

A garden of magic and mystery



Lorraine Wilder took over an almost derelict Parker & Unwin house at the top of Asmun's Hill five years ago. "The garden was in a terrible state, covered in brambles and not a flower in sight," she remembers. Leading from the York stone terrace, adorned with pots of colourful bedding plants, at the back of the house, there are three distinct areas, linked by a wide grass path which runs the length of the 250 foot plot: a formal herbaceous border, a vegetable plot and an orchard.

Faced with a half acre of weed-infested heavy clay, Lorraine rapidly acquired a gardener: "I can't do the heavy work, I just can't cut 9 foot high hedges, but Eric Beaumont is a profoundly good gardener and in many ways it's as much his garden as it is mine. We have worked together to double dig the whole area, incorporating over four tons of soil, grit and feed, with mulch added every other year.

I've always liked cottage gardens and so here I've tried to keep things simple. The trees give it the structure and style and the back orchard is magical so I've tried to keep that sense of magic and mystery."

The trees are spectacular. A giant Cedar dominates the lawn at the back of the house. Two ancient pear trees, laden with fruit, and a tall pine edge the southern side of the herbaceous border. Walk on down, past the greenhouse and raised vegetable beds and you come to the orchard. Here is a paradise for children and squirrels with gnarled old apple, pear and walnut trees. In one corner the gently dilapidated former stables recall a more leisured age.

The garden is slowly evolving. The Arts and Crafts cottage lends itself to traditional Gertrude Jekyll style softly coloured planting, and self-seeding Evening Primroses and giant *Macleaya microcarpa*

tower over herbaceous beds filled with cottage garden favourites. However, Lorraine is a Christopher Lloyd fan and is enlivening the beds with some vibrant modern 'clash' planting, mixing bright yellows and magenta with purple, pink and orange. A favourite patch has huge yellow *Heleniums* with vivid blue-purple monkshood and crimson *Crococsmia Lucifer* growing through it.

The garden is completely organic: "I don't use any chemicals or snail baits on it. I've got a

compost heap and a big pile of logs at the back where a tree fell down in a storm. I leave all the seed-heads on for the birds and put boxes all over the place. I'm desperately trying to encourage wild flowers in the orchard because in spring when the cowparsley is out with the pear and plum blossom, it all looks absolutely beautiful!"

Lorraine confesses to a passion for dahlias, inspired by her neighbour who grows them to perfection. "I aim to have six-foot dahlias all the way across the front of the house – red, purple, orange, yellow, in-your-face- proper brilliant dahlias, the brighter the better!" she beams.

Because Lorraine is a nutritional therapist, she is very aware of the value of fresh vegetables and so has recently taken on an allotment which she shares with a friend. "It's a lovely, lovely allotment site in Creswick Walk. Everyone is so friendly and helpful," she enthuses. Pia Duran, Head of the Allotments Committee, told me that although there are no plots available at the moment, if you ring her (8458 2300) she will be happy to discuss future possibilities.

You can see Lorraine's beautiful garden next year as she has agreed to open it for the London Gardens Scheme on Sunday 29th June, 2008. Details are in the Yellow Book, available from your local garden centre.

ANNE CRAWLEY



Suburb rainfall

In April we had a drought and now, at the end of August and the start of September we have another technical drought (14 days with no measurable rainfall). But, in between, what a contrast! The four months of May to June had, at over 13½ inches, the highest North London rainfall since these records began.

May was the wettest month with 4 inches of rain. On May 27, light rain during the day became heavy at night and by morning there had been just over 1½ inches in 24 hours. On only eight other days since these records began has as much been measured. The highest recorded occurred on September 1, 1992 when over 3 inches fell.

June too, had almost 4 inches of rain and July had 3½ inches. It was not until August that the weather became drier and the total of just over 2 inches was marginally lower than average. This meant from January to August the 23½ inches of rain that fell was the third highest recorded for the period. 2001 and 2002 had higher amounts and also had very high annual totals. But the end of year figures were very different for the two years. Trying to find a pattern in our weather is extremely difficult. Even the boffins at the Met Office seem to have a problem and find it best to blame jet streams which in turn are incomprehensible to the layman.

DIANA IWI

Open gardens success

On 10 June 21 gardens and two allotment sites opened for the Horticultural Society's Open Gardens event. A record 400 people visited the gardens and an astonishing £1,500 has been donated to the North London Hospice. Seven of the 'open gardeners' (Veronica Klein, Karen Grant, Judy Green, Janet Maitland, Yvonne Oliver, Deborah Pulvarnis and Lorraine Wilder) have been invited to open their gardens under the National Gardens Scheme along

with Diane Berger, Carol Kemp and Michael Franklin, who already do so. Therefore ten Horticultural Society members will be in the 2008 Yellow Book!

The society is thriving, having just enrolled its 400th member. Contact Marjorie Harris (8455 6507, hgs@hortsoc.co.uk) if you would like to know more about joining the committee, or Sonia Mathias (8455 7334, hgs@hortsoc.co.uk) if you would like to join the society.

MARJORIE HARRIS



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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

Your Garden in September

- ☼ Plant daffodil, tulip and iris bulbs under forget-me-nots and wall-flowers for a stunning spring display.
- ☼ Take cuttings of pelargoniums, penstemons and most garden shrubs; root in pots in a cold frame.
- ☼ Prune unsightly perennials to ground level and tidy up shrubs after flowering. Complete summer pruning of apples, pears and plums.
- ☼ Mulch trees, shrubs and climbers with weed-free organic matter. Thompsons of Crews Hill will deliver to your door – 020 8363 1383.

Your Garden in October

- ☼ Bring tender plants and shrubs under cover before the first frosts. Pick tomatoes and if left on a windowsill beside a banana they will soon ripen.
- ☼ Rake up fallen leaves into bags for free leaf-mould next year. Remember to punch holes for ventilation if you use plastic bags.
- ☼ Tie grease-bands round the trunks of apple and cherry trees to trap egg-laying pests. Prune out canker and burn affected material.
- ☼ Plant hardy deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs between now and February, if weather permits.

Your Garden in November

- ☼ Give succulents a collar of grit to deter slugs and improve drainage.
- ☼ Cut down and lift frost-blackened dahlias; dry the tubers and store in boxes of sand in a frost-free shed.
- ☼ Prune established apples and pear trees. Do NOT prune cherries, damsons, peaches or plums.
- ☼ Send the lawn-mower for its annual service, clean and oil tools, and empty petrol-driven mower tanks.

Your Garden in December

- ☼ Put the garden to bed with a cosy mulch of straw, leaf-mould or shredded bark. Bubble-wrap pots to protect from frost damage.
- ☼ Place cloches over Christmas roses to encourage early flowering.
- ☼ Order bulbs, plants and seeds for spring.
- ☼ Remember to feed the birds. Have a good rest!

Prize winning centenary flowerbed

The Horticultural Society has been awarded third prize for the flowerbed in the communal gardens category of Barnet in Bloom. The prize will be presented by the Mayor of Barnet in October.

And now there is more good news for the Society. The centenary

flowerbed picked up a gold, silver or bronze medal in the London Gardens Society competition (communal gardens category). The medal will be awarded at a ceremony at The Mansion House, when the secret of which one it is will be revealed.

Flower shows

The Horticultural Society's 261st June Flower Show went well despite this year's growing conditions. Hon Presidents Jonathan Ross and Jane Goldman brought all three children with them to help with judging the Henrietta 'lady' scarecrows. We were also honoured by the presence of 'Dame Henrietta Barnett' herself (Sarah Falk reprising her centenary pageant role). 'Dame Henrietta' was delighted that one of her

favourite societies was still going strong and upstaged Jonathan with her very funny opening remarks. The Autumn Show saw many more entries than usual for 'preserves', with people taking advantage of the wonderful fruit available this year. One family was new to the show, but grandmother, mother and grand-daughter all walked away with prizes.



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