



# WHERE PLANTS star

While other gardens may be fading by late summer, at 47 Denmans Lane in Lindfield the show is ablaze with colour and interest

WORDS AND PHOTOS: Leigh Clapp



Golden daylilies add impact

Passionate gardeners Jim and Sue Stockwell are fully involved in the Sussex horticultural community, with Jim the chairman of the Sussex Gardens Trust and Sue the chairman of the Sussex Hardy Plants Society. Both belong to Lindfield in Bloom, as well as opening their garden through the National Gardens Scheme and the Lindfield Garden Trail that they also organise. Their interest in plants and gardening is wonderfully expressed in their one-acre gently sloping plot at 47 Denmans Lane. "I've been a keen gardener since early childhood, exhibiting vegetables

and flowers from the age of 11, often winning prizes ahead of much older gardeners," says Jim. "Together Sue and I have owned and enthusiastically cultivated gardens in London, Nottinghamshire, Newcastle, Yorkshire and another garden in Lindfield before moving here in 1995. I'm a hands-on gardener and also enjoy doing the hard landscaping myself."

The garden is planted to maintain the interest right through the year, the heavy clay soil is regularly enriched, and in late summer the riot of colour that greets the visitor offers inspiration for us all. Variety abounds across



## Get the look

- Plant for a long season of interest from spring bulbs, through herbaceous and autumn foliage
- Design for areas of interest – look at views and vignettes from inside the house and through the garden
- Use the vertical space with a variety of layered planting and also climbers on fences
- Plant in different micro-climate areas – shady, exotic, drought-tolerant, woodland
- Consider areas of different colour themes – bright on one area, more subdued in others
- Create a journey in the garden with different rooms bounded by hedging or planting and just glimpses to entice you to explore



Jim, Sue and Dan share an interest in gardening

exotic garden, woodland and productive plots of herbs, fruit and veg. “In August and September the bold vibrant colours in the herbaceous borders reach their peak especially the dahlias, heleniums, lobelias, cannas, and tithonias,” says Jim. “In the prairie planting by the swimming

were delighted with his design, which included a circular pond surrounded by a yew hedge and new beds that created serpentine curves with views to distant eye catchers. Over the years we have implemented these ideas, adding our own interpretation and embellishments.”

It’s a real team effort with Jim passionate about propagation, artist Sue tending the plants and displaying her ceramics and sculptures, while their