

Suburb Style



Suburb Style editor, Deborah Warland talks to local residents

GARDENING GURU

featuring Diane Berger

When I asked Diane to describe herself her shorthand answer was: mother, garden enthusiast, 37 years on the Suburb and still counting. Fortunately she did agree to expand on all three areas.

Diane moved to the Suburb in 1972 with her husband, Tom and son Joshua and has lived in the same house on Willifield Way ever since. "The Suburb, though a nice place to live in, was by no means the 'expensive oasis' it has since become. I also recall it was so much easier to get around by car." Sadly, Tom died 24 years ago, leaving her with her son who was then aged nine. 15 years ago Vincent entered her life (everyone's favourite 'Master of Wine' when he ran Oddbins in Temple Fortune) and they have lived together from then on.

When she moved to Willifield her garden was not particularly well-maintained but that did not last for long. As she reflects, "It has taken many years of trial and error for the garden to be what it is today and I am constantly trying to amend and redevelop year on year. I have built a pond – which I then extended – added a bridge, radically overhauled the growing areas and borders, added a deck, a secret area, pergola, gazebo, mirrors, love seat, etc. My current thinking is to extend the pond again and to focus more on the purples in my hot border. My garden is undoubtedly high maintenance but very rewarding." (At this point I practically fainted with exhaustion at just the idea of all that work!)

It was Vincent who gave Diane the push to enter the flower shows and open her garden to the public. She has subsequently won countless prizes and is particularly pleased with how her zantedeschias (yes, I had to ask her how to spell the word) have done. She joined the committee of our Horticultural Society, organised their trips and talks and wrote the gardening pieces in Suburb News. So she had plenty of opportunity to meet like-minded people. Her advice to anyone starting out with a garden is, "Join the Horticultural Society, visit lots of gardens, particularly locally, just to see what grows. Clay can be very unforgiving. Lastly, don't give up. I often feel the weather and conditions conspire against me."

Diane and Vincent also have an allotment, now in its fifth year, which she describes as "having the capacity for both pleasure and heartache."

Diane still finds the Suburb enchanting. Springtime with the blossom and magnolia; summer has the smell of cut grass and fragrant shrubs; autumn brings the changes to the trees and the last two winters have brought a picture postcard of white. Her favourite spots are Bigwood, which she thinks is 'magical' and the Croquet Lawn for 'it's peace and tranquillity'.

Finally, we talked about the future. "My hope is that more people will get involved in the wide range of Suburb activities and maintain its community spirit," she said. **S**



Diane Berger in her fabulous Suburb garden

MY SECRET LIFE

Find out more about more about Diane as she shares her 'Secret Life' with Suburb Style readers...

I drive/ride: I drive a Polo and ride anywhere my pass will take me. I make a point of: Listening to the 2.15 play on Radio 4; in my garden during the summer; on the sofa in the winter.

You may not know it but: I'm bad at keeping my mouth shut and my opinions to myself.

You wouldn't know it: la anca eakspa ackba angsla orfa asa onгла asa

ia anca eray embermay (you will have to think laterally to get this! DW). **The people I am closest to:** The two men in my life. I really value my girlfriends.

Comfort reading: Modern detective mysteries and most things horticultural – naturally.

Comfort eating: Anything on a plate as long as it follows a G&T and is accompanied by a glass of decent Sauvignon Blanc.

Moving pictures: The tiger by my son aged 9. It still hangs in the bathroom.

My biggest regret: Not marrying a millionaire.

When I was a child I wanted to: Work with my Dad. He was an interior decorator.

At night I dream of: Great dramatic saga often involving me, the cats (all deceased now) and general mayhem and peril. After which I have excellent recall.

I wish I'd never worn: No regrets really; everything was of its time.

All my money goes on: Self-preservation, hair, skin and body and, of course, the garden.

It's not fashionable but: I like Eddie Cochran (50 years dead), Mark Knopfler and Glads.

If I wasn't me: I'd like to be Prime Minister. I'd sort everything out.

The shops I can't walk past: I'm not a shopper but Sunshine Garden Centre, Bounds Green and Hobbs, Brent Cross are irresistible.

My biggest influence: Christopher Lloyd whose ideas on succession planting and colour combination have been a constant inspiration. And Sharon, whose words of wisdom have helped me through some very difficult times.

The best invention ever: The dishwasher aka the Quattro. I didn't think I needed one but three years ago I installed a half-sized one. It has changed my life! **S**

Pathways to a bright future



The Institute

Welcome to our Open Week

Monday 21st - Saturday 26th June

With all that's happening at The Institute, this year we've decided to extend our Open Day to an Open Week. Now you can drop in at any point during the times detailed below to see The Institute at work, get advice and guidance on a full range of courses, plus the opportunity to talk to teachers and visit classes.

If you can't make it, then be sure to ring or pop in to pick up a copy of our new 2010/11 prospectus that's hot off the press. It's packed full of details of all the new courses on offer for the academic year ahead.

Monday 21 - Thursday 24 June: 12noon - 2pm & 5.30 - 8.30pm • Friday 25 June: 12noon - 2pm • Saturday 26 June: 12noon - 5pm
For the full programme of advice, guidance sessions and activities, please visit our website.

www.hgsi.ac.uk • 0845 871 4141 • 11 High Road N2 8LL, by East Finchley tube

