

# THE ENGLISH GARDEN

JANUARY 2012

FOR EVERYONE WHO LOVES BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

**FREE\***  
10 PACKS OF VEG  
SEED & MORE  
FOR EVERY  
READER WORTH  
OVER £34!

[www.theenglishgarden.co.uk](http://www.theenglishgarden.co.uk)

## *Extreme gardening*

ROUGH PLANTS & 5 THRIVING  
CROPS IN IMPOSSIBLE PLACES

RAYMOND BLANC

is growing Michelin-star  
food in his amazing garden

Queen of veg

JOY LARKCOM RAISES  
CROPS BY THE SEA

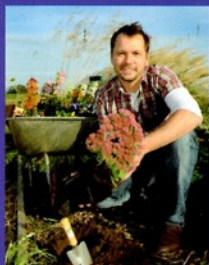
National Trust  
Head Gardeners

12 MONTHS OF TOP TIPS

£3.99 A\$9.50



9 771361 284071



**PLUS PRACTICAL ADVICE ON:**

- Growing and cooking colourful CHARD
- Encouraging wildlife with JIMMY DOHERTY
- Success with the year's EARLIEST FLOWERS
- Volunteering and COMMUNITY gardening



# Lost and found

This plantswoman's garden of found, borrowed, bartered and donated objects is the perfect island hideaway you can disappear to ►

**PHOTOGRAPHS** ANDREA JONES **WORDS** ANTOINETTE GALBRAITH







# GLORIOUS GARDENS

ISLE OF MULL

**PREVIOUS PAGE** The garden at Lip na Cloiche is just a few yards from the sea. **BELOW LEFT** Simple wooden gates add a rustic feel. **BELOW RIGHT** The nursery area with potting shed. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Sarah Bernhardt' stands out in the border; containers have been planted with succulents, sempervivums, pelargoniums and aeoniums; an old tin bath is the perfect home for alpines and succulents; the shrubby germander *Teucrium fruticans*; *Rosa glauca* is prized for its greyish-purple foliage, but it also has lovely pink flowers.

**G**ardening on the northwest coast of the Isle of Mull presents many challenges. Sea winds and damp mists, coupled with a high rainfall on a rocky soil best suited to the production of gorse and bracken, are just some of the problems. But none of those things fazed Lucy Mackenzie when, 15 years ago, she bought Lip na Cloiche, a one-acre plot perched on a dramatic hillside overlooking Loch Tuath, with the Isle of Ulva in the background. Lucy, a Muileach - the term used for someone born and bred on the island - was instantly smitten by the view. 'Living on an island, the view is so important,' she says. 'The light on the water is always changing - one can gaze out forever. I would never sacrifice the view, and so I plant accordingly.'

There were, she adds, other compensations. Even in the dark short days of January, the island's proximity to the Gulf Stream leads to calm, warm days when she undertakes projects in the garden. 'I've learnt to do things

whenever I get the chance,' she says. It is a philosophy that has served her well in the six years since she moved full time to Lip na Cloiche - having worked for several years at Longstock Nursery in Hampshire - and been gardening in earnest.

Having rebuilt the cottage, her aim was to enhance the rocky landscape while experimenting with a wide range of plants tolerant of the damp and windy but relatively mild conditions. There was no formal plan. 'It is neither a designed nor a fashionable garden. It evolved from my love of plants and the need to find a place for them.'

She began by laying out the beds that frame the house, while anchoring it to the landscape, filling them with honeysuckle, clematis and foliage plants such as *Melianthus major* and the annual *Ricinus communis* 'Impala'. 'I love foliage in all its different shapes and textures,' she says. 'Flowers are so fleeting, but foliage lasts much longer.'

**'Living on an island, the view is so important... I would never sacrifice the view and so I plant accordingly'**



Entered through a gate from a single-track road, the garden opens directly into a nursery area, where hundreds of propagated plants are laid out on trestle tables, each individually labelled with a razor shell. Here also are the first samples of a quirky collection of objects found on the beach and in farm tips, including a collection of land drains planted with alpines; an old tin hip flask overflowing with the silver-foilage daisy *Anthemis pulchella* subsp. *cupaniana*; and galvanised buckets, cooking pots and old iron kettles holding an eclectic assortment of container plants such as tender salvias and *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop'. Scattered throughout the garden, they provide a satisfactory link between the different areas.

Scavenging, Lucy admits, has become her pastime. 'I spend the summer in the garden and the winter beachcombing, collecting things for the garden and my craftwork. Fishermen bring me old ropes, which I use as banisters beside the steep steps, or to fence roses. These unusual objects,' she says, pointing









# GLORIOUS GARDENS

## ISLE OF MULL

to a collection of pitchforks, 'give me something to look at in winter when the garden is bare.'

