

A garden of contained profusion



In 1998 Veronica and Philip Clein moved to their wonderful Grade II English Heritage listed house in Corringham Road. Set in an exquisite Trust-maintained courtyard, the Queen Anne style house was built by Parker and Unwin in 1912. You get a sense of history here. "When we laid a new lawn we discovered the old posts of what was originally a gate when the land had been a farm. There are hawthorn trees at the bottom of the garden and a local tree expert thinks they are part of the original hedgerows."

Their plot faces north-east and was dwarfed by six huge self-seeded sycamore trees, a nightmare for any gardener. "I remember standing in the garden and thinking, crickey, what am I going to do with this?" Veronica reminisces. The soil has been improved over the years with lashings of homemade compost and leaf mould breaking down the patches of yellow slimy clay. There are still bits of original

builders' rubble in the soil. Most of the sycamore trees have been felled over the years, but the trees that remain make the ground quite dry in places, and regular mulching reduces the need for watering.

With a Capel Manor design course and the RHS Certificate in Horticulture under her belt, Veronica set about transforming her 60' x 40' plot. "I knew I wanted to create a circular lawn surrounded by densely planted flowerbed; contained profusion. Planting around a circle is quite a discipline because you have to repeat the plants to get a balance while coping with different aspects and conditions. I used repeating shrubs for all year round structure: Pittisporum, Hydrangea 'Annabelle', Cotinus and Corokia, and in-filled with herbaceous perennials, annuals and bulbs in Persian carpet colours, plum, pink, purple, magenta and blue set off with silver foliage. We widened paths and made a York stone terrace behind the house."

The greenhouse is Veronica's pride and joy. "The Trust approved our design which is sympathetic to the style of the house. I grow all my seeds and keep tender plants there in the winter."

The focal point in the garden is a striking bronze head by Christopher Marvell which can be seen from different angles from all points of the garden (see picture, far right). On the other side of the garden are three small raised beds where Veronica grows vegetables, herbs and salads. Sweet peas scramble up hazel wigwams.

She also shares an allotment with her gardening 'buddy', Philip Friedman. He is a keen and

talented gardener and it is generally agreed that he does the lion's share of the digging while Veronica helps by picking! Veronica gardens organically on the allotment, and in her garden, log piles, bird boxes and overwintering seed heads add to her green credentials.

Inspiration has come from many sources but it was the intense planting and rich colours of the Rose Garden at Sissinghurst that germinated Veronica's idea of planting heaven. Another important influence is the work of Chelsea award-winning designer, Tom Stuart-Smith, noted for his restrained, elegant planting set in modern idiom. "I love his naturalistic planting and use of modern hard landscaping materials such as rusted metal and slate." Tom Stuart-Smith is lecturing on 'Structure and naturalism - planting and the modern garden' at the RHS Flower Show on 17 February. To book, tel: 0845 612 1253. RHS members £4, non-members £5.

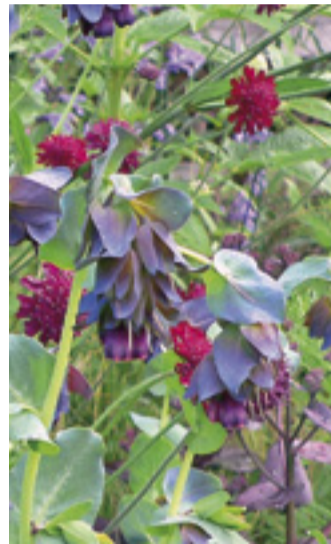
You might like to share some of this talented gardener's favourite plant combinations: Spring: Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve' with tulips 'Angelique' & 'Queen of Night' and Primula 'Wanda'. Summer: Rose 'De Rescht' with Artemisia 'Powis Castle' and Allium Sphaerocephalon. Autumn: Dahlia 'Hillcrest Royal' with Aconitum 'Arendsii' and Anemone 'September Charm'. Winter: Sarcococca hookeriana var. digyna with plum and pink hellebores and snowdrops.

Veronica sources her plants from many different nurseries. She recommends Finchley Nurseries (old-established, family-run, lovely people, best quality bedding plants). Other favourites are Marchants Hardy Plants where Graham Gough grows the finest perennials and grasses, and Langthornes Plantery for their great quality and huge selection of shrubs, perennials and climbers.

You can see Veronica's garden for yourself when she opens for the Yellow Book on 28 June. This year the Yellow Book leaflet, containing details of hundreds of gardens open for charity, is free from local garden centres.

Veronica and her partner run Plantbox, a company specialising in container gardens and small town spaces. She also designs, installs and maintains traditional and contemporary style gardens. 8455 7823.

ANNE CRAWLEY



Pauline Murphy and Rosemary Biebler were the winners this year of the Phyllis Young Trophy for best kept allotment. The presentation was made by RA allotments committee chairman Pia Duran at the annual harvest home supper.

Talk about the weather

After all the excitements of floods earlier on in the year, in the end the Suburb has experienced a total of 29.3 inches compared with an average of 29.8 inches. So nothing much to further, or not, our understanding of global warming. The last four months of the year were drier than normal but not very much so. October, which usually has the highest average monthly rainfall at 3.5 inches, this year only received 2.5 inches. Similarly, December had well below normal, 1.4 compared with 2.7 inches. Only five Decembers have been drier since 1980 although elsewhere in the country there

were local floods. In the Suburb it dried up after the 13th when it rained all day, and one could at last leave the umbrellas behind.

The end of the year was not entirely without interest. After thunder during the day, on the night of October 28th rain turned to snow and the temperature fell to 27°F, the lowest in October since 1983. The snow lay well into the morning of the 29th and the temperature never rose above 38°F, much colder than the 1983 following day. As in 2007, December has been a colder month than we would normally expect. Typically, January and the first half of

February would be the coldest months. However, if this more recent pattern occurs again, the weather will be warmer after Christmas than before it. If not global warming, this does at least

seem to indicate changing climate patterns. On the other hand, our weather has always been variable, and thus exciting. If it were not so, what would we have to talk about?

DIANA IWI



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Suburb's national gardens

Billed as an Arts and Crafts tour the National Gardens Scheme tour of six stunning Suburb gardens and lunch at Kenwood will take place

during Chelsea Flower Week on May 19. Led by Anne Crawley and Janine Wookey. Cost is £85. 8693 1015, j.wookey@btinternet.com

SHORT COURSE

GODS AND THEIR MYTHS

The mythology of ancient Greece has provided artists with a rich vein of source material ever since they were written. Particularly from the 15th to 17th centuries, Renaissance and Baroque patrons were drawn to these vivid stories interpreted by painters with imagination and panache. This short course will focus on the way some of the pagan Gods have been portrayed in painting.

Dates: Tuesdays, 10.30am - 12.30pm,
24th February and 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th March 2009
Cost: £50/£42 concessions

At Fellowship House, Hampstead Garden Suburb,
136a Willifield Way, London NW11 6YD

For further information and booking details, please contact Mary Kitson
Tel: 07831 663015 ■ Email: mary.kitson1@btopenworld.com