

IN BRIEF

WHAT Broadwoodside, converted farm buildings surrounded by a strongly structural garden created from 1997.

WHERE East Lothian, 20 miles east of Edinburgh.

SIZE 1.5 acres.

CONDITIONS Exposed.

SOIL Clay.

FEATURES Courtyard garden, walled kitchen garden, landscape garden with sculpture and artifacts.

The all-weather garden

Robert and Anna's garden in East Lothian looks fantastic in spring, summer and winter – not bad for a couple who admit they don't like gardening

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREA JONES

I am one of those gardeners who hates gardening," says Robert Dalrymple. To ram the point home, pinned to the door of the potting shed is a quotation from *Times* columnist Damian Whitworth: 'I have always hated gardening. It is hard to think of any other activity in which the disparity between the happy idea of what it might be like and the tedious reality is so back-breakingly vast. I love a garden. I love being in a garden. I love looking at gardens and reading about gardens. It's just the gardening that I can't handle.' So it's not surprising that Robert and his wife Anna employ someone to look after the garden for them.

The combination of a dedicated professional gardener and an employer with a strong design sense (Robert is a book designer) makes for a bold, imaginative and finely wrought garden. The site is not easy, being at an elevation of 116m. Once a tenanted farm, the property was derelict by 1997. Over four years the Dalrymples converted the ruined farm buildings into a home, and then developed the garden.

Out of the mud

Anna is disarming about their inspiration. "Everything here is copied," she says. Their first source was a book, *Living by Design*, which records the conversion of a similar derelict farmyard in Dorset by interior designer John Stefanidis. "In the winter of 1998, when the site looked like a muddy film set for the *Siege of Stalingrad*, the glamorous pictures in that book gave us hope."

A key part of the garden's success is the relationship between Robert and Guy ▶

The Dalrymples have created an immaculate courtyard garden that looks crisp and vibrant in winter, colourful and bright in summer. Its centrepiece is an iroko-wood aviary.

“ We are always looking at this bit of the garden, every day of the year, so it had to be evergreen, it had to look good through the long Scottish winter ”



▷ Donaldson, the gardener. The development of the garden is charted in several volumes of ‘Guy’s Book’, a big publisher’s dummy (a cover but with blank pages, pictured left) that Robert fills with instructions for Guy.

In winter the overriding impression is of strong structures and a love of symmetry and geometry. This look has of course been endlessly repeated in gardens since the 18th century. At Broadwoodside, though, I first visited the garden in summer, and hardly even noticed the symmetry until I got home and looked at the photographs I had taken there. That’s because the garden’s geometry is clothed in plenty of interesting plants: particular species are used in blocks or repeated combinations, so the total species count is relatively low but the overall impact is stronger. This is a rare example of using perennials with discipline, sticking to those that make an impact over a long season.

An all-year garden

The balancing of variation with disciplined restraint is apparent in the central courtyard, a grid of 25 squares centred on an aviary (see opposite page). Several of the squares contain a clipped Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*). Perhaps best appreciated in the depths of winter, one square has been planted with box balls, others a variety of low evergreens.

TOP LEFT Small standard Norwegian maples (*Acer platanoides*) gives height to the courtyard garden.

CENTRE Owner Robert Dalrymple has made reams of notes on his plans for the garden – gardener Guy Donaldson’s job is to make them a reality. In the next picture, Robert and Guy discuss the latest plans with Robert’s wife Anna.

LEFT The gardens are designed to complement the superb restoration of the 17th-century farmhouse.

In some cases, an evergreen is paired with a bulb for spring or summer interest: *Ophiopogon bodinieri* with summer snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*), great wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) with drumstick alliums (*A. sphaerocephalon*), Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*) with dark tulips (*T. ‘Queen of Night’*). “We are always looking at this bit of the garden, every day of the year, so it had to be evergreen, it had to look good through the long Scottish winter,” says Anna.

On the south side of the house is a partly walled kitchen garden, on the west side a less formal garden dominated by repeated combinations of perennials. To the north ‘gardening’ merges into ‘landscaping’ with views over the fields. A number of intriguing artifacts lie in this part of the garden – contemporary, but with that edge of 18th-century wit, erudition and willingness to use the garden for metaphor and allusion. Some reflect Robert and Anna’s appreciation of Ian Hamilton Finlay’s influential Little Sparta garden in Lanarkshire, famous for its artworks with classical allusions.

Broadwoodside evokes classical forms and plays with age-old themes of order and ornament, but in a way that is distinctly contemporary, marking itself out as a major new garden, all the more exciting for still being young and developing. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

OPEN 5 June, 2011, under Scotland’s Garden Scheme. See www.gardensofscotland.org or call 0131 226 3714 for details.

ADDRESS Broadwoodside Farm, Gifford, near Haddington, East Lothian EH41 4JQ.

WEBSITE www.broadwoodside.co.uk



Planting for a year-round garden

The courtyard is divided into 25 squares, alternately paved, grassed or planted with evergreen ground covers that look good in winter. A succession of bulbs flower through the ground cover plants in spring and summer.

PLANTS FOR WINTER GROUND-COVER

1 *Ophiopogon bodinieri*

This quick-spreading plant has dark green, grassy foliage and pink flowers from July to September. Combine with snowdrops or crocuses.

2 *Teucrium chamaedrys*

Wall germander has evergreen foliage and small pink-purple flowers in summer; it grows up to 45cm tall. Plant with *Nectaroscordum siculum* (8, below).

3 *Luzula sylvatica*

The underrated native wood rush thrives in infertile or dry (but not too dry) shade. It’s a strong-grower, 25cm tall, but needs an occasional tidy-up. Vigorous companions, such as English bluebells, will thrive.

4 *Pachysandra terminalis*

Well-established as a ground cover for shade, even where the soil is dry. Autumn-flowering crocuses (*Colchicum* species) would make for a good late-season bulb combination. 25cm high.

BULBS FOR UNDERPLANTING

5 *Allium hollandicum* ‘Purple Sensation’

Spectacular round flower heads in late spring/early summer, maturing to good-looking seedheads for midsummer. It will even flower again later in the summer, as long as the foliage is not too shaded by surrounding plants.

6 *Leucojum aestivum* The summer snowflake bears pendant white flowers on 40cm stems in spring. It’s remarkably tolerant of damp soils, even winter flooding, and builds into clumps over time.

7 *Tulipa* ‘Queen of Night’ This popular tulip flowers in mid to late spring, but doesn’t always manage to produce flowers again the next year.

8 *Nectaroscordum siculum* Tall (70cm) stems in early summer bear intriguing bell-shaped flowers in cream flushed with pink or purple, followed by elegant seedheads. It usually flowers well in future years.