

The Tudor garden in Willifield Way

cyclamen, define the path to the door. Pots of wall-flowers and wonderfully fragrant Christmas box (Sarcococca buxaceae) complete the welcome.

When Karen moved in 20 years ago, there was nothing in the garden except a huge oak which still stands sentinel at the end of her patch. Undeterred by this and the local heavy clay, this great-grand-daughter of a prize-winning rose grower, herself a talented interior designer, began the transformation.

Twenty years on, the view from the house in winter is a delight. Facing south, a pretty suntrap patio outside the back door houses a collection of terracotta pots filled with succulents and spring bulbs. An ornamental cherry tree is hung with bird boxes and feeders. White painted window boxes grow 6" high box and, even in the depths of winter, white pelargoniums lead the eye out to the main garden.

This Tudor garden is an oblong enclosure, 65'x40'. Two main alleys cross in the centre (as in old monastery gardens) where a Trachelospermum jasminoides grows in a tall lead pot. A narrow brick path runs round the perimeter. Four 'knots' (beds edged with low hedges of box) surround this central feature. In each, a standard white Iceberg rose has a box ring at its feet, with four box spokes running to the corners of the knot. The spaces in between are crammed in summer with old-fashioned sweet-smelling herbs, perennials and roses. Cyclamen coum, snowdrops and other bulbs add winter interest.

Height and focus are added by a splendid Magnolia grandiflora and an exotic 15' high yucca. A white dove-cote,

under-planted with the honey scented Euphorbia mellifera, provides more shelter for the birds that regularly visit; jays, woodpeckers, robins, house martins, magpies, wood pigeons and blackbirds.

Karen has made the most of a difficult area at the end of her garden. Although the giant oak is regularly pruned it is still overpowering in such a suburban setting and little grows underneath its canopy. Karen's solution is to gravel the area and plant different varieties of bamboo that rustle delightfully in the breeze. Even here, a topiary bay ball has a ring of box (it is very tough) and the garden shed almost disappears under a roof of large-leaved variegated ivy. A pretty seated arbour provides shade in summer.

This is a relatively low-maintenance garden. The box hedges are clipped on Derby Day and there is a big clear-up operation in November. Some of the seed-heads are left for the birds but generally the perennials and shrubs are cut hard back to reveal the underlying structure. The garden then settles into a comfortable and beautiful winter time of sleep.

As you leave by the side gate, stop to admire the 'shrubby' planted along the eastern wall of the house. Red-stemmed Cornus Alba Sibirica and scarlet Photinia Red Robin lighten the winter gloom along with a flaming Berberis Thunbergii Atropurpureum. Rosemary and Philadelphus add scent and colour later in the year. (All available from Hopes Grove Nurseries by mail order: 01580 765600).

Among the many awards that Karen has won are the Hampstead Horticultural Society's Parkhill Nursery Challenge Cup for Best

Small Front Garden and our HGS Horticultural Society's Millennium Cup for Best Suburb Garden.

As if this wasn't enough, Karen's love of quality fresh vegetables led her to take on a small allotment plot in 2003. Here she grows runner beans, aubergines, raspberries, fir apple potatoes, courgettes, tomatoes

and sweetcorn. Seaweed fertilizer and a good top-dressing of well-rotted manure every other year ensure good crops.

You can visit the garden this summer on Open Gardens Day on Sunday 10 June (ring Diane Berger for details: 8455 0455). Don't miss it!

ANNE CRAWLEY



The earliest description of a topiary garden is given by Pliny the Younger (AD 62-110): 'The walk was bordered by topiary animals cut from box, and led to a lawn with a path around its circumference shaded by evergreens clipped into a variety of shapes'. The English love affair with topiary reached its height in Tudor England; even today you can look out of the windows at Hampton Court at curiously shaped box beds in-filled with multi-coloured gravel. Sadly, the box centaurs, servants with baskets, figures of men and women are long gone.

Happily, this historic and romantic style is again in fashion. When you consider that for almost half the year the average English garden morphs into a brown study shivering under rain, frost and snow, the clipped

formality of ever-green box, bay and yew lend dignity and structure to the dreariest view. Dusted in winter with an icing of snow, highlighted with snowdrops, such a garden is magical. In summer, in-filled with sweet-scented flowers, it creates an air of tranquillity and security – qualities frequently missing from our high tech 'Big Bang' lives.

Karen Grant's award-winning garden in Willifield Way is lovely in all seasons. A small front garden is meticulously crafted. Crimson berried pyracantha canopies doors and windows. Behind a low hedge, two small oval raised brick beds contain a pair of cloud-pruned box, under-planted with a restrained palette of seasonal tulips and busy lizzies. Box balls and low hedges, backed by miniature white



Horticultural Soc AGM

There was standing room only at the Horticultural Society's AGM and prizegiving in Fellowship House. Unusually there was a contested election for the Hon Secretary. After some impassioned speeches from the candidates, the vote was for Gerard Wiseman. Chairman, Marjorie Harris thanked Barbara Kogut for her

service over many years. All the other officers were re-elected and new committee member Jane Epstein was welcomed. Marjorie welcomed Pia Duran who has taken over from John Freeborn as chair of the RA's Allotment Committee who said, "It is important this centenary year to make sure plots look good."

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