



Judy Green's Sissinghurst-inspired front garden

"I'm not very technical; I'm more into the aesthetics and the atmosphere of a garden than concerning myself with soil structure and compost heaps. I'm a real London girl, and haven't really developed that side of things," grins Judy Green with disarming candour as we sit gazing out onto her lovely elegant garden. Set on the edge of Hampstead Heath, the 90' x 60' garden adorns an exquisite Arts & Crafts house that could be the perfect setting for an Edwardian novel.

"When we moved here in 1984, we found a garden in which little had been done for a long time. The only thing worth keeping

was an old bay tree which now forms a very distinctive focal point as it is cloud-pruned and over 50' high. Once the children were older, I did a garden design course at the Chelsea Physic Garden which was brilliant. It's such a fantastic hobby – you never stop learning with gardening."

You approach the house through a box parterre designed by John Plummer to celebrate the Green's 30th Wedding Anniversary. Judy likes formality, especially in front gardens and admits to being influenced by the white garden at Sissinghurst; here she has crammed the parterre with white hydrangeas

An oasis of tranquillity in Wildwood Rise

and roses and stone pots are densely planted with pretty bedding. A clematis and twin acers underplanted with muscari frame the door. Vita would approve the air of calm tranquillity with bees buzzing through the scented air.

A spacious York stone terrace at the back of the house leads to the main garden. Here there is a relaxed formality that is very peaceful. The fine mix of perennials and shrubs do well in this woodland garden: "I like that feeling that the garden goes with the house; that they speak together."

If a garden is to have character, it must reflect an individual taste otherwise it becomes a hotch-potch without form or cohesion. Judy's garden exudes an atmosphere of peaceful tranquillity, partly due to the woodland setting, partly to the restrained simplicity of her planting schemes – no over-stuffed and technicolor borders here! "I'm quite restrained in my planting. It's like with clothes – I don't want a million clothes; I want one or two that I really love and I can't cope with a lot of

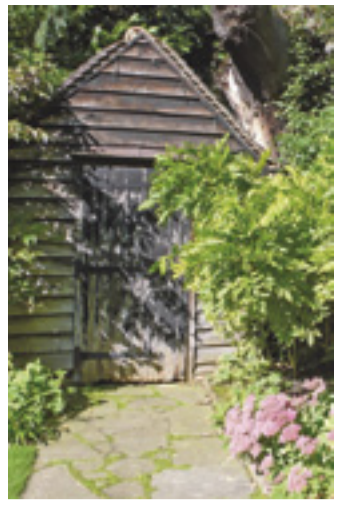
things in the cupboard." This is very much a philosophy for our times; we too need to learn that less is more and that great gardens are a product of careful thought and planning over many years.

"I'm an erratically hands-on gardener," confesses Judy. "I have a gardener who comes once a week; Paul trained at Wisley and is very knowledgeable but I'm very much hands-on in that everything that happens in this garden I know about; every plant I've bought. From early Spring up to when I open my garden for the National Gardens Scheme, I'm out there a lot, planting and weeding. Then I'll plant my bulbs in the Autumn but if I'm busy in the shop I won't have time to do much."

This isn't as bad as it sounds because 15 years ago Judy opened Judy Green's Garden Store, her delightful garden shop in Flask Walk, Hampstead. Here she sells a miscellany of the best garden gear, old tools, elegant bric-a-brac, pretty pots, cards and scented candles. Judy spends weeks sourcing bric-a-brac in French markets. "Because it's

small and we don't have much outside space, we have to sell plants that will live inside if they don't sell straight away." This has proved popular with her flat-dwelling Hampstead clientèle who come back time and time again for help and advice. "I love being part of the community. I've got a very good team working in the shop and we all work very hard. The local people in the village really like us because we look so nice and we're a friendly shop."

ANNE CRAWLEY



The variety of shrubs and perennials are perfect in this woodland garden

Too much excitement or too little

If rainfall in the first four months of the year was felt to be unexciting, then that of the middle four months was the complete opposite.

On Saturday 27 June, there was a thunderstorm, a real thunderstorm, with 2½ inches of rain in about two hours and hailstones up to 1 cm in diameter. The storm occurred from about 5.30 to 7pm and many normal rush hour travellers must have been heartily thankful that it was a Saturday while others may have had their evenings ruined. Rainfall of such a quantity in such a short time has not been

recorded in the last thirty years in this locality.

A previous total of 3.08 inches in twenty-four hours was experienced on 22 August 1992, but that was a result of rain falling all day. There were other daily totals of nearly two inches in October 1984, October 1987 and October 2000, but all those were over longer periods of time.

Of course, although all this may seem exciting to residents of the Suburb, for real excitement weather-wise Hampstead really does leave us standing. On 14 August 1975, a thunderstorm developed and was almost

stationary for about two hours forty minutes. At the weather station by Whitestone Pond 6.72 inches of rain were recorded, one person was drowned in a basement and damage ran into millions of pounds. Meanwhile, a rain gauge 2,500 yards away in the Suburb recorded a mere 3.9 inches. This reinforces the very local nature of rainfall quantities in storms.

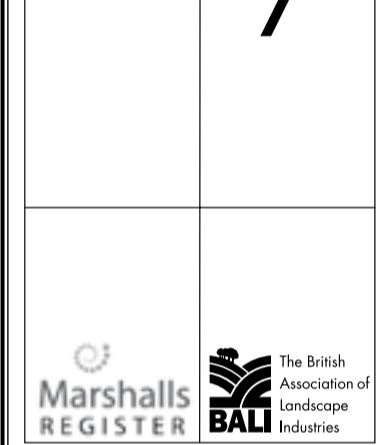
In August there was another example of very concentrated rainfall, with more than three quarters of the month's 1.97 inches falling in the night of Saturday 6. This meant the rest of

the month was very dry and watering cans were needed. Similarly, May was dry, with 0.97 inches compared with an average of 2.36. It followed a dry April and March, but January and February had been wet. A June total of 4.2 inches, including the storm, meant that the amount for the first eight months of the year was, in the end, 19.07 inches, just about the average of 18.48 for the period. Perhaps we will now settle down to a nice, quiet end of year – maybe?

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