thrive, ixia need as much sunshine as possible. After planting the corms, cover the area with straw, bracken or horticultural fleece to protect them from hard frosts.

My own favourite spring-flowering bulb is the ipheion. I first came across it one bright March day in the abandoned garden of a derelict house, where thousands of its pale blue stars sparkled magically. The plant that so enchanted me was *Ipheion uniflorum*. In recent years, several named selections have been introduced, the best of which is 'Rolf Fiedler', whose petals are more rounded than the species and an intense azure blue. It grows to about 18cm tall and flowers through March and April. One gardener's 'invasive pest' is another gardener's 'good clumper'. I'm happy that this bulb spreads rapidly and easily: it's a bright and cheerful flower that quickly dispels any lingering drabness of winter.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT *Ornithogalum magnum* looks beautiful naturalised in a grassy meadow; *Iris tuberosa* thrives in chalky soils; *Ixia* 'Blue Bird' needs plenty of sun, and a mulch to protect against hard frosts. **BELOW LEFT** *Ipheion* 'Rolf Fiedler' has intense azure-blue flowers.



WHERE TO BUY UNUSUAL BULBS

- **Avon Bulbs** Website and mail-order nursery. Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE. Tel: +44 (0)1460 242177. www.avonbulbs.com
- **Broadleigh Gardens** Display gardens and nursery open to visitors all year. Website and mail order too. Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AE. Tel: +44 (0)1823 286231. www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk
- **Rose Cottage Plants** Nursery open Fridays, March-Oct, plus online orders. Bay Tree Farm, Epping Green, Essex CM16 6PU. Tel: +44 (0)1992 573775. www.rosecottageplants.co.uk
- **Jacques Amand** Nursery open Monday-Friday (but please call ahead) plus online orders. Clamp Hill, Stanmore HA7 3JS. Tel: +44 (0)20 8420 7110. www.jaquesamandintl.com

IMAGE/ALL GAP PHOTOS - CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROB WHITWORTH, JONATHAN BUCKLEY, VISIONS, JAN SMITH

Cherchez la Femme

We explore how the rose 'Madame Caroline Testout' got its name from a forward-thinking French dressmaker

WORDS SARAH FEELEY

Back in the days when 'branding' meant approaching a cow's hind quarters with a hot iron, a forward-thinking 19th century French dressmaker expertly harnessed the power of publicity.

In Grenoble at the foot of the Alps, Madame Caroline Testout was a *couturière* who owned salons in Paris and London, creating bespoke garments for private clients.

Ambitious to boost both her business and her own profile, prescient Madame Testout made a move that's now commonplace in today's savvy world of commerce, but was rare back then. She pinpointed the most sought-after, in-vogue, must-have item of the moment among sophisticated society at the time – and gave it her name.

Hybrid tea roses were all the rage back then, and she targeted the ultimate rose nurseryman, Joseph Pernet-Ducher – 'The Wizard Of Lyon'. Lyon was a centre of excellence for rose growing, and while Madame Testout visited the city to buy silks, she took the temperature of high society, and realised that having a prestigious new rose named after her would put her on the map.

Pernet-Ducher agreed, but disagreed with her choice of seedling, which he considered mediocre. The lady was not for turning, her choice prevailed – and she was proven right when the rose was a sensation on its debut at Madame Testout's spring fashion show in 1890.

With abundant, silky, rose-pink flowers and a delicate fragrance, *Rosa* 'Madame Caroline Testout' was an instant hit with her well-heeled clientele, as well as with gardeners. Two years later, the RHS bestowed an Award



Madame Testout took the temperature of high society, and realised that having a prestigious new rose named after her would put her on the map

Of Merit on the rose, and Reverend Pemberton of the National Rose Society declared it 'one of the best – if not the very best – new rose of the last seven years'.

Its popularity spread to America and especially to Portland, Oregon. At the turn of the 20th century, as Portland prepared to welcome many thousands of visitors to an 'exposition' or world fair, which included a lavish parade, cuttings of *Rosa* 'Madame Caroline Testout' were handed out to everyone living for many miles along the parade route, which they planted along the sidewalks. This led to Portland becoming known as 'The City of Roses'. Today, there are original roses still growing on the old parade route, and the city hosts an

annual rose festival. To protect hybrid roses grown in Europe during the First World War, Portland established the International Rose Test Garden. It survives today as one of the oldest in America, covering 4.5 acres with more than 8,000 rose plants and 550 different species.

Rosa 'Madame Caroline Testout' is considered one of the finest pink hybrid tea roses ever created. And it also played an important part in rose breeding. In 1969, David Austin introduced new rose 'The Wife of Bath', which used 'Madame Caroline Testout' as the seed parent. The new variety contributed significantly to his pink breeding line, with 12 of his roses descended directly from 'The Wife of Bath'. ♦



ENDURING APPEAL

Winter may be upon us but the show of foliage is still going strong.
Andy McIndoe picks out 10 interesting evergreens

Foliage is the foundation of good planting. Lasting longer than the ephemeral beauty of flowers, leaves contribute variety and colour for more than one season. Evergreen shrubs are the most enduring of all, providing year-round structure and interest. Far from boring and plain, they offer a great variety of shapes and colours, and there is one to suit every gardener and situation. Many are remarkably tough and shade tolerant, bringing verdant beauty to the most challenging garden situations. Set aside the misconception that evergreen shrubs are big, unmanageable brutes; many are refined characters suited to pots and containers and the smallest gardens.

