

FEATURING SIX SENSATIONAL ENGLISH GARDENS

# THE ENGLISH GARDEN

NOVEMBER 2009

FOR EVERYONE WHO LOVES BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

US/CANADA \$6.99

*Heale House*

ALL CHANGE AT AN  
HISTORIC MANOR

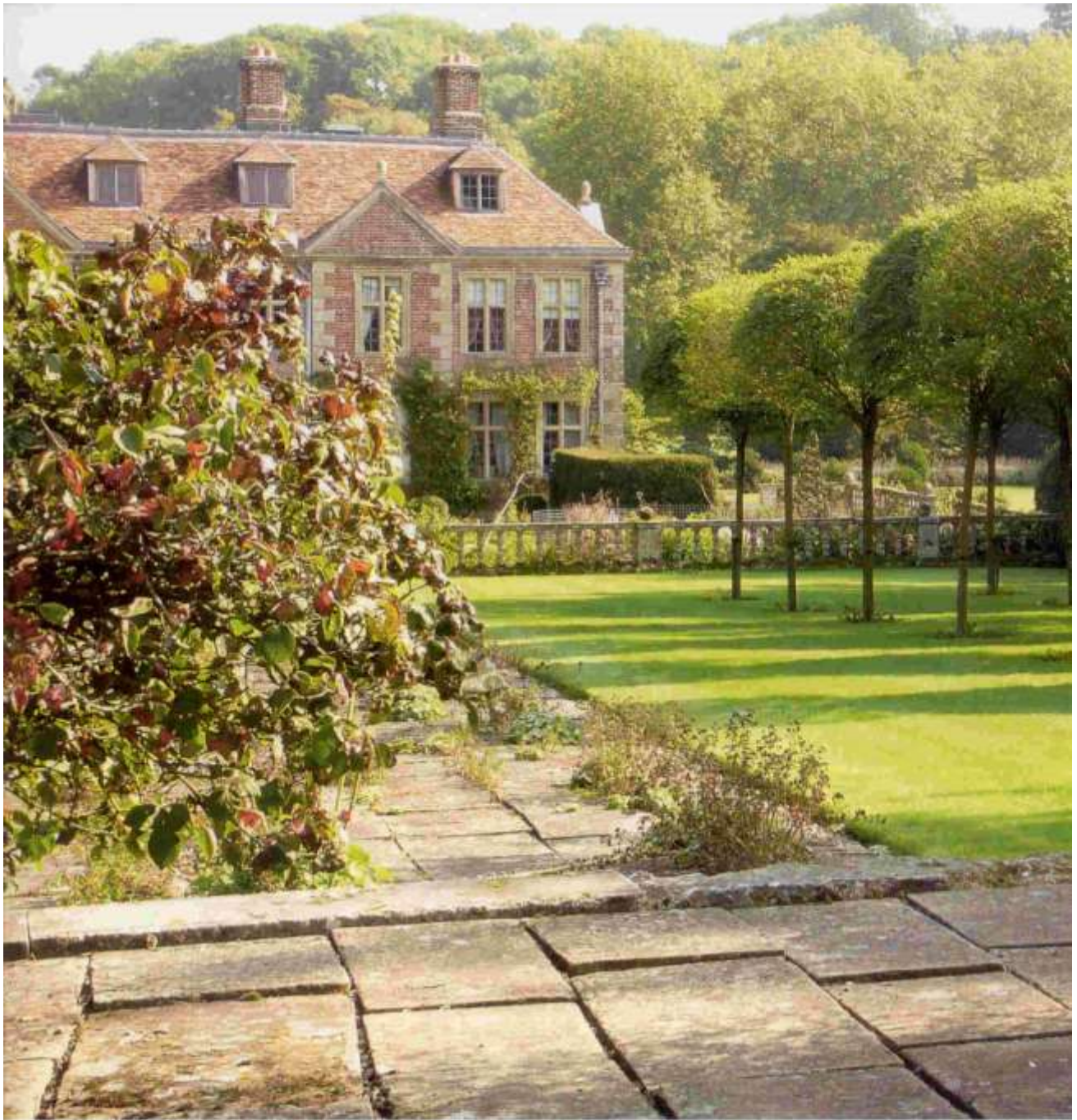
*Paradise island*

IN FULL BLOOM

**PRAIRIE-STYLE PLANTING**

*Grasses in all their glory*





# Keep the change

Heale House is an historically rich manor and garden that has seen kings, nobles, famous designers and Japanese gardeners come and go, and, like its new mistress, embraces the evolution that must come with each new age

PHOTOGRAPHS AND WORDS JANE GIFFORD



GLORIOUS GARDENS  
WILTSHIRE

**H**idden in the rolling grasslands of Salisbury Plain, Heale House gives few clues to its presence. Even upon entering the drive, passing through pleasant level pasture grazed by sheep and horses, and dotted with ancient oaks, there is still no sign of the manor and garden. Both are treasures to discover.

It's hardly possible to pass by the secret delights of this charming garden in your search for the wide-open grandeur of the main house and grounds. You have to explore, crossing little wooden bridges over chattering streams, keeping still

amongst ferns and hydrangeas to listen to the song of the garden, gazing up into the weeping willows, breathing in the fragrances. You can't resist leaning over a scarlet bridge to marvel at enormous trout. The water swirls beneath you, rushing on under the Japanese tea house. You are drawn up steps to take a closer look at perfectly sculpted box balls and immaculate fruit tunnels. It takes an iron will to go past all this without stopping.

The house itself has a fascinating history. Built in the 16th century by Sir William Greene and given to his daughter and son-in-law, Sir Gerald Errington, as a wedding ►

**Heale House was built in the 16th century. The garden was laid out in part in the early 20th century by Harold Peto. But avenues of roof-headed false acacia were recently added to the front lawn by Frances Rasch, wife of the present owner.**



present in 1553, it passed on to Lawrence Hyde of Hatch, cousin to the Hydes of Clarendon House. In October 1651, fleeing to France before the armies of the Parliamentarians, King Charles II took refuge here, finding six nights of delightful seclusion in the care of the widowed Mrs. Hyde.

In 1835, the property was severely damaged by fire, completely destroying the east wing. Heale House was in this sorry state when bought in 1894 by the Hon. Louis Grevill, great uncle of the present owner, Guy Rasch. Grevill commissioned renowned architect Detmar Blow to rebuild the house on the existing foundations, using reclaimed and sympathetic materials.

Parts of the garden were originally laid out for Grevill in 1910 by the designer Harold Peto.

Today, these elements are still regarded as some of the finest examples of the Arts and Crafts style. The lily pond and eight perfectly round box bushes in the tunnel garden are by Peto. So too are the curved stone benches on the top terrace and all the extensive terraces and balustrading immediately surrounding the main house.

The names of the old-fashioned roses that climb the balustrades, and make this part of the garden so beautiful and highly scented in summer, are long forgotten, and present a challenge to all visitors to conclusively identify them.

But it is the Japanese water garden that is Grevill's most personal legacy, and the most immediately striking part of the gardens. A bright red bridge makes a bold statement, in pleasant contrast to the dappled shade and ferny intimacy

of the water garden itself, where you are invited to sit quietly and lose yourself in the music of the bright clear waters of the Avon, channeling fast and shallow under the trees.

There are some remarkable tree specimens, including the katsura on the boundary of the Japanese garden. It has an exceptional number of stems and is reputed to be the largest in Britain. Nearby is a fine large black poplar, an uncommon native species. On the lawns on the river bank are an old black mulberry, a medlar and a quince.

The present garden owes much to the creative skills of Guy's mother, Lady Anne Rasch, in particular the tunnel garden, which dates back to 1965, and the wonderful variety

of scented roses. In more recent years, Guy's wife Frances has taken over responsibility for the care

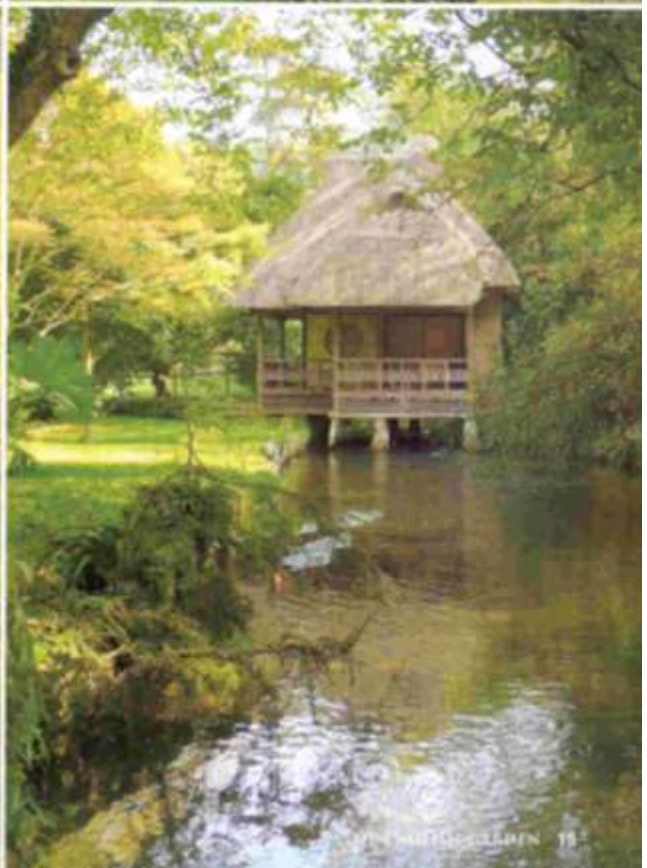
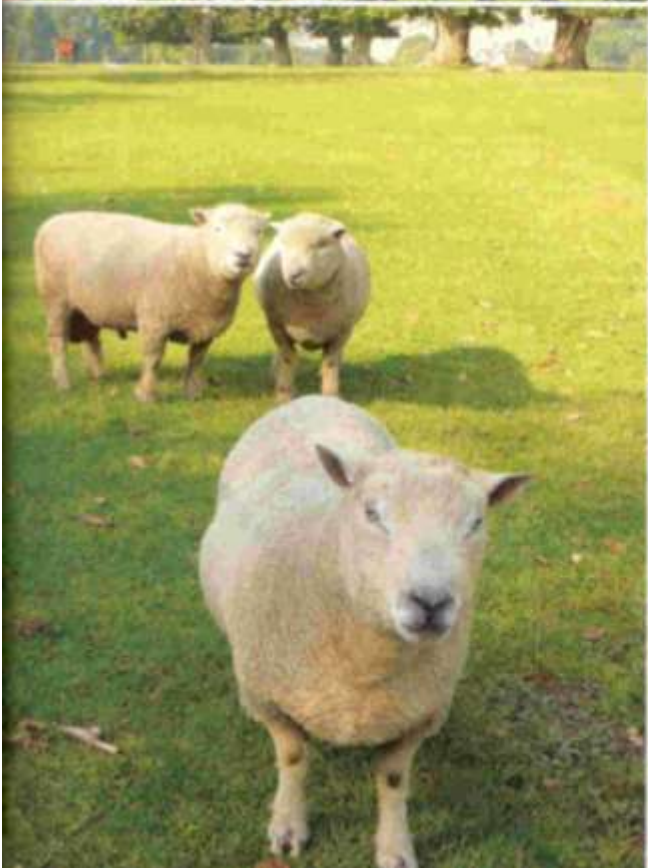
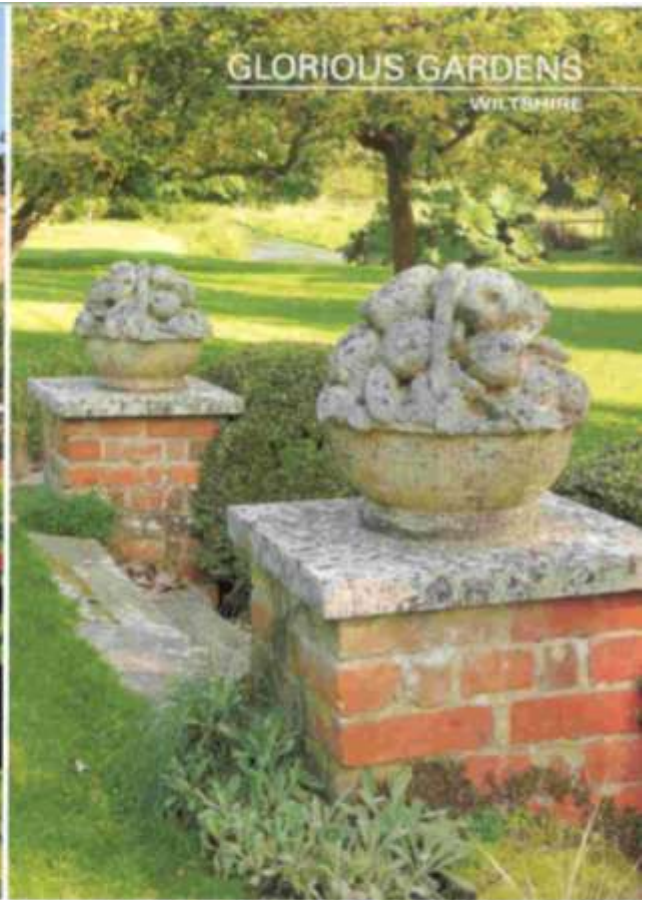
### These elements are regarded as some of the finest examples of the Arts and Crafts style

and design of the eight acres here. 'I'm so lucky to have our head gardener, Michael Malby,' says Frances. 'He is a pruning and topiary wizard and is responsible for the arbours, tunnels, wisterias and climbing and balustrade roses, among a host of other key features in the garden.' Paula Flynn is also part of the team, specialising in the care of the lawns and the vegetable and cut-flower garden, as well as propagation.

'Gardening is a constant process of change and evolution,' says Frances. Each year she undertakes to completely redesign at least one border or structural element in the garden. 'I have learnt from experience that it is better to completely root out and clear a border, rather than treat and replant discreet areas'. Heale House garden also serves Frances as a blueprint for her new business of garden

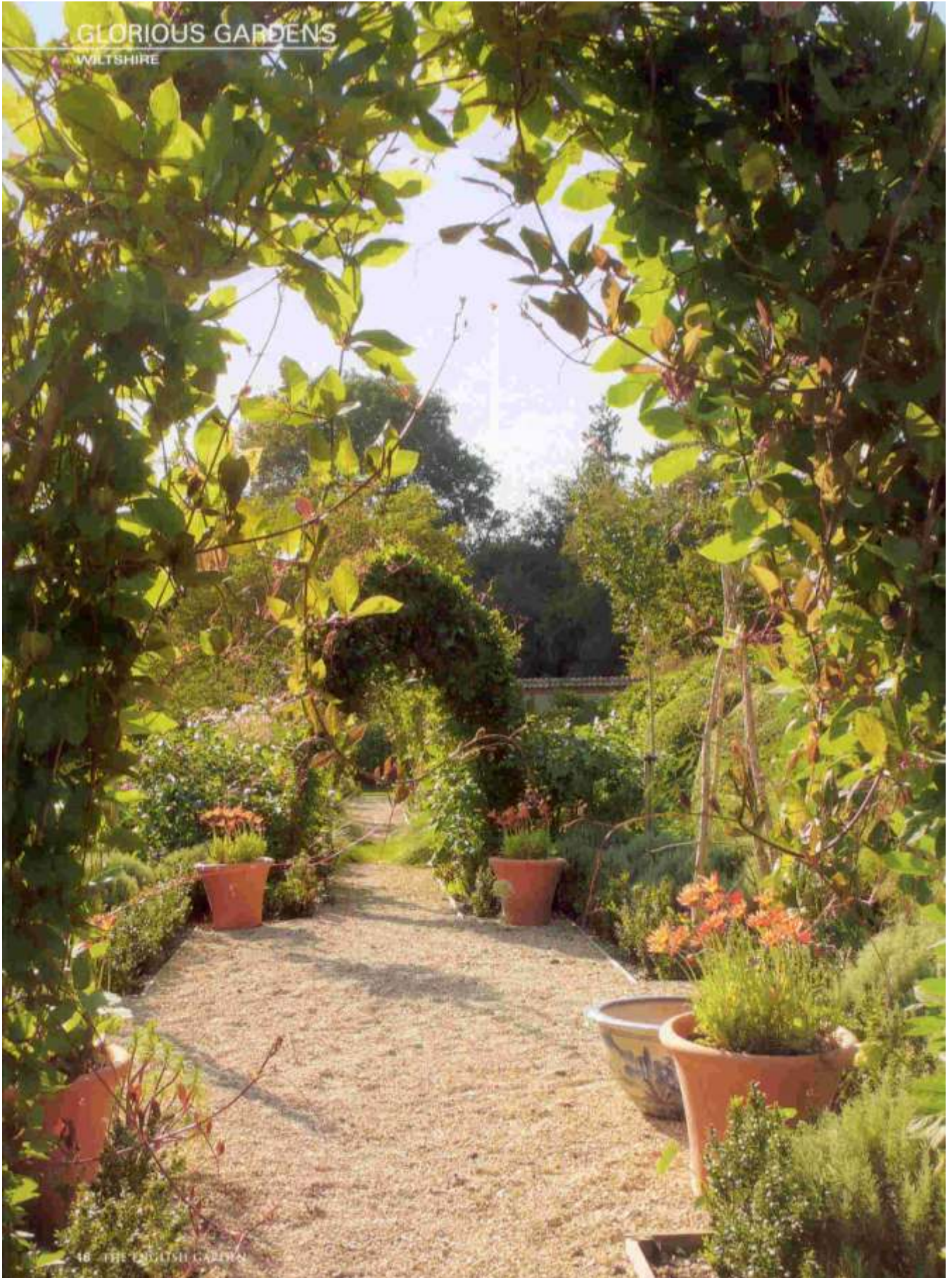
LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM Orange ercotis, the African daisy, Rudbeckia laciniata 'Herbstsonne', Vitis cognata, Anemone x hybrida 'Elegans'. BELOW The tunnel of espaliered fruit trees, offering a view down to Harold Peto's box balls. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT Rose hips frame a view of the house. TOP RIGHT Baskets of fruit, just one example of stonework here. BOTTOM LEFT Pet rats in the meadows. BOTTOM RIGHT The Japanese tea house sits on the water.





# GLORIOUS GARDENS

WILTSHIRE



design. Avenues of mop-headed false acacia, *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Umbraculifera', on the lawns to the west of the house below the top terrace are just some of her additions. They have been grafted at 2.5m (8ft) and successfully break up the otherwise traditional, severe symmetry of this area.

The regular stone slabs of the central path dividing the two lawns have also been softened by interplanting with *Achillea millefolium* and oregano. 'I plant mainly for scent and colour,' she says. 'I love daphnes and stocks, especially the white night-scented stocks in the beds beneath the magnolias. Various wisterias and the old-fashioned rose 'Souverain du Docteur Jarmain', which is a rich velvety dark red and highly fragrant,

grow on the house around my bedroom, with more night-scented stocks in the borders below. On early summer evenings, a heavenly scent fills the room through the open window.'

Plants are clearly Frances' passion. 'I have so many favourites,' she explains. 'I couldn't live without my irises, euphorbia, the magenta flowers of *Geranium* 'Patricia' and the deep crimson and purple-pink flowers of *Geranium pulnanum*. I am also starting a collection of amsonia, amelanchier, hostas and plants with dark foliage.' Guy especially loves the early displays of snowdrops and acornites in the wooded areas of the garden, and the fabulous scent in late spring of *Viburnum x juddii*. 'This year I want to begin the transformation of the sandal garden,' Frances says. 'At the moment I find it quite uninspiring. I want to make it more romantic but with a modern twist, so I am thinking

about introducing a series of parterres and hedges with gaps through which you catch tantalising aspects and glimpses, luring you on, making you explore. I would also like to redesign the croquet lawn along these lines.