Turning left, the path from the nursery area leads into the Burn Garden, a steeply sloping woodland garden, newly laid out thanks to the kindness of neighbours, who allowed Lucy to 'borrow' the strip of land on the far side, which she enclosed with a hedge of variegated *Griselinia littoralis*. This generosity made it possible to create a path up the far bank and plant both sides of the burn with bold, dramatic foliage plants, including rheums, ligularias and *Gunnera manicata*, with a much-loved collection of sanguisorbas and a *Malus transitoria* to add height. A border under an old ash tree contains spring-flowering woodlanders such as disporums, *Syneilesis palmata*, diphylleia and cardamines.

A bridge at the top of the Burn Garden leads towards the long, narrow hen run, the shape of which is dictated by the line of the perimeter fence. This is lined with an eccentric row of ancient rusted bedsteads found in

perches above Lucy's elegant greenhouse, 'my main extravagance, but essential for propagating'. Flanked with deep red beds of valerian, *Geranium palmatum* and *Cirsium rivulare*, it appears to float above the only formal area, a box-enclosed parterre surrounding raised vegetable beds. Here, around a central rustic teepee of French beans, grow peas, leeks, scorzonera and purple-sprouting broccoli, punctuated with bright orange marigolds.

With all this to look forward to, Lucy confesses that the winter is a special time. 'I love the peace of the winter months, when I can go on long beachcombing expeditions or excavate old farm tips to find items for the garden and my craft work, and get my landscaping and paving work done.'

*Lip na Cloiche, near Ulva Ferry, Mull PA73 6LU. Tel: +44 (0)1688 500257. Lucy also provides bed & breakfast on site. [www.lipnacloiche.co.uk](http://www.lipnacloiche.co.uk)*

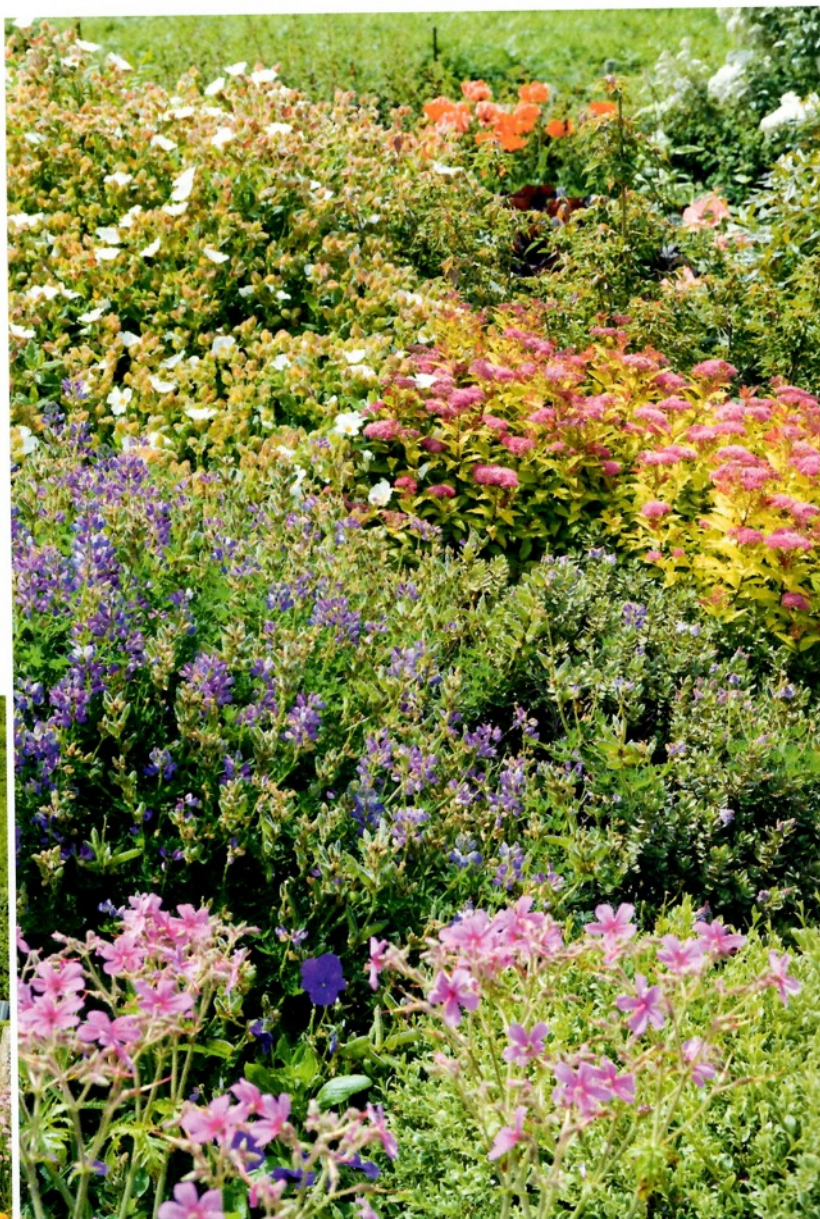
**BELOW LEFT** The very cute Alitex greenhouse in the vegetable garden, which Lucy uses for all her propagating. **BELOW RIGHT** Geraniums, hebes and eupatorium are just some of the plants brightening up the border at Lip na Cloiche.

**'I love the peace of the winter months, when I can go on long beachcombing expeditions or excavate old farm tips to find items for the garden'**

farm tips or bartered with friends that now form a filter between the garden and the hillside beyond. 'The aim was to enhance the landscape rather than intrude upon it,' Lucy says.

Turning right, you follow the path as it dips and climbs, following the contours of the steep hill, leading up well-spaced cobbled steps, wandering between billowing beds where plant choice is dictated by the windy conditions. Here, Lucy favours the evergreen foliage of blue- and white-flowering olearias, ozothamnus, hebe and cistus. At the top of the hill, benches framed by ropes supporting swags of rambling rose 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' - a firm favourite - invite you to pause and admire the breathtaking views over Ben More, Ulva and the Treshnish Isles.

The mood changes as you walk down the hill, past 'hot' beds planted to extend the season. A stone seat, planted with thymes and fronted by a step made from fragments of blue and white china found on the shore,





# The notebook

**na Cloiche** measures one acre and faces southwest. It is battered by winds, although it is somewhat sheltered by the Isle of Ulva to the west and the hill behind the cottage



## FOUND OBJECTS

In winter, Lucy lays paving, excavates new borders and builds walls. She collects stones for walling and paving, birch for staking, and gravel for mulching. Artefacts are placed when inspiration comes, but there are also beds for old forks, spades, bedsteads and cartwheels.

## HOME GROWN

Vegetables are started in the greenhouse as the open ground warms up late in spring. Apples, plums and soft fruit do well here. 'Most of my apples are grown as step-overs, partly for reasons of space but also to minimise wind damage and maximise sun exposure.'



## COMPOST COURGETTES

Courgettes are grown on top of full compost bins (*above*), which are surrounded by old slates to retain warmth and moisture while keeping the plants away from mud and slugs. Yields are good and very easy to harvest.

## WINDY WOES

Lucy plants for windy conditions using lots of stakes. She has suffered more losses in recent winters from the cold than from the wind. 'It has been degrees colder here in recent years, with more frost than generally experienced in the past 20 years.'



## LUCY'S GARDENING TIPS

- **Cut back perennials** in stages as they fade in autumn. The current fashion for leaving everything standing until the end of winter does not work here - you just end up with a sodden matted haven for slugs.
- **Griselinia - either plain green or variegated** - makes an excellent windproof hedge. It looks bright and cheerful all year and is much easier to prune than escallonia, which is more commonly used in Scotland.
- **The olearia family is large** and varied. I like wind-hardy varieties, which I can grow on the hill. These include: *Olearia chathamica*, *O. 'Henry Travers'* and *O. phlogopappa 'Comber's Blue'* with violet blue flowers. *Olearia arborescens* has white flowers. *Olearia traversii* does not flower but has good foliage and is very wind hardy and fast growing.
- **The steep slope** ensures good drainage. Watering newly planted shrubs is difficult, but a good mulch of seaweed and compost helps initial water retention.
- **A mulch of gravel** keeps the necks of the plants dry, retains moisture in dry periods, retains warmth in the soil and helps deter slugs and weeds.



## CONTACTS

### RECOMMENDED GARDENS

- **An Cala** Charming family garden designed in the 1930s around a framework of burns and waterfalls and surrounded by hills. Colourful borders, rockeries and quirky garden buildings. Ellenabeich, Isle of Seil PA34 4RF. Tel: +44 (0)1852 300237. [www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk](http://www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk)
- **Ardkinglas Woodland Garden** This 25-acre woodland garden on the Ardkinglas Estate features a fine collection of rhododendrons and magnolias set within a framework of majestic conifers and surrounded by magnificent Highland scenery. Cairndow PA26 8BG. Tel: +44 (0)1499 600261. [www.ardkinglas.com](http://www.ardkinglas.com)
- **Ardmaddy Castle Garden** The walled garden tucked in behind the castle has been cleverly restored by owner Minette Struthers, using the original box layout to contain a profusion of plants, including many rhododendrons. Balvicar, Oban PA34 4QY. Tel: +44 (0)1852 300353. [www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk](http://www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk)