



The Writer's Garden

Jennifer Potter has lived in a pretty cottage in the Artisan's Quarter of the Suburb for 15 years. She is the author of three novels and four works of non-fiction: the much admired Secret Gardens; Lost Gardens, written to accompany the television series; an acclaimed biography of the John Tradescants, Strange Blooms, the Curious Lives and Adventures of the John Tradescants; and most recently The Rose, A True History, heralded as "a remarkable and gripping work of scholarship" (Mary Keen,

Gardens Illustrated) and "the finest disquisition on the early history and symbolism of the rose" (Daily Telegraph). Until recently a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Kings College, London, she reviews regularly for the Times Literary Supplement and is an Honorary Teaching Fellow on the University of Warwick's Writing Programme.

That doesn't leave much time for gardening! The Rose took her five years to write as a massive research programme took her to Malmaison in Paris;

the Huntington Library in California; the White House rose garden; to Iran and to the largest rose garden in the world – Sangerhausen in East Germany which boasts 7,000 of the possible 24,000 varieties in the world. She says, "Since working on 'The Rose', I've grown more and more in love with old roses and I'm slowly filling the garden

with them. I'm fascinated by the way roses came about. I have, for instance, a damask rose that was born of three different parents: Rosa gallica, the musk rose, and a wild Chinese rose – Rosa fedtschenkoana, which grows in my garden."

Jennifer spent many years trying to disentangle the many myths and legends that have grown up around roses over the centuries. As she says: "Knowing the history of a particular rose somehow makes it more real. There's a 2,000 year old rose wreath from Roman tombs in Egypt and experts have identified the particular variety; it's Rosa x richardii and you can grow it in your garden today."

Jennifer has a very relaxed attitude to her garden, "The garden is slowly filling up and in a way that's how I like to garden, just slowly and taking my time, seeing what happens. I had all sorts of plans but in the end it's kept the same basic shape." A wide stone terrace overlooks a 100 foot long rectangular lawn edged with flower beds; at the far end is a rusted arch leading to a wild garden. Three birch trees, Betula nigra and Betula utilis var. jacquemontii, mark the boundary.

Nearer the house, Jennifer plans to make a new bed devoted to her beloved old roses. She already grows 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' through an



Gardeners World on the Suburb

The BBC's flagship gardening programme, Gardeners' World, spent many hours filming in several Hampstead Garden Suburb gardens on 5 April, in preparation for a programme that was to have gone out on Good Friday but in the event was held over.

As well as talking about the ethos of the Suburb and its founders, Joe Swift and his team visited and interviewed five HGS Horticultural Society members who open their gardens regularly for the National Gardens Scheme (Yellow Book) and the society: Diane Berger†, 86 Willifield Way; Chris Page at 32 Wordsworth Walk, Marjorie Harris† at 48 Erskine Hill, Yvonne Oliver† at 4 Asmunds Hill and Patricia Larsen† at 5 Heathgate.

Gardeners' World wanted to demonstrate how different suburban gardens, large and small, can be and how enthusiastic amateur gardeners can produce good ideas to overcome some of the gardening problems that size or shape, locality or type of soil, among other things, can throw up.

HGS Horticultural Society Chairman, Michael Franklin, said: "the BBC researchers came to visit and photograph our gardens earlier and were overcome by the variety of

planting and Spring colour they found, the proximity to allotments and the passion for gardening. They were intrigued by small but practical solutions, for instance, growing flowers in long grass under an apple tree near a seat or round a birdbath, which is good for wildlife and means that an awkward site for mowing only has to be cut once or twice a year. They were also fascinated by the idea of the Garden Suburb and its survival in a modern age, in their conversation with Jane Blackburn of the HGS Trust."

All the featured gardens will be open with many others for HGS Horticultural Society from 2-6pm on Sunday June 19, partly in aid of the North London Hospice. There will also be a festival of roses, a specialist nursery plant sale and teas from 2-6pm at Fellowship House (tickets at £7.50 pp on sale from 2pm at 4 Asmunds Hill). Those marked †, will also be open for the National Gardens Scheme (48 Erskine Hill and 5 Heathgate – Hampstead Garden Suburb Gardens – on 5 June, 4 Asmunds Hill on 26 June and 86 Willifield Way on 24 July). A full list of Suburb gardens open for the NGS was published in the previous Suburb News.

MARJORIE HARRIS

old pear tree, 'Great Maiden's Blush', Rosa 'Kazanlik' which is used in the manufacture of rose-water, Rosa rugosa 'Alba', and the repeat-flowering Autumn Damask rose because "if sunshine had a smell, this would be it." Many of her roses come from the Peter Beales nursery; he has a good selection of these old roses.

The front garden has lovely shrubs under-planted with epimediums, snowdrops and deep purple hellebores. There's a Cercis siliquastrum (does anyone know why it's called the Judas Tree?), Christopher Lloyd's favourite Ceanothus 'Puget Blue', a Carpenteria californica, the beautiful Pittosporum tobira; a shrubby amelanchier and a Molly-the-witch peony (Paeonia mlokosewitschii). A Celmisia (the New Zealand daisy plant) makes a handsome pot plant beside the front door.

Ever since Sappho planted roses at the shrine of Aphrodite, no flower has captured the imagination in quite the same way. Wherever it has grown, human beings have projected onto it their dreams and aspirations. Celebrated as a sacred symbol and as a token of womanhood, the rose unites Venus with the Virgin Mary, the blood of Christ with the sweat



Molly the witch



Mme Hardy



Ferdinand Pichard

of Muhammad, the sacred and the profane, life and death, the white rose of chastity and the red rose of consummation. Read all about it in 'The Rose', by our most distinguished Suburb writer.

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