'I plan to overhaul the Japanese water garden as well,' she says, but after recently attending a garden design course in Japan, I realise that you cannot transplant a garden style completely. The shape and structure of Japanese gardens are derived from very specific cultural influences and with reference to elements of the surrounding landscape, such as Mount Fuji, and can't be transplanted wholesale. I see now that you can mix Japanese elements into the contemporary garden, but you must plant for the current period and culture, incorporating elements of the surrounding countryside and leaving plenty of scope for change. For me, a garden can otherwise become stale. Gardening should be an ongoing process. I'd go mad if I had to live with the same border for more than 10 years.'

With Frances' drive and ideas, don't be surprised to find that something you fell in love with on a previous visit to Heale House garden is no longer there. That's all part of its draw - there's always something new to discover.

Heale House garden, plant centre and tea room, Middle Woodford, Salisbury SP4 6NZ. Open 1 Feb - 31 Oct; Wed-Sun, BH Mon; 10am-5pm. Tel: +44 (0)1722 782504. [www.healegarden.co.uk](http://www.healegarden.co.uk)

**'On early summer evenings, a heavenly scent fills the room through the open window'**

Turn over for garden notebook ▶

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Arches of *Cobaea scandens* intermittently cover the gravel path in the recently made kitchen garden. **THIS PAGE, BELOW** Ferns and willow line the lush banks of the carrier streams off the River Avon. **RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM** *Cobaea scandens* in bloom; *Geranium* 'Rozanne'; the green-veined leaf of a vine; a flowering catalpa tree.



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# The notebook

**Heale House** garden covers a total of eight acres and includes a water garden, vegetable and cutting garden, lawns, avenues and terraces. The soil is chalk and dries out very quickly, although the Japanese garden is prone to flooding



### STONEMWORK IN THE GARDEN

One of the granite storm lanterns (above left) that were brought back by the Hon. Louis Grevill when he returned from the British Embassy in Japan, part of a wider collection of Japanese memorabilia he used to create a Japanese garden at Heale House (see below for details of other items). Other ornate stone artefacts that adorn the gardens are a swan (top right) and a pair of stone pillars that mark the entrance to the kitchen garden (below right).

### OWNER FRANCES' TOP TIPS

● **Be brave!** Don't be frightened to lift and split plants. They are generally surprisingly hardy.

● **Read up on and follow designers.** If you put Rupert Golby, Arabella Boyce and Georgie Langton in a cocktail shaker and mixed them together, you would pour out my perfect garden.

● **Our head gardener Michael prunes silver-leaved plants in late spring.** They are less

likely to flower, but most gardeners dislike the flowers anyway.

● **Prune espalier pears in the second week in July,** espalier apples in the third week. Remove all heavy growth down to the fruiting wood, exposing young fruit to the sun.

● **Cut all old wood** from balustrade roses after they have flowered.



### CONTACTS

#### FRANCES' FAVOURITE GARDENS

● **Cothay Manor and Gardens,** Greenham, Nr. Wellington, Somerset TA21 0JR. Tel: +44 (0)1823 672263. [www.cothaymanor.co.uk](http://www.cothaymanor.co.uk)

● **Knoll Gardens,** Hampreston, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7ND. Tel: +44 (0)1202 673931. [www.knollgardens.co.uk](http://www.knollgardens.co.uk)

● **The Peto Garden at Iford Manor,** Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 2BA. Tel: +44 (0)1225 863146. [www.ifordmanor.co.uk](http://www.ifordmanor.co.uk)

#### LOCAL NURSERIES

● **Allington Plants & Garden Shop,** Allington Bar Farm, Allington, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 6LJ. Tel: +44 (0)1249 659700.

● **Cranborne Manor Garden Centre,** Cranborne, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 5PP. Tel: +44 (0)1725 517248. [www.cranborne.co.uk](http://www.cranborne.co.uk)

● **Downside Nurseries,** Upper Westwood, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 2DE. Tel: +44 (0)1225 862392. [www.downsidenurseries.co.uk](http://www.downsidenurseries.co.uk)



### THE JAPANESE BRIDGE

Returning from the British Embassy in Japan at the end of the 19th century, the great-uncle of present owner Guy Rasch - the Hon. Louis Grevill - brought with him a tea house and a Japanese 'Nikko' bridge (above), which spans a 17th-century irrigation channel that feeds the water meadows. Four Japanese gardeners also came back to England with him to tend his Japanese garden.