

When we purchased Redmain House in 1993 it was not just the house that needed to be completely refurbished, the garden, totalling around 3 acres, had not been touched. It had been used as a dumping ground. Ash and Sycamore trees had self-seeded everywhere and the dry stone walls were in a bad state of repair. The large field at the rear had been grazed by sheep and did not look in bad condition, but in its first year of non-grazing produced an enormous amount of weed. In particular thistle and dock.

There was no alternative but to go around the 3 acres and remove them by hand. It was all I did that first year and it seemed to work as the following year there were very few that came back. However, I now had a problem with hogweed! Hundreds and hundreds of them appeared everywhere. As anyone will know hogweed has a long tap root, so digging them out was a long and difficult job and I simply could not do them all, so, of those I could not dig up I made sure to cut off the tops so they would not seed.

It seemed like a good idea at the time (and it probably was) but it meant that the following year the taproot was twice as big and twice as difficult to get out! I just kept at it for the next couple of years and finally got them under control, but they continue to pop up from time to time so I am still vigilant about getting them out!

ANGEL GARDEN

As with any garden there are still areas that need to be utilised and "tidied". There is an old chicken run at one end of the field and a polytunnel. As the garden has progressed these areas are no longer in harmony with the rest and need to be "adjusted". Now that our three children have left home the need for eggs is not so great so the chickens have gone. I have decided that this area will become the new Angel Garden.

It is my intention to enclose the chicken run behind hedging and make a secret enclosed garden behind an old door with a shelter at one end. The centrepiece of this garden will be a sunken square pond filled with white *Zantedeschia* watched over by a stone Angel. The outer borders will be filled with many types of ferns, climbers and hostas and white irises. Paths will lead around the pond and into the enclosed sheltered seating area at the far end. A quiet, reflective and slightly monastic area to get away from it all. Just have to find the money to do it now!

UPDATE January 2009

The Angel garden is completed!

There have been some slight alterations due to circumstances – and money! We have an Angel in the centre of the garden although it was very difficult to find one. As it is it is not exactly what I wanted – I may change it in the future. As yet I haven't been able to source one that I like. The chicken run has gone and the area is enclosed with trellis while a beech hedge has been planted around it.

Inside at the far end, is what we call the "loggia". It has a clear roof to allow the light in for plants that are slightly tender and need protection. The centre bog area is completed and has been planted with hostas, ferns and white irises. *Zantedeschias* will be added in the Spring. The borders are partly planted with shrubs, climbers, ferns, hostas, lily of the valley, and a beautiful lime green Japanese Maple.

More will be added in the Spring when the overall scheme can be better put together. Personally, I can't wait to get stuck in and finish it – but I don't fancy doing it under 3 inches of water.

BETTYS BORDER

My husbands' mother passed away in 2007, but she loved the garden and particularly lots of colourful flowers, so this new border, which should be planted up in 2008, is for her. It is placed in front of the woodland on the opposite side to the bog garden and it is a large long flowing border. The plants have been ordered already and will consist of *Kniphofia* (3 different varieties), *crocsmia* (4 different varieties), *heleniums*, *helianthus*, *achilleas* and *rudbeckia* in shades of yellow, rust, orange, burnt orange and occasional dashes of red in the form of the dahlia Bishop of Llandaff. In-between to give a little colour early on I have planted the tulip "Queen of the Night". Sometimes this border can get wet, although it does drain quite quickly, so I will be interested to see how the tulips fair.

Incidentally a few of these tulips did turn up in the grass where this border is now, which would indicate that they can survive here.

It's one of the reasons why I chose this variety - and of course it will fit in with the colour scheme.

The *rudbeckias* will appear at the back of the border along with the tall *heleniums* and gradually disappear into the wood behind. I can't wait to see it develop and I am sure that Grandma will love it - wherever she is.

BOG AREA

This is a small area at the bottom of the steps in the woodland. Always mushy and frequently impassable this area has been planted with hostas, *astilbes* and loads of drumstick primulas and another favourite *Persicaria Bistorta Superba*. I absolutely love this area when it is in full swing. A lot of the alder is planted in this area too, to absorb some of the water and underneath them the American skunk cabbage, which produces the most superb yellow leaves as it emerges from the bog in Spring! I first saw this plant at the Dawyck botanical gardens (sister to the Edinburgh botanical gardens and about an hour and a half journey from here) where it has been growing for a lot longer than mine, and in May will just take your breath away. Also planted here is *ligularia Desdemona* which shoots up to about 4-5ft from ground level in one season topped with brilliant yellow daisy-like flowers.

ORCHARD

This area was planted in 2006. I wanted to have an orchard, mainly for the fruit, of course, but it is a nice to sit and read a book or have a picnic here. It is a small orchard with around 14 trees, so far. Sometimes, during Winter this area can take on a lot of water so it was necessary to provide drainage under each tree. To give the trees a good start we cut a large square around each tree and planted crocus at the base for colour in early spring.

A mown path divides the orchard into two halves and the grass on either side of the path is left to grow naturally. During late spring snakeshead fritillaries and lady's smock come up through the grass and usually following a wet spring, spotted orchids will appear. Sometimes, if spring is dry the orchids don't show, but it is better for the fruit trees. How do you choose?

The trees are a mixture of apple, pear, cherry, damson, plum and quince. I have chosen some local varieties, some old varieties and some very new introductions.

THE TERRACE ROSE GARDEN, HERB GARDEN AND LAWN

These three areas lie directly behind the house and were the first part of the garden to be completed. They were completely overgrown and had to be cleared with a JCB. As is common with most ancient houses the rear of the house backed into the soil behind it and so this had to be removed and new dry stone walls constructed to hold the soil in place. This was where I built my first dry stone wall and I'm quite proud of it!

Alistair who did most of the dry stone walling for us managed to complete a quarter of a mile of dry stone walling before I finished mine! Steps were made to access all areas and everything comes together harmoniously. The rose garden and herb garden are protected by box hedging, which are now around 4ft high having been planted from small plants, and cuttings from these plants were used to put box hedging around the lawned area behind the holiday cottages.

Roses are notoriously difficult to grow this far north and I spent many hours deciding which ones were the most likely to survive! I love old English roses and so went for the new old English roses by Peter Beale. Some survived and others didn't so varieties have changed from my original choices and still do change from time to time if they succumb to black spot, the wind, or the wet.

The toughest survivor has proved to be William Shakespeare a beautiful crimson velvet colour – I guess he's used to the rough wind and wet conditions?! The roses are planted in deep beds edged with lavender and underplanted with chives and alliums. Walking through from this area into the small herb garden under a large pergola, which is covered with the rambling rose Dorothy Perkins, clematis Wilsonii and passion flower (which does not produce much in the way of fruit this far north but the flowers are lovely). I cram as many herbs as I can into this area and guests are welcome to pick them for cooking as they please. Two of my favourites here are the monardas which I have only grown over the last two years and the Florentine iris which finally flowered for the first time last year after almost five years. The root of this famous iris is the orris root which is used as a fixative in pot pourri.

THE VEGETABLE AND FLOWER CUTTING GARDEN

This large area has been developed gradually over a number of years. It was part of the field directly behind the house to the right of the woodland area and tilts south-east. Originally a local farmer tilled the soil for me with a tractor as it was mainly rough grass. The soil was not much and weeds were endemic for a couple of years. I planted only potatoes and onions at the beginning. Hours of weeding and tons of manure have now turned the soil into a great place for growing my treasured veggies and flowers.

This area has progressed from a few beds dug out of the soil with muddy paths to a very formal area with 20 boxed deep beds, gravel paths and seating areas and the whole is surround by an 8foot high privet hedge for shelter. My husband made some cold frames at one end and some lovely obelisks for the sweet peas at the other end. There are three entrances to this garden through arched gateways, the middle being the main entrance, which has a large urn filled with Gypsophilia (Baby's breath) which froths out in all directions during the Summer.

We now grow all kinds of vegetables in 6 deep beds and raise flowers for planting out and for cutting in the others along with strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb, blueberries, and currants. It is a beautiful place to sit in summer and provides excellent views over the Derwent valley towards Skiddaw mountain. We often have our dinner in this area at night and watch the sun go down behind us.

THE WILD FLOWER MEADOW

This area covers almost 2 acres and follows on from the orchard. Since we came in 1993 we have really done very little to this area apart from weed by hand particularly invasive and unwanted weeds. Nature can often provide its own beauty and so we left the field for a number of years to see what would appear, cutting for hay at the end of July or beginning of August to allow seed to drop.

It was not long before the Lady's smock appeared in large numbers and is a picture in Spring, followed by ox-eye daisies, knapweed and thistles (which we keep strictly under control). Interestingly, as the moles have moved in and turn over the soil purple opium poppies have appeared and huge numbers of celandine. The celandine is very invasive and must also be kept under control. We allow the grass to grow all summer and mow paths around the edge and diagonally across the middle to provide a nice walk.

The paths lead to a grass tump/seat in one corner which is the best place to watch the sun go down as it faces directly West. Red field Poppies have appeared recently, but these are from a couple of dry borders situated nearer the house, courtesy of the birds – but they look lovely in the field. It will be interesting to see if they adapt well to what is a predominantly damp spring field.

WILDLIFE POND

The wildlife pond lies through a five bar gate and behind a wall directly behind the lawned area. Originally, this was where the sheep came to drink from a very muddy pool. Rainwater and spring water from the field accumulated in the muddy pool so it seemed a natural place to put a pond being at the bottom of a shallow hill. We used a mini digger to make it a little bigger than it was, and lined it. It is not meant to be a fancy pond, but is there for the wildlife and fits well into its surroundings at the edge of the woodland area.

Yellow flag iris, willow, reeds and ragged robin grow around the edges and I am pleased that newts, frogs and toads now make their home in and around the pond. If you get up early enough in the morning you may be lucky enough to catch a heron hoping to catch a fish! There aren't any, but nevertheless he is a handsome creature. Irises are among my favourite flowers and I have made a point of planting them all over the area surrounding the pond. In late Spring blue irises appear everywhere amongst the grassy banks at the bottom of the woodland area next to the pond.

THE WOODLAND COPSE

During that first year my son and I planted a copse of trees on a gentle slope behind the house. According to an old map dated around 1810, there was a copse of trees here before so we decided to replace it. We planted aspen, alder, birch, hazel, elderberry, holly, hawthorn, wild cherry and field maple alongside the two remaining sycamore (one came down the first winter and kept us in wood for the fire for over 2 years). Now, in 2008 the woodland area is one of my favourite places. The wood is mature with a stepped area that leads down through a mass of ferns, geraniums, primroses, aquilegias, Jacobs ladder, dog rose, foxgloves, gunnera, and other native species during June. In Spring it is underplanted with bluebells, daffodils, primroses, wild garlic, forget-me-nots and ground elder!

We have made an area available to sit under the trees when it gets too hot (yes we do get hot weather!) and it is a favourite place for a lot of our visitors and us. We have also erected a tee-pee in this area, made of willow taken from the area around the wildlife pond which was created during the second year of the garden. A bust of Aphrodite also rests here snuggled in the hollow of the sycamore tree trunk that fell during the first year, surrounded by aconites, geraniums, foxgloves and purple bugle.

Website www.lakesnw.co.uk/hudcot/gardens/index.htm has all the above information and hundreds of photographs!

Christine and Lloyd hope you have enjoyed your visit.