1 ↑ *Nandina domestica* 'Obsessed'

A compact form of sacred bamboo with stiff, fern-like, evergreen leaves with small, pointed leaflets; olive green through summer, flushed orange red at the top of the stems. As autumn progresses to winter, the foliage at the top of the plant turns to flame crimson. Growing to only 60cm or so, this is the perfect shrub for the smallest garden, or a pot on the doorstep or patio. Try underplanting nandina with black ophiopogon for a dramatic winter effect.



2 ← *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekka-sugi'

Almost unrecognisable as a conifer, this conical shrub has a light, open habit and slender drooping branchlets of pale creamy yellow, which are conspicuous against the pale green foliage at the heart of the plant. Reaching 1.8m in a few years, size can be limited by selective pruning; it can even be trimmed as an unusual, shaggy topiary subject. This conifer is lovely against a Japanese maple with purple-red foliage, and it makes a striking focal point in a mixed planting scheme.

3 → *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball'

Unlike most pittosporums, 'Golf Ball' forms a rounded mound up to 90cm in height, with a similar spread. Fine, dark stems carry small, bright green, flat leaves, giving a cheery and bright appearance. Dense and bushy in habit, it is still light in character and makes a strong alternative to box. This pittosporum can be clipped in spring for a more formal shape, or left to grow naturally. Grow it for structure in formal or informal planting, or grow it in a pot in a sunny position.



4 ← *Aucuba japonica* f. *longifolia* 'Salicifolia'

A superb evergreen with glossy, deep green, narrow leaves carried on sea-green stems. Shiny and reflective, it adds year-round interest to any shady corner. Showy red berries are freely produced from mid-summer onwards; a lively colour combination with the leaves. Growing to 1.5m with a similar spread, size is easily controlled by selective pruning in spring. This shrub grows on any reasonable soil and is a good choice for a large pot. Plant it with *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' for a colourful foliage contrast in summer and red stems in winter.



5 →

Hedera helix 'Erecta'

This is a wonderfully architectural evergreen shrub with upright stems carrying pointed, waved, dark green ivy leaves. These have an elegant, alternate arrangement on both sides of each stem. As the stems grow taller they tend to lean to one side, then grow vertically again up to a height of roughly 75cm. 'Erecta' is a superb plant for shade and a wonderful contrast to the foliage of shade loving ferns. This is lovely under planted with *Cyclamen hederifolium* and snowdrops under trees.



6 ←

Ilex aquifolium 'Ferox Argentea'

The silver hedgehog holly has the most unique leaves of all the hollies. Dark green and heavily variegated with cream, they have spines on their sides and upper surfaces, making them curiously three dimensional. Lax stems, often cream and green, mean a more informal, loosely bushy habit than most varieties of common holly, and develop a height and spread of 1.5 x 1.5m in about 10 years. This is a lovely contrast to plain, broad-leaved evergreens, and is good under trees, even in dry shade.

7 →

Podocarpus 'County Park Fire'

A bushy mound of spiky stems clothed in bronze-green, soft, needle-like foliage. A contrast to the colour and texture of most other evergreens, this podocarpus is a conifer which mixes well with other plants. The young foliage of this plant is cream in colour, turning to salmon pink, becoming bronze-red in winter. With a height and spread of 90cm, it can be allowed to grow loosely, or may be pruned into a more compact shape. Plant this shrub with bronze carex and caramel-coloured heucheras for an eye-catching evergreen effect.





8 ← *Luma apiculata* 'Glanleam Gold'

Closely related to the myrtle, this lovely evergreen has cinnamon-coloured stems and small, leathery dark green leaves, broadly edged with cream and tinged with pink when young. The shoots are tightly packed with foliage; growth is compact, if somewhat angular. Single white flowers, filled with fine white stamens, appear along the branches in summer. Growing slowly to 1.2m, it is ideal in a sunny spot, especially in a smaller garden. This plant makes an excellent foliage contrast to purple foliage shrubs such as *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea* 'Rose Glow'.



9 → *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Curly Red'

A small, striking evergreen shrub with dark green, curiously curled and waved leaves on loosely arranged 30cm stems. The foliage is flushed red as it unfurls, turning deep ruby-red in winter. Leucothoes prefer a shady spot through summer; a perfect position would be under the shade of deciduous trees growing in acid soil. This one is ideal for a lime-free growing medium in a pot or container; choose a pot with a black glaze to create a Japanese effect on the winter patio.

