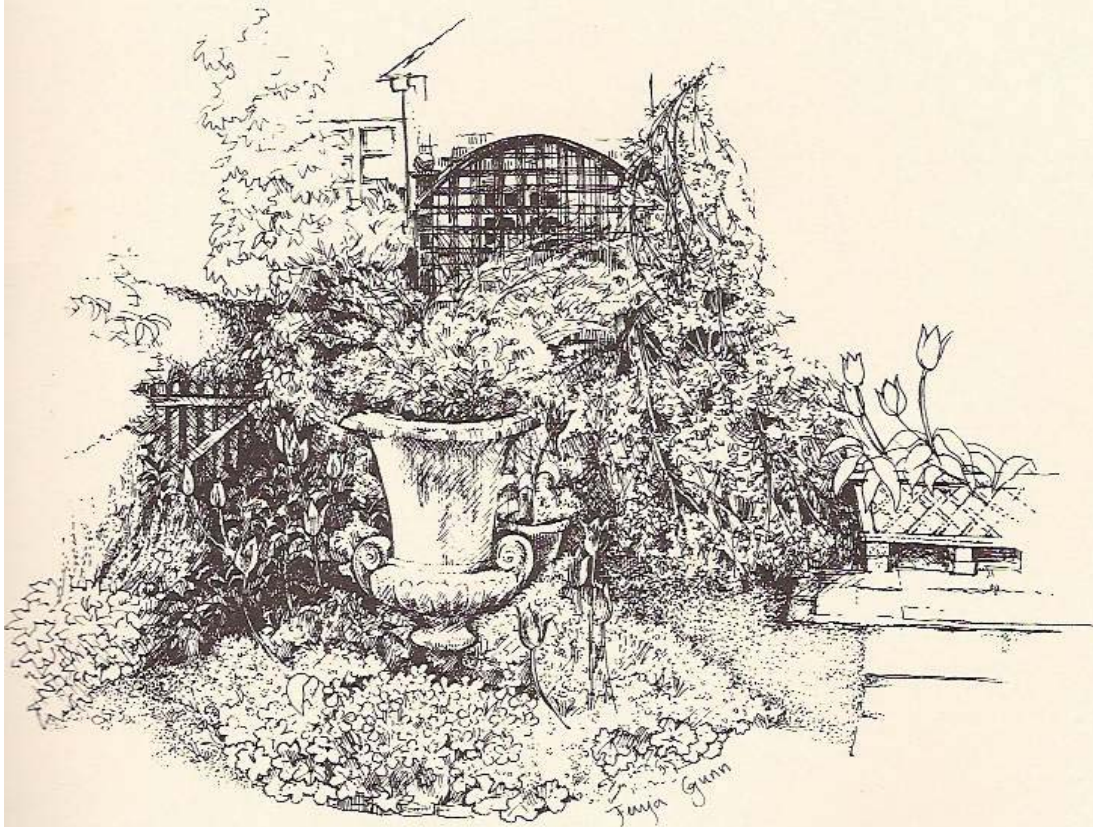


Reproduced by kind consent of HORTUS.

TAKING OVER AN OLD GARDEN

FENJA GUNN

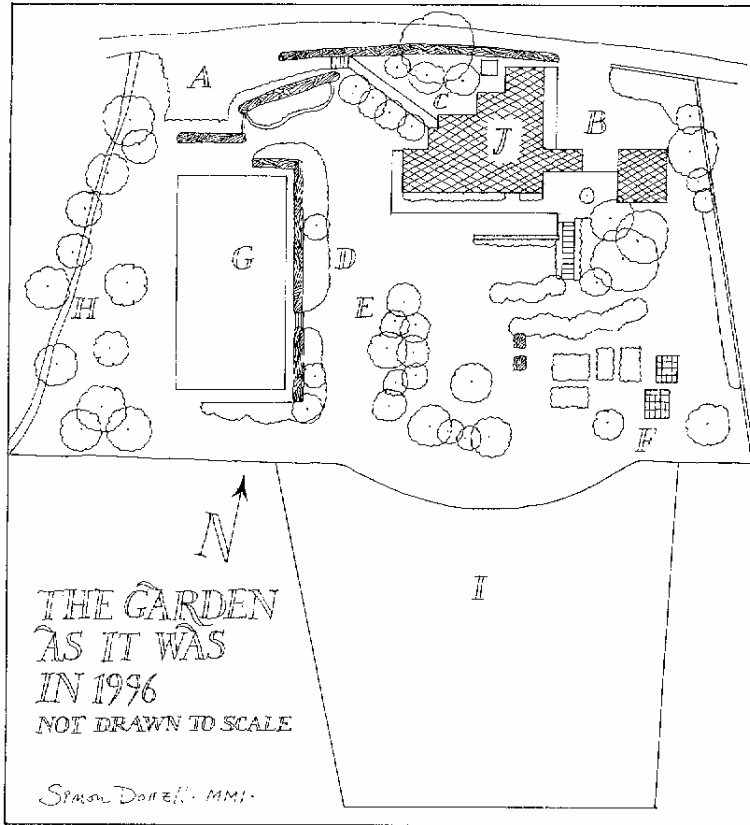


A reprint from HORTUS

I loved my London garden in the Victorian suburb of Bedford Park in Chiswick, but after twenty-three years I had fully exploited its potential and longed for a larger area to design and plant. My house-hunting expeditions in London only reinforced the view already expressed by my husband Anthony, that I would never find a large enough garden unless we moved to the country. So, after what seemed an interminable time spent house- and garden-hunting, we moved nearly five years ago to west Berkshire.

My new garden already had an established pedigree. It had been opened regularly to the public under the National Open Gardens scheme. Its owner was an accomplished plantswoman and a granddaughter of Elizabeth von Arnim, writer of that enchanting (and haunting, I think, for any gardener) semi-autobiographical novel *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. I had written a book about Gertrude Jekyll: Elizabeth von Arnim had known Gertrude Jekyll, and first visited Munstead Wood in 1909. The link between the garden and myself had been forged.

When we moved in the autumn of 1996, the new house occupied most of my attention. My recollection of the garden was as I had first seen it in the summer: a south-facing but upward-sloping site with a generous herbaceous border curving up one side of a lawn, some mature trees, dense shrubberies, an untidy but obviously productive vegetable garden, and a tennis court surrounded by evergreen shrubs. In all, the area occupied about one and a half acres, with an acre of field beyond the boundary of the garden. I subsequently discovered that the site was composed of two types of soil: the field and the top of the garden were a mixture of a light-textured loam with gravel, while the lower slopes were predominantly heavy clay. But in the autumn everything was settling down to its period of winter dormancy, so I was able to study the character of the garden's topography and its main features without being distracted and beguiled by any detail of planting.



KEY TO PLAN OF THE GARDEN

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------------|
| A | Parking Bay | F | Vegetable Garden |
| B | Garage Garden | G | Tennis Court |
| C | Front Garden | H | Stream below steep bank |
| D | Herbaceous Border | I | Field |
| E | Bank Shrubbbery | J | House |

How many gardening books cover the problems inherent in taking over a well-established mature garden – trees that have become too large for their position, ageing shrubs, thugs of weeds or invasive cultivated plants gradually smothering more exclusive specimens? The solution to these problems is suggested if not dictated by most gardening texts – a comprehensive clearance and makeover, regardless of expense. If we are honest, as gardeners many of us would prefer a blank canvas, a clean surface on which to paint our own garden picture. But on reflection, I am glad I was not presented with a completely blank canvas. There are some outstanding trees in this garden, and shrubs like *Magnolia × loebneri* ‘Leonard Messel’, a delight each spring with its display of fragile pink flowers fluttering with each breath of the wind. The climbers that clothe the walls of the house are a constant source of pleasure, and I bless the previous owner for having planted them. Many years ago at the Royal Horticultural Society’s gardens at Rosemoor in Devon I fell in love with *Rosa banksiae* ‘Lutea’ intertwined with a lilac wisteria on the walls of the house in Lady Anne’s garden, and vowed that when I had a house and garden in the country, I would reproduce this delightful association. Here, two huge specimens of *Rosa banksiae* ‘Lutea’ reach to the eaves of the roof and are covered every season in thousands of tiny butter-yellow rosettes, set off to perfection by a wisteria’s spectacular lilac drops of flowers.

Every gardener has a dream of a garden in mind, a composite of personal feelings and experiences. The atmosphere of a place can stimulate potent memories of emotions experienced at a particular time, perhaps in a childhood garden, and in creating our own gardens we almost subconsciously try to recreate the evocative and dreamlike quality of these recalled moments. Or sometimes we remember a particular garden feature, an arrangement of plants or a harmonious colour scheme that caught our eye. The garden created by an individual is thus a rich mixture of ideas, memories and personal taste. When you take over an old-established garden you are aware of the inspiration and hard work involved in making it, and also faced with the disturbing knowledge that in making changes you will be taking apart the ideas and dreams that inspired

the previous owner. Feeling a great empathy with my new garden, I was well able to appreciate its past owner's love for it, and also her considerable skill. I was also indebted to her for an introduction to her treasure of a gardener, Jane. But Jane, like many of the sensitive plants she tended, disliked 'root disturbance' – that is, change – and perhaps, like myself, also regretted alterations that would involve tampering with the original vision for this garden. I remember only too well trying to win her over with what I thought was a virtuoso performance of pruning old woody shrub roses, but which resulted in many of my subjects reverting to briars.

The received wisdom suggests that those taking over an established garden should wait for at least a year 'to see what comes up', a maxim which assumes that as a gardener one's main preoccupation is – and maybe it should be – with plants rather than with layout and design. But scrutiny of the garden that autumn left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction: how rewarding it would be to move all the features around, like pieces in a board game, or subtly alter the style. My husband and I were agreed that the layout should suit the way we would use the garden, and my advice to anyone taking over an established garden would be to begin by judging it from this personal and practical viewpoint.

My own experience leads me to think that in the long run one cannot afford to be either sentimental or tentative in achieving the realisation of one's own vision for a garden. Close inspection revealed that many of the plants here were perhaps thirty years old, and now past their 'sell by' date. Groups of mature shrubs had rubbed shoulders for far too long, branches were dead or had become twisted and misshapen from too-close contact with others – and there was a surfeit of conifers, which in my view should be used with discretion. Yet selective alteration of shrubberies and borders throughout the garden has proved difficult, if not impossible. If just a single shrub is removed, the whole group thereafter appears unbalanced. Another obvious problem is that new shrubs find it hard to thrive in proximity to well-established specimens, and look out of scale in a mature planting. However ruthless it may seem, it is wiser to clear the area and replant anew. With hindsight, I should

have cleared the main herbaceous border of its contents, accommodating them temporarily in a nursery bed while rigorously spraying upcoming perennial weeds in the border until they were eradicated. Then the whole area could have been enriched with compost before replanting. Both old inhabitants and any new subjects would have benefited from being planted in freshly-enriched weed-free ground, and the design of the border would now appear more cohesive. Adding herbaceous plants here and there in gaps left by former old-established tenants is not conducive to a well-balanced border, and it quickly becomes clear that the creation of a satisfactory garden picture depends on achieving that fine balance between form, space and colour. To achieve a harmonious effect, I was eventually faced with the laborious task of clearing and replanting the border in sections each season. Our appraisal of the garden that first autumn made us critical of various aspects of its design. It had been landscaped into a series of banks, not we thought as a design feature but merely as an expedient way of dealing with a steep incline. The house had been built at the bottom of this incline, so the view from the windows of the garden-facing façade was up the slopes. The effect was to fore-shorten the garden, so that the shrubberies planted on the slopes appeared to loom darkly and depressingly. I felt a lighter look would be an improvement, with space between the shrubs and trees so that we could enjoy their individual silhouettes, particularly important in winter when there is nothing more beautiful than the skeletal forms of trees against a cold blue sky. The vegetable garden was large and my husband unenthusiastic, particularly as there was a superb organic 'pick-your-own' a hundred yards away up our lane. Besides, the numbers of munching rabbits in our neighbour's field indicated that protecting any produce would be a major problem. Looking down from the top of the garden, the back of the house with its narrow ribbon of paving gave the disturbing impression of being about to topple over: it needed to be anchored securely to its setting by a more substantial area of paving. Finally, there was the biggest dilemma of all – what were we to do with the tennis court? It was very dilapidated, and occupied the only piece of precious flat land in the garden.

We began by erecting a shed, greenhouse and cold frames to provide a practical working area, and a visit to a nearby 'open' garden inspired us to add three sizeable wooden-slatted compost bins for garden waste. We then decided to make the whole garden and the field rabbit-proof. The previous owners had deterred prospecting rabbits by taking pot-shots at them; we, lacking firearms, erected a cordon of supposedly rabbit-proof wire fencing. Supposedly. But early every morning that first spring a happy group could be seen feasting on our lawn and on any new shoots rising above ground. We commissioned various local rabbit-hunting experts, who invaded the peace of the garden with their guns at dawn, hoping to catch the intruders. The rabbits never appeared, of course, but I was once surprised in my dressing-gown on an early walk by a tall green-camouflaged countryman lurking behind our conservatory, gun at the ready.

Eventually, the ultimate in rabbit deterrents was introduced – a Jack Russell terrier sporting a rakish white-spotted red bandanna round his neck like a little gypsy, and reputed to be the best in the county. Yapping furiously he quickly flushed out a rabbit, then dog and rabbit dived into the undergrowth and failed to reappear. His concerned owners and I hunted everywhere, until a curiously hollow and subterranean sound of distant barking revealed that rabbit and Jack Russell had disappeared down a drain and were now somewhere beneath the tarmac lane next to our house. I had to console the dog's owners through many hours and many cups of tea as occasional cars drove up or down the lane over dog and quarry – until at last the Jack Russell emerged. His services have not been offered again, and we have found other ways of outwitting the rabbits and excluding them from the garden. The large vegetable garden has been grassed over to make a mixed orchard of apples, pears and plums, with a self-fertile cherry and walnut. The apple trees are just beginning to bear fruit, and last year 'Beth' provided us with some delicious pears, so at least this part of the garden continues to be productive.

I knew I wanted to design the garden myself, and we both had views about how to proceed. Looking back now, I can see that a

professional designer might have anticipated the difficulties we encountered, and would certainly have planned a more coherent and comprehensive programme of work. This would have relieved us of the jobs that we, with our lack of experience, had to redo because they had been done out of logical sequence, but it would not have been so much fun. I say this, of course, from the comfort of a retrospective viewpoint. We may never have employed a professional designer, but we have had the invaluable help of a gardening consultant friend from Yorkshire gifted with an unerring eye. He has taught me a great deal about appraising a site, evaluating its potential, and making the best use of what is there. To him we owe the revised proportions of the paved area at the back of the house (based on meticulous measurements of the house and its elevation), the creation of vistas, and the redesigning of awkward corners. He has also given me a nervous breakdown or two by dismissing various features introduced since his last visit while gliding imperiously round the garden like a galleon in full sail. There was the pond at the bottom of a grassy bank. When first it was dug out and landscaped I have to admit it looked rather like a hazard on a golf course. Its removal was instantly called for; when we demurred, two vivid pink plastic flamingos were sent to adorn it. We have clung stubbornly to the pond none the less, but the whole bank behind it has been cut out, so that the area of water remains, but as a point of focus, and to reflect the planting of the border.

This pool bank border replaced one of the old shrubberies, from which I have kept a gaunt and venerable tamarisk which makes a characterful shape against the sky, and the shrub rose 'Complicata'. New planting is concentrated on the side of the slope and I have selected shrubs which bend and weep towards the pool or else cluster on the bank to emphasise the character of its slope. The main feature in early summer is a great swathe of pale yellow tree lupins. Viewed from the house, the colour scheme of the border develops in sequence from golds at the far end, which include a golden elder and golden-leaved sophora, to the pale yellow of the lupins. Lower down the bank are blue tradescantia, nepeta, *Polemonium caeruleum* and the pellucid blue iris 'Jane Phillips', set

against the clear yellow of *Hemerocallis* 'Citrina'. Behind the pool are a thriving *Viburnum sargentii* 'Onandaga' and a clutch of iris: *I. sibirica* 'Holden Clough', and my favourite, *I. × robusta* 'Gerald Darby'. Astilbes and *Primula florindae* are planted at the water's edge. The colour sequence first changes to hot colours in the foreground of the border, with *Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum Atropurpureum', *Spiraea japonica* 'Fire Light', *Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fireglow', purple-leaved heucheras and dusky purple sage. Then it changes again to pinks, with the subtle water-colour-wash tones of *Papaver orientalis* 'Mrs Perry' and clear pink *Geranium × riversleianum* 'Mavis Simpson'. To give movement to the border I have woven in drifts of annual poppies, *Stipa tenuifolia* and *Sanguisorba obtusa* with its nodding plumes, and dark *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing' to offset the pinks. Ferns, variegated mint and *Alchemilla mollis* help to unify the colour scheme.

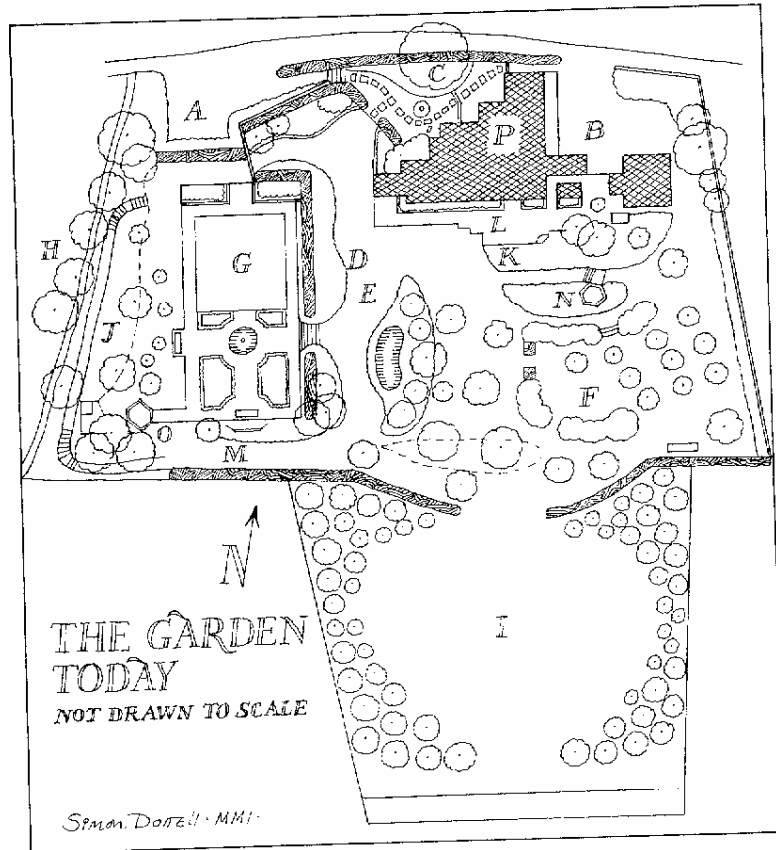
The establishment of the banks as a valid design feature has been essential to my vision for the garden, but the work of preparing them for planting was arduous. By far the most successful method proved to be to glyphosate the whole area and then allow time for surviving weeds or grass to reappear before spraying a second time. It was then a matter of digging over to help aerate the soil, and adding generous amounts of compost before planting. The banks leading up from the paved area behind the house in a double tier are perhaps the most important, being constantly visible from our windows. The top bank is a blend of established planting, which includes a handsome specimen of *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium' and a shapely golden yew, and new shrubs and herbaceous plants I have introduced.

The planting of the lower bank is an experiment inspired by Andrew Lawson's *The Gardener's Book of Colour* and thoughts on the carefully planned schemes using limited colour described by Gertrude Jekyll in *Colour in the Flower Garden*. I wanted to try a bold scheme of black, red, wine and deep pinks, with a touch of blue and some white to add coolness and light. The soil here is the heaviest in the garden and impossible to work after rain, but has proved fertile, capable of sustaining a large variety of plants. The colour

plan is maintained by several species of geraniums, dark purple-blue iris and black *I. chrysographes*, copper hemerocallis, black scabious, muted crimson *Knautia macedonica*, *Lythrum salicaria*, red astilbes and *Lobelia cardinalis* 'Queen Victoria' (which, unfortunately, slugs prefer even to hostas). Large clumps of the penstemons 'Burgundy', 'Ravenswing' and 'Firebird' have so far survived in this frost pocket: I never cut down the old foliage until May, and take cuttings every winter as an insurance policy. *Baptisia australis* thrives here, welcome for its attractive glaucous leaves and blue pea flowers. With its formal structure and upright habit, white *Lysimachia ephemerum* adds an important architectural focus. *Persicaria affinis* 'Superba' has now colonised almost the whole length of the brick retaining wall that confines the bank, leaving me little room for the annual planting of my favourite old-fashioned sweet pea, 'Black Knight', which is allowed to scramble over the wall and surrounding plants. *Lonicera perichyenum* 'Serotina' and viticella clematis soften the wall above a traditional lion's-head waterspout trickling into a small ornamental pool.

This pool and paved area is the most important piece of hard landscaping in the garden and was, when he built it, the *magnum opus* to date of twenty-two-year-old Ryan, top design student of his year at a local horticultural college. Its construction introduced us to Ryan's helpers, many of whom had nothing to do with garden landscaping but had been persuaded to be his work-force at weekends. The best was a car salesman, the least ebullient a pasty-faced youth in charge of the cement-mixer. Increasingly disconsolate as the day wore on, he eventually admitted that his usual job was as a chef at one of the Oxford colleges; clearly he could not wait to return to a more normal size of 'magimix'. Severed electric cables were the least of the many disasters that struck before the work was finished. The most dramatic was a breached water pipe which resulted in a dramatic and impromptu fountain – an unplanned water feature we could well have done without.

The terracotta pots I have gradually collected to complement the old brick of the walls include some giants from Crete planted, appropriately enough, with *Cistus creticus*, also *Caryopteris* 'Heavenly



KEY TO PLAN OF THE GARDEN

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| A | Parking Bay | I | Wild Flower Meadow with Native Trees |
| B | Garage Garden | J | Woodland Walk with Spring Flower Bank |
| C | Front Garden | K | Double Bank Borders |
| D | Herbaceous Border | L | Terrace and Silver Borders |
| E | Pool Bank Border | M | Moongate |
| F | Orchard | N | Vine Bower |
| G | Rose Garden | O | Rose Bower |
| H | Stream below steep bank | P | House |

Blue' and viticella clematis, which I festoon round each pot. The pots are in character with the Mediterranean style of the silver and grey south-facing borders under the walls of the house, already well established but now extended to accommodate an even greater variety of plants. A raised brick herb border is both a decorative feature and, close to my kitchen, a practical asset.

It is a sad fact that when the design or planting of an existing garden is dismantled, much of its charm disappears for a time. Until the newness begins to mellow, one is apt to regret the changes. I have tried to keep the original bosky character of the front entrance garden intact because I doubt whether its particular appeal could be replaced with anything as subtle. Every year a cream climbing rose colonises an ancient apple, and in spring carpets of early flowers appear at their feet – snowdrops, cyclamen, scillas, crocus and primroses. I have added epimediums and *Helleborus orientalis* hybrids (including a luscious one in plum, acquired from Carol Klein at Glebe Cottage Plants), and *Viola cornuta*, geraniums and hostas to provide interest later in the season. So overgrown with shrubs was the area between the gate and our front door that reaching the latter after a shower of rain was like running the gauntlet of one of those antique hydraulic devices producing sprays of water to drench the unwary. Clearing many of these shrubs away has provided a more generous and welcoming approach to the house, with a winding path of stepping stones set into gravel spattered with self-seeded violets. A terracotta urn stands in the centre of a circular bed spilling over with *Viola cornuta* 'Clouded Yellow', primulas and forget-me-nots.

The largest task to be undertaken in the garden was the removal of the tennis court, which offered the most perfect site for a sunken formal garden within a surrounding cordon of mixed evergreens and yew hedging providing shelter and a dramatic dark backdrop. Since I have always loved old shrub roses I decided to create a garden for them there. This was to be no prissy, fussy cliché of a rose garden, however: I would use them lavishly, in generous beds. This was the only area of the garden I planned on paper. But first the hard court had to be removed and the site prepared. The work

was carried out by Roy, an adept handler of a small JCB that he could manipulate to twist, turn and all but waltz round the site as it broke up the concrete and ripped out the wire fencing surrounding the court. He then laid an extensive system of pipes to ensure good drainage, and we imported tons of topsoil, ready for the roses.

This was a mistake, as experience was to prove. It was in wet, dire winter conditions that Ryan came to carry out the hard landscaping. During the process of construction, our precious and expensive topsoil quickly blended with the heavy clay loam to form a glutinous porridge which impeded work at every turn; it seems a miracle that it was ever completed in time for planting. Another time we will know enough not to bring topsoil onto a site until all the construction work has been carried out.

My plan included two large and four smaller rose beds, a circular water-lily pool, areas for stone seats, gravel pathways, and a lawn to provide an area of green calm amid the rich pattern of roses. I spent weeks studying rose books and Peter Beales's current catalogue, trying to make a final selection for the garden.

My colour scheme was to be white, cream and pale, cool pink, spiced with deep pink and dark plum. A 'one of each' policy was a recipe for a visually confusing and uncoordinated scheme, but the beguiling descriptions of the roses, the romance of their pasts and their alluring photographs made any exercise of discipline almost impossible. My final choice combined groups of Bourbons, Chinas, Hybrid Musks, Hybrid Perpetuals, Portlands and the almost continuous-flowering Moss 'Alfred de Dalmas' ('Mousseline') to ensure blooms throughout the summer, with groups of Gallicas for their spectacular but limited seasonal display. In all, there were a hundred and fifty roses for the formal part of the rose garden, deliberately over-ordered and over-planted to insure against losses, with wild species roses for the surrounding grass verges, and the cream climber 'Mme Alfred Carrière' for the entrance.

Anything to do with the making of the rose garden seemed to attract bad weather, and the day Jane and I planted the roses was no exception. We still refer to it as 'The Battle of the Somme'. My plan

involved a co-ordinated planting of the beds so that those on one side of the water-lily pool in the middle were a mirror image of those on the other. In theory, the ideal way to achieve this was to quarter the garden into a carefully measured grid marked out with spray paint or string stretched between wooden pegs, then place a stake or bamboo labelled with each rose's name in position on either side. This proved to be totally impracticable in pouring rain. The labels on the stakes became saturated, and quite illegible through mud-spattered glasses. Tempers shortened as the day wore on. Expediency began to outweigh careful planning. My husband arrived home in the late afternoon to the sight of two muddy figures jumping up and down on opposite sides of the pool brandishing twiggy bare-root roses aloft and screaming directions at one another: 'Your 'Mme Hardy' is too far to the left – where is your 'Thisbe'? – 'Cardinal de Richelieu' is in completely the wrong position.' In spite of this unceremonious introduction to my garden, the roses have settled down in their heavy clay soil, helped by lashings of compost and rose fertiliser. From the moment the first leaves appear I spray regularly every two weeks, alternating fungicides to guard against a build-up of immunity to one particular brand; so far mildew and black spot have been kept under a degree of control. Unfortunately some of my aristocratic old French roses, like many other elegant Parisians, hate to venture out in the rain dressed in their best. 'Comte de Chambord' has a propensity to 'ball-up', and 'Souvenir de la Malmaison' becomes a mass of sodden, water-stained pale pink petals. But when the first generous flush of blooms appears the rose garden is now, four years later, a glorious sight, an extravaganza of pastel and deep pink velvet-textured petals arranged in the complexity of twists and spirals that gives each rose bloom its individual character. I have underplanted with a simple colour scheme of white and blue – blue nepeta and campanula, white *Geranium clarkei* 'Kashmir White' and *Viola cornuta* – and lime *Alchemilla mollis*, which creates a perfect foil for the pinks of the roses. The shape of each bed is defined by box hedging, which I regularly examine apprehensively in case it should fall victim to box disease.

Since planting the roses I have added several structural features to the garden. First came a 'rose temple' or bower under a grove of trees, based on the much grander version in the rose garden at Mottisfont Abbey. Mine is a simple hexagonal structure of wooden posts supporting a series of metal arches, ingeniously made as a single piece by a local blacksmith. When the prolific but once-flowering deep pink Multiflora rambler 'Russelliana' has finished blooming, *Clematis viticella* 'Purpurca Plena Elegans' takes over with its rosettes of smokey red-purple flowers. The bower has its counterpart in the main garden, planted with vines and clematis and positioned in line with the rose bower to provide a two-way vista between them. To create a visual stop on a bank at the far end of the rose garden, the blacksmith has constructed two arches supporting a 'moon gate', a huge metal circle around which I am training white clematis and the white rose 'City of York'. The final touches have been the addition of a bird sculpture in the centre of the water-lily pool and four Cretan pots, two giants used as sculptural features and two large bulbous ones standing at the entrance to the garden, planted with generous box balls.

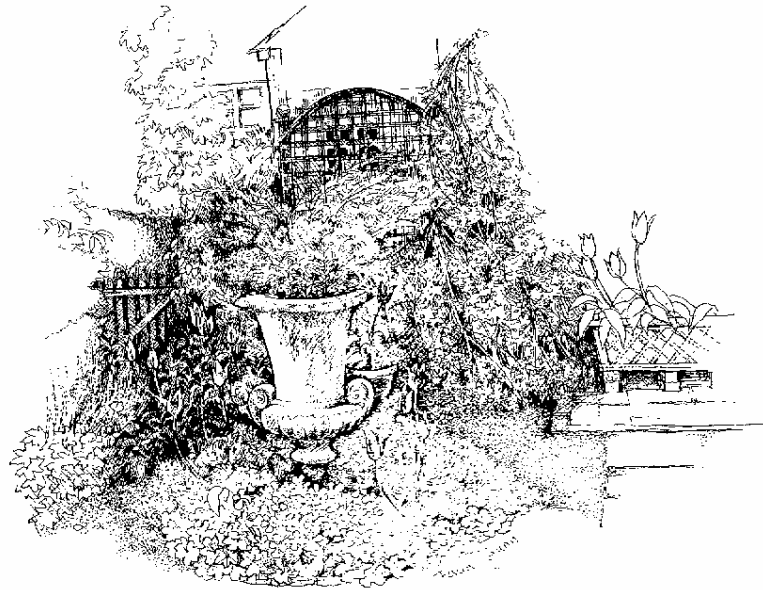


In the Rose Bower.

The rose garden is my own special part of our garden. Notwithstanding its turbulent period of construction and planting, it has acquired an extraordinary aura of peace and stillness which draws one to visit it. Even my old West Highland terrier Fergus used to assume that I was always to be found there (probably spraying the roses) of a summer evening. He would stand at the top of the steps leading down to the garden, staring blindly but resolutely into the dusk trying to locate me, regardless of the fact that I was by then elsewhere. His replacement, Bertie, prefers to patrol the 'woodland walk' marking the western boundary of our garden which runs parallel to, and below the level of, the rose garden. This is one of my husband's favourite parts of the garden and one that he designed. Originally it was a neglected tangle of self-seeded hollies, brambles and rampant periwinkle disguising a delightful small stream running clearly over a gravel bed. The ever-resourceful Ryan constructed a barked pathway above the stream, which is edged with a fringe of tall trees providing a permanent canopy of shade except in winter. The banks were cleared and planted with primroses, bluebells, snowdrops, cyclamen and other small bulbs, to create a spring garden. Gradually we are adding such subjects as trilliums, brunnera, omphalodes and hepatica, and alliums like *A. karataviense* with its red-lined glaucous leaves, and invasive but graceful white *A. triquetrum*. In summer there are tall pale pink foxgloves, a small group of vivid blue *Meconopsis grandis* and varieties of geranium. At the sunlit entrance to the walk I have planted a mass of *Nicotiana sylvestris*.

There are many more plans for the garden. Our field, in the four corners of which we have planted native species trees informally, has been designated a wild flower meadow by my husband. Currently we are waiting for a local farmer to come and plough it, in preparation for the creation of a seedbed this autumn. There is much more planting to be done to establish a sense of visual harmony in the garden. Thugs planted as useful but temporary fillers now need to be replaced with choicer specimens. The lawns – the province of my husband and Den, who cuts the grass devotedly each season – are just beginning to throw off the moss and

weeds of our earliest years. The soil desperately needs lightening, to make it freer draining and also more attractive. It pains me to have to look out on winter banks of clod-like clay soil, until spring and summer cover the ground in welcome leafage and colour.



A Corner of the Front Garden.

But it is in the nature of keen gardeners never to be satisfied, and thus a garden is never truly finished or complete. Like all gardens, ours has become a private world that we nevertheless enjoy sharing with others. We have had four years of triumphs and failures. Already there are memories attached to particular parts of the garden, and to plants like the *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Palo Alto' which marks Fergus's grave and the *Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' given to me for a birthday. Anthony's teak seats have been ideally placed for contemplation of the garden with a glass of white wine on a warm summer's evening. A host of plants recall the generos-

ity of gardening friends, the skills of specialist nurseries and, in particular, the many idyllic journeys across Watership Down country to reach Highclere and Penwood Nurseries. But I am well aware that when we in our turn leave this house and garden (and please let that day be far off), the new owners, if they are enthusiastic gardeners, will change things yet again to realise their own dreams, just as we have.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Elizabeth von Arnim, *Elizabeth and her German Garden* (1898)
Fenja Gunn, *The Lost Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (Letts, London, 1991)
Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour in the Flower Garden* (1st publ. Newnes/Country Life, London, 1908)
Andrew Lawson, *The Gardener's Book of Colour* (Frances Lincoln, London, 1996)