10 ← *Griselinia littoralis* 'Dixon's Cream'

Round, disc-like leaves of apple-green, which are broadly edged and splashed with rich cream are striking in any situation in sun or semi-shade. The upright green stems become looser and more arching as they mature, but are never as vigorous and tall as those of the species. Growing slowly to 1.5m in height and spread, 'Dixon's Cream' responds well to pruning, making it suitable for gardens of all sizes. Ideal in coastal and small town gardens, the light, bright appearance of this shrub can lift any dull green planting scheme throughout the year. ♦

Andy McIndoe tutors on www.my-garden-school.com



Viburnum x bodnantense
'Charles Lamont' has the
largest flowers in this
group of hybrids and is the
most free-flowering



WINTER'S BOUQUETS

Now is the time that fragrance becomes prominent, says **Matt Biggs**,
who suggests some of his favourite winter-flowering plants →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS



Winter is the season when fragrance comes to the fore, with beguiling perfume rather than blowsy flowers enticing passing insects.

Some plants disperse their finest perfume over a wide area, others are more subtle and restrained. But don't be misled by their sophisticated fragrance – winter-flowering plants are reliable and robust, with weather-resistant blooms. Fragrances are at their most powerful on milder days, so plant them beside a doorway or near a path where their scent can be savoured. It is also pleasing to cut a few sprigs as a posy for the house as they will fill a room with perfume – one of Flora's finest treasures.

Among the most dependable fragrant winter plants is *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont'. Less well known than ubiquitous 'Dawn', it boasts pink blooms and the largest flowers of all the cultivars. The start of the long flowering season in October heralds a succession of densely packed clusters of buds on naked stems which burst into exquisitely perfumed flowers until March, when the plant slides exhausted beneath a blanket of leaves to rest from its exertions until the following winter. Its toughness, tolerance and marathon feats

of flowering make this a 'must have' plant for the garden.

Few evergreen shrubs are more florally fragrant than *Daphne bholua*, with several particularly pleasing forms and a spicy fragrance that hangs in the air. 'Peter Smithers', which can be semi-evergreen, has large flowers, with deep purple-pink buds. The darkest of all the cultivars, the lobes retain the colour when they open but the centre becomes white and the flowers darken with age. 'Limpsfield', a more recent, hardy selection, has clusters of regal, dark-purple buds. Most famous of all is 'Jacqueline Postill', raised by plant propagator Alan Postill and named for his wife. This pleasing upright evergreen prefers well-drained, acidic soil in sun or part shade, and the small dense clusters of rose-purple tinted flowers cradled in a cluster of leaves at the shoot tips produce a most sensuous fragrance from December until March.

There are other daphnes worth considering that are not as powerful in fragrance or prolific in flower, but still with an irresistible charm. *Daphne odora* var. *rubra* is a delightful compact evergreen with crimson flower buds opening to a white lobed flower. It is ideal for the smaller garden. Meanwhile while *Daphne mezereum* f. *alba* 'Bowles's Variety'

Don't mistake their sophisticated fragrance for tenderness – winter-flowering plants are reliable and robust, with weather-resistant blooms

ABOVE Position *Daphne bholua* 'Peter Smithers' where the fragrance can be appreciated

RIGHT *Daphne bholua* 'Limpsfield' is weather-resistant and notable for its bi-coloured flowers

FAR RIGHT *Daphne odora* var. *rubra* is compact and best grown on free-draining soil



RIGHT If given protection from the winter's worst excesses, *Edgeworthia chrysantha* is one of the outstanding plants of the season.

BELOW RIGHT *Daphne mezereum* f. *alba* is the white form of this British and European native – it is vigorous, reaching 1.8m in height.



(sometimes sold as 'Bowles White'), is a small, deciduous shrub of upright habit, with fragrant white flowers in dense clusters along bare stems from midwinter onwards, which are followed by yellow berries. This selection was made by the great gardener and plantsman E.A Bowles, who had a keen eye for a good garden plant. The requirements of these daphnes is identical: well-drained, moisture-retentive soil, free from drought and waterlogging.

Its close relative, highly desirable *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, forms a shrub eventually reaching 1.5 x 1.5m. It blooms from December to March, particularly when the weather is mild. Rather more sensitive than many others, tolerating temperatures to -7°C at the lowest, it needs a warm, sunny, sheltered position protected from strong winds, or a little cossetting in a cool greenhouse in colder climates. Dense clusters of up to 50 vivid primrose-yellow flowers - each clothed in silvery white, silky hairs - appear at the shoot tips in January. This plant of undoubted elegance produces its delicate perfume

and gorgeous flowers, then sits serenely, waiting to be adored.

Hamamelis are undoubtedly stars of the winter garden, notably *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane' whose fragrant, rich, coppery-red flowers open in February. The cultivar 'Pallida' has sulphur-yellow flowers with a pleasingly fruity fragrance, and 'Aphrodite' with flowers of the colour of marmalade, seduces with the subtle aroma of lemon. *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna*, a form of Christmas box, has narrower leaves than the species and is an excellent spreading groundcover plant for a moist, shady spot. The cultivar 'Purple Stem' is so called because the young stems, leaf stalks and midribs are flushed purple. Both have sweetly scented flowers with prominent stamens. Plant singly or in small groups, as the vanilla-like scent easily becomes overpowering.

Some winter flowering plants have distinctly waxy flowers. *Lonicera standishii*, a large deciduous or semi-evergreen shrubby honeysuckle, is among that number. Bend close to smell the white,



BELOW The spectacular *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane' makes a great specimen shrub for a lawn centrepiece

BOTTOM The waxy flowers of *Lonicera standishii* emit a powerful fragrance

pink-tinted, lemon-scented flowers which compensate for their somewhat subdued appearance through much of the year. *Chimonanthus praecox* – or wintersweet – is my favourite winter flowering plant, a free-standing or wall-trained shrub for a south-facing wall that takes up to five years to flower, but it is well worth it. Its flowers emit a spicy aroma which becomes stronger as you walk nearer to the plant.

It may be winter outside, but with such warming fragrances, in your heart it will always be spring.



ABOVE
Sarcococca hookeriana var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem' thrives in deep shade

LEFT
The delicate flowers of *Chimonanthus praecox* have an exotic, spicy perfume

WHERE TO BUY

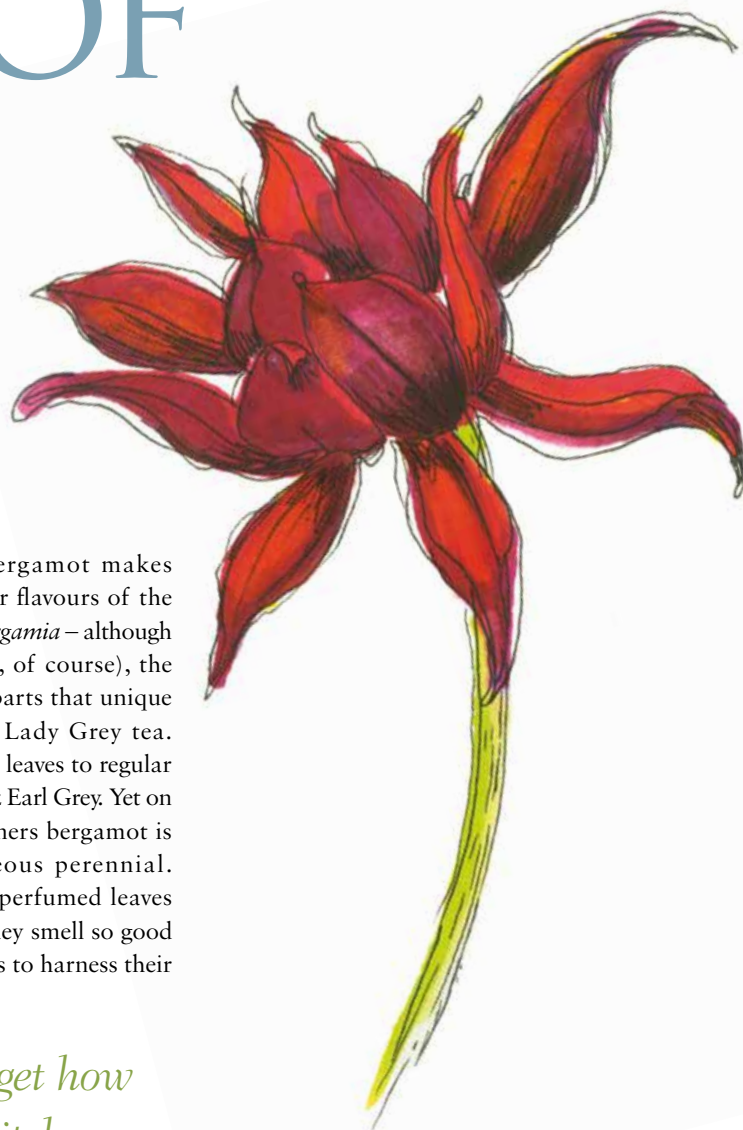
● **Karan Junker, Junker's Nursery,**
Higher Cobhay, Milverton.
Somerset, TA4 1NJ
Tel: +44 (0)1823 400075
www.junker.co.uk

● **Crocus**
Nursery Court, London Road,
Windlesham, Surrey, GU20 6LQ. Tel: +44
(0)1344 578000. www.crocus.co.uk

ASCENT OF AROMA

Jane Perrone explores the sweet-smelling world of perfumed leaves

ILLUSTRATIONS HELEN CAMPBELL



If you open up a book on herbs to read about bergamot (*Monarda didyma*), you'll invariably read that oswego tea – as the brew made from this herb is known – was the replacement for 'English' tea in the wake of the Boston Tea party of 1773, when American colonists destroyed the tea cargo of three ships in protest at British taxation hikes.

It's true that oswego tea was drunk by the colonists – a trick they no doubt learned from native Americans – but it wasn't the only plant pressed into service. As James M Volo writes in his book *The Boston Tea Party: The*

The common name bergamot makes a connection to the similar flavours of the bergamot orange (*Citrus bergamia* – although it's no relation to the tree, of course), the citrus fruit whose skin imparts that unique flavour to Earl Grey and Lady Grey tea. And you can add bergamot leaves to regular tea to create your own ersatz Earl Grey. Yet on the whole, for most gardeners bergamot is simply a pretty herbaceous perennial. This seems true of many perfumed leaves common to our gardens: they smell so good that we forget how easy it is to harness their aromas in the kitchen. →

Perfumed leaves smell so good that we forget how easy it is to harness their aromas in the kitchen

Foundations of Revolution: 'The matrons of each town made a great spectacle of brewing alternative beverages from native leaves, stems, seeds and flowers'. Their tea substitutes included Labrador tea made from *Rhododendron groenlandicum*, and liberty tea made from whorled loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*). Some people even tried (and generally failed) at growing *Camellia sinensis* in their gardens.

Yet bergamot won out in the end, at least in terms of tea alternatives. This member of the mint family with its showy red or pink flowers is the plant we continue to grow as an ornamental in our gardens on both sides of the Atlantic: some of us still put the leaves to work in the teapot. Forager and garden writer Alys Fowler calls it 'a sort of Earl Grey of the herbal tea world'.

PELARGONIUM GROWING TIPS

Expert advice from Ursula Key-Davis of pelargonium specialists Fibrex Nurseries of Pebworth, near Stratford-upon-Avon

Varieties 'I particularly like *Pelargonium* 'Radula'. The leaves are very deeply cut, the scent is lemon-rose, and it makes the most handsome, huge plant.'

Soil 'Any fresh, good quality compost is fine - they are not particularly picky.'

Position 'Take them inside around September, cut plants back by half, clean the plant up and repot it into a fresh pot with fresh compost, and it will grow quite happily away in the winter and make an attractive foliage plant. Pelargoniums are light-loving plants, so put them in a nice sunny position. Traditionally, put them back outside in full sun in the third week of May. By that time, they should be back in flower. Once they have finished flowering, they are easy to take cuttings from.'

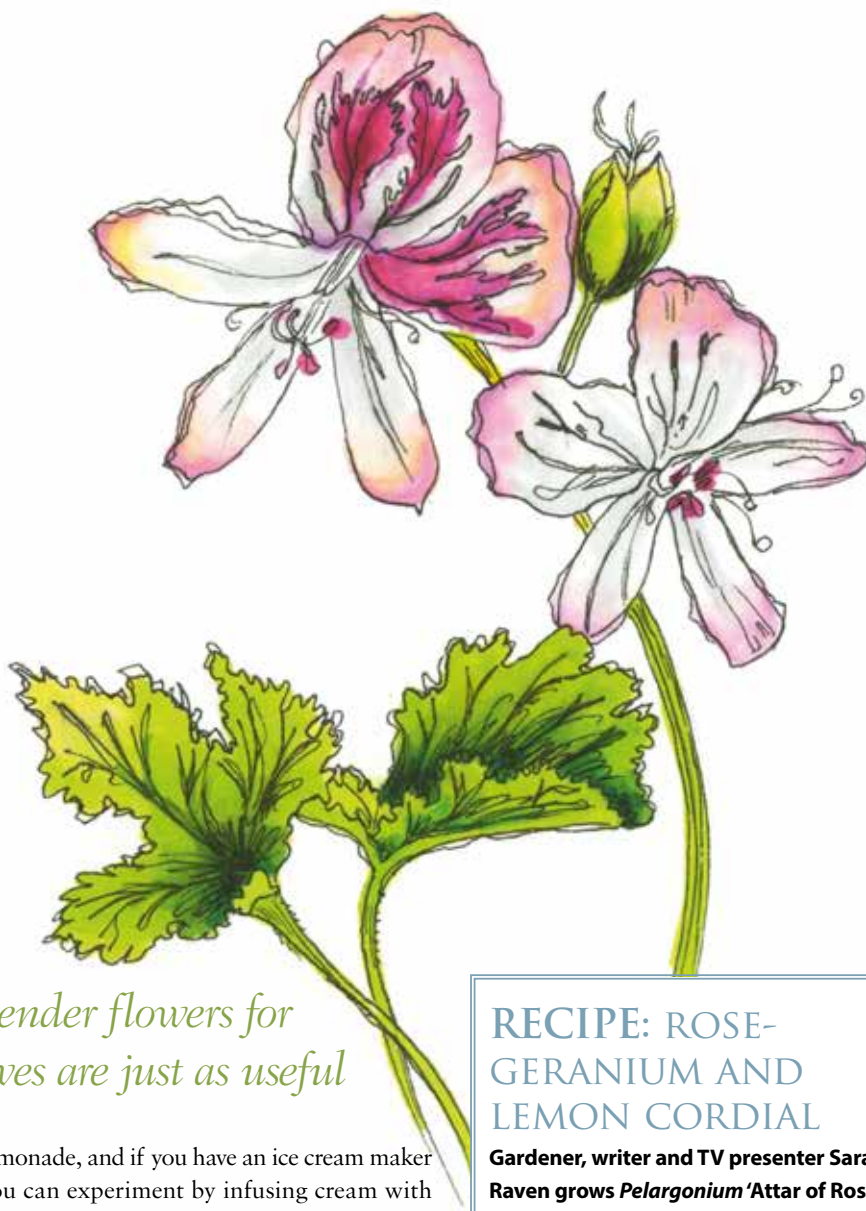
A pelargonium will exist with neglect, but it thrives if you look after it. Give a high potash feed about once a week or 10 days, and they respond very well.'

Harvesting 'As long as you repot them in September, they will start growing again, and you can use the odd leaf during winter. I use them in cakes. I put the leaves in the bottom of a sandwich tin, pour the Victoria sponge mixture on top, and bake the cake. The oils from the leaves cook out into the cake; if you use 'Radula' it puts the flavour of Turkish delight into the cake.'

→ I'm a sucker for an unusual plant, and as soon as I read a description of the cola plant (*Artemisia abrotanum* var. *maritima*) from the Manor Farm Herb nursery in Oxfordshire, I knew I'd be planting one before long. The silvery, feathery foliage grew so well in my quick-draining raised herb bed, and the aroma from the leaves as I brushed past while weeding was so delicious – it *does* smell like cola! – that for a while I forgot to pick some to take to the kitchen. I eventually added some to a pot-roasted pork shoulder, which gave a nice kick, and a few sprigs muddled into a glass of fizzy water taste good too.

If you don't want to go to the bother of getting hold of this rather obscure member of the artemisia family, what about the lavender that inhabits almost every garden? You may pick and dry the flowers for scented cushions, but the leaves are just as useful. Some cooks add the dried leaves to their *herbes de Provence* mix, and it's a feature of the *ras el hanout* spice mix of North Africa. The chopped leaves can be added to home-made

You may pick and dry lavender flowers for scented cushions, but the leaves are just as useful



RECIPE: ROSE-GERANIUM AND LEMON CORDIAL

Gardener, writer and TV presenter Sarah Raven grows *Pelargonium* 'Attar of Roses' and 'Sweet Mimosa' especially for this recipe, and for adding to blackberry and apple pies and crumble. Add citric acid if you want to store this for more than three or four days in the fridge. This recipe comes from www.sarahraven.com – a supplier of plants, bulbs and seeds for flowers, fruit and veg.

Makes 2 litres

Ingredients

- 2kg caster sugar
- 1 litre water
- Handful rose-scented pelargonium leaves
- The juice of 6-8 lemons (depending on whether tartaric acid is used)
- Finely grated zest of 2 lemons
- 30g citric (or tartaric) acid (optional)

Method

- Heat the sugar, water and pelargonium leaves until the sugar is dissolved. Cool.
- Remove the geranium leaves and add the citric acid (if using), juice and zest.
- Dilute to taste with sparkling water.

lemonade, and if you have an ice cream maker you can experiment by infusing cream with lavender leaves for a subtly perfumed dessert.

The granddaddy of this group, though, must be scented leaf pelargoniums. The flowers, though generally pretty enough, play second fiddle to the softly furry leaves. There's an array of scents to choose from, including the citrus of 'Cy's Sunburst', the cedar-scented 'Clorinda' and the piney 'Variegated Fragrans'. Perhaps the best known and loved are the rose petal scented types, such as 'Attar of Roses'.

Scented leaf pelargoniums arrived in the US only a few years after the Boston Tea Party, and soon became established as a useful plant for the house and garden. The Victorians fell for scented leaf pelargoniums in a big way, breeding ever more unusual varieties, but by the early 20th century they began to lose ground to the brasher charms of the zonal pelargonium in our gardens. Their fortunes revived as gardeners rediscovered their charms.

Layer a few leaves in a jar packed with sugar for up to a month, then remove before using the sugar in baking. You can also use them to flavour jams and jellies, and even make a liqueur with vodka and sugar. ♦



THE REVIEWER

A selection of the new releases, including a rare look at some of England's finest private gardens and the art of garden design, and we delve into the intriguing untold story of Kew

BOOK REVIEWS

Garden Design Solutions

by **Stephen Woodhams**
(Jacqui Small, \$35)

If you're looking for a good grounding in the basics of how to design a garden, this is a great place to start. Despite its rather lightweight sounding title, and the strapline 'Ideas for Outdoor Spaces', this is a thorough guide to garden design rather than a mere book of snippets.

All the classic principles such as focal points, scale, proportion and texture are explained at length, backed up with anecdotes from the author's personal experience. This adds a nice slice of personality to back up the wealth of practical advice.

As much a long read as a pictorial handbook, the imagery will only inspire if you buy into Woodhams' style of design. There is a strong Mediterranean theme to many of the illustrated designs and case studies, many of them using succulent plants to form the backbone. Outdoor living is also a recurring theme, with furniture taking centre stage in many of the images. Although Woodhams explains many design techniques that can be carried across any style of garden, the reader isn't afforded a broad range of visual examples.

If you have an urban garden that you long to turn into a usable space for entertaining, then the imagery from the author's designs in this publication will excite. If, however, you shudder at the words 'modern' or 'contemporary' when conjuring up plans for the garden, you may wish to choose a more traditional or visually comprehensive design guide.

A section on planting introduces the reader to Woodham's favourite plants. While most of them will be familiar to keen gardeners, his trademark planting style suggests ways to see old favourites in a new light. There are countless examples of repeat planting throughout the book that demonstrate how even the most unassuming of plants can make eye-catching features when planted en masse.

Reviewed by **Greg Loades**



The Private Gardens of England

edited by **Tania Compton**
(Constable, \$115)

Before you turn the page with a yawn at the prospect of yet another lavish coffee table book promising glimpses of expensively designed and previously unseen private gardens, all style over substance – stop. This is quite different, quite special, and has much for real gardeners to enjoy.

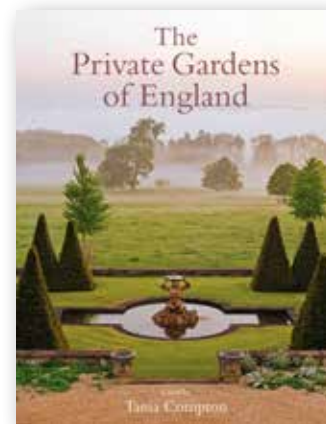
For starters, it ascends to a new level of grandeur, featuring the gardens of a duke, a duchess, an earl, a countess and a cousin of the Queen. Many prominent garden designers have thrown open their garden gates for this book, too, not least Tom Stuart-Smith, Mary Keen, Arabella Lennox-Boyd and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan.

As one would hope for a book that costs £75 and the calibre of the gardens therein, the photographs are take-your-breath-away spellbinding, shot by the best in the business, including Jason Ingram, Clive Nichols, Marianne Majerus and Sabina Rüber.

But for me, the masterstroke was getting homeowners to write about their own gardens. Usually with these tomes, the reader is offered an external perspective at one remove from the real-life, flesh-and-blood family who live there, the vision and effort it took to create the garden, and the personal pleasure of having such splendour outside the French windows. And I can sense an author's waning enthusiasm for yet another expertly clipped box parterre as fatigue sets in and the gardens start to merge into one.

Intimacy and immediacy is the result of getting garden owners to write in the first person. The full force of their passion and frustration around creating their home garden engages the reader without it being filtered through a third party and diluted. The energy levels never dip, and insider insights come thick and fast, with self-deprecation cutting far deeper than any outsider would dare to venture. The minute level of detail here will satisfy real gardeners, elevating this book far above its competition.

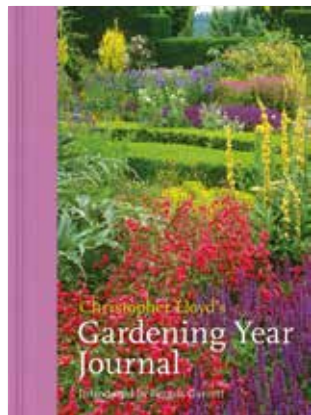
Reviewed by **Sarah Feeley**



Fundraising boost

Raise funds for Great Dixter by treating yourself or a loved one to *Christopher Lloyd's Gardening Year Journal* (Frances Lincoln, \$23.99).

This new version of the classic month-by-month gardening reference has fresh images by Jonathan Buckley and a new introduction from Fergus Garrett – royalties go to Great Dixter Charitable Trust.



Landscape & Garden Design Sketchbooks

by **Tim Richardson**
(Thames & Hudson, \$60)

The chance to see images of gardens in the early stages is always an intriguing one. Seeing the designer's sketches before it was made, maybe even more so. This diverse collection of sketches, from 37 landscape and garden designers around the world gives insight into the earliest incarnations of landmark modern gardens and landscape developments, when they only existed on paper or screen.

The range of projects is vast, with designs for sprawling urban developments as well as gardens. The sketches are backed with an overview of the ethos of the designer and comments from them, although this is much harder to digest than the imagery, which is rightly given the lion's share of the space.

You probably won't spend long looking at the numerous computer generated concept shots, compared to Tom Stuart-Smith's pencil sketches, which are truly breathtaking pieces of work to be pored over and admired. The same can be said of Raymond Jungles's intricate designs of US and Caribbean gardens. More primitive are sketches of Sarah Price's 2012 Gold Medal winning Chelsea Flower Show garden, shown in the most embryonic of stages as merely a collection of rough pencil-drawn shapes. For plant-lovers, Piet Oudolf's epic planting plans offer a fascinating insight into the creation of the 'prairie planting' style that is the envy of so many home gardeners. Maybe it will inspire a generation to put down their Zen colouring books and start sketching out ideas for redesigning the garden instead.

At the end of the book, an assortment of pencil sketches from Cleve West offers an intriguing insight into the designer as well as a much needed element of humour. It also reinforces the point that landscape and garden designers are in the business of creating works of art as much as works of horticulture, something for which they aren't always given enough credit.

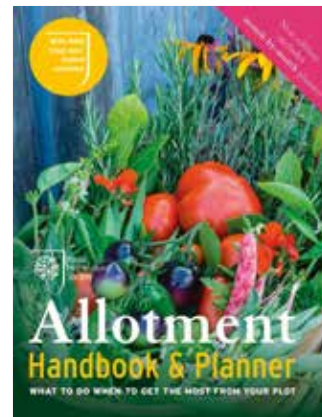
Reviewed by **Greg Loades**



FRESH PICKINGS

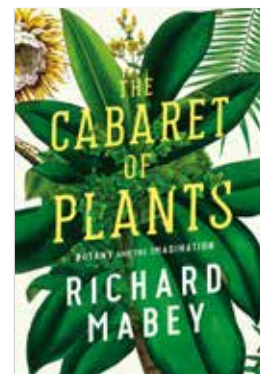
RHS Allotment Handbook & Planner
(Mitchell Beazley, £12.99)

The current taste for allotments – they are must-have hipster accessory – has spawned dozens of books, with many clearly geared at the fair-weather novice whose spade is rarely dirtied. This book, however, is for people who really wish to grow their own. With a fold-out, month-by-month planner of what to do when, expert advice, tricks of the trade and top fruit and vegetable varieties from RHS trials, this is a fact-packed book that is easy to navigate, and contains all the information needed to achieve a bumper crop.



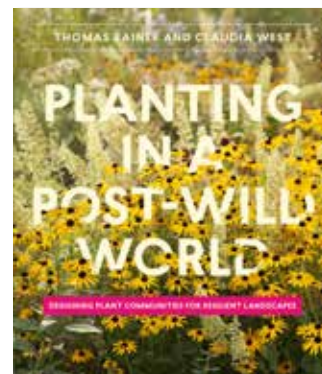
The Cabaret of Plants
by **Richard Mabey**
(Profile Books, \$29.95)

Serious plant lovers will adore this in-depth and insightful exploration of humans and plants from the author of *Flora Britannica* and *Weeds*. One of our greatest nature writers, Richard has penned 30 books – yet this is his magnum opus. His sense of wonder and curiosity is boundless and infectious. He delves into the stories behind plant species picked from every walk of life which have challenged our imaginations and upturned our ideas about history, science, beauty and belief. This may be the antithesis of a lightweight 'dip-and-read', but the tone of voice here has a lyrical charm that draws in the reader.



Planting in a Post-Wild World
by **Thomas Rainer & Claudia West**
(Timber Press, \$39.95)

We have driven nature out of our cities – but this need not be a one-way ticket. Thomas Rainer and Claudia West, two leading voices in ecological landscape design, present an optimistic call-to-action dedicated to the idea of a new nature – a hybrid of the wild and the cultivated that can flourish in cities and suburbs. The authors speak with conviction and authority, and offer a practical blueprint for the future. →



INTERVIEW

We spoke to Vanessa Berridge about her new book *The Princess's Garden* (Amberley Publishing, \$34.95)

Tell us about your new book.

The Princess's Garden: Royal Intrigue and the Untold Story of Kew is about the political and personal background to the founding of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The princess is Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, wife of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who died in 1751 before he could inherit the British throne.

In her widowhood, Augusta built on the foundations laid by Frederick at Kew and established a physic garden there in 1759, helped and advised by John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, later a calamitously unsuccessful Prime Minister. These were turbulent times politically, with Britain still in a state of transition to becoming a fully constitutional monarchy. Augusta was thought to be helping her son, George III, put the clock back to a more authoritarian regime.

Far from being praised for her work at Kew, she was hated and hissed to her grave in Westminster Abbey in 1772.

Why did you want to tell this story?

On a 10-day tour of Scottish gardens, I visited the gardens at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute where there is a towering, statue-topped column dedicated to Augusta. The head gardener told me that it had been erected by Lord Bute in the 1770s in memory of Augusta with whom he had worked closely at Kew. I was intrigued by a relationship which resulted in a man raising such a memorial to a woman who was not his wife.

The inscription (from Virgil) on the column's pedestal means, loosely translated, 'You will remain in my memory so long as I am conscious and my spirit controls my limbs'. As I researched, I wanted to restore Augusta to her overlooked position as founder of Kew. When Diana, Princess

of Wales, opened the new Princess of Wales Conservatory in 1987, few people appreciated that it was named not for her, but for her predecessor.

How did you research it?

I read published diaries and memoirs of the period before delving into archives at Kew, Stowe, various university libraries and the British Library. One problem was that Augusta burned all of Frederick's papers after his death because she thought his political programme would be unpopular with her father-in-law, George II, and might cause problems for her and for her son, the future George III.

The spiteful memoirs of Lord Hervey, a courtier of George II and his wife, Caroline of Ansbach, were a fruitful source of gossip about both Frederick and Augusta, while Horace Walpole's memoirs and diaries took up the story later in the period. The British Library has a collection of Bute's correspondence which reveals him to be a petulant, disappointed man who believed himself entirely misunderstood.

What fascinating and surprising things did you uncover?

I discovered just how dysfunctional the Hanoverian royal family was. Every Hanoverian



king hated his heir, but George II took this to a new level with Frederick, kidnapping him from Hanover, and then isolating him personally and politically. Caroline of Ansbach was even heard to say that she wished he were dead. I also found out how vicious political cartoons were in the 18th century.

Bute and Augusta were thought to be lovers, and the cartoons depicting their affair, some of which have been included in the book, were breathtaking in their virulence and explicitness.

Who do you think would enjoy reading this book, and why?

I have tried to bring out the importance of 18th century gardens as a means of political expression, so I hope that the book will appeal both to garden lovers and to people who enjoy history.



Underground arts scene

Don't worry if you missed London Transport Museum's recent exhibition of vintage and modern Underground posters encouraging Londoners to use the Tube to visit outdoor attractions such as Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Hampton Court.

You can still view many of these beautiful and evocative posters – and find out about the talented artists who created them – on the website of the museum, which has an online exhibition.

Many of the posters are also available to buy via the museum's online shop, and you can even book onto a tour of the museum's iconic poster collection at its Acton depot. For more details, visit www.ltmcollection.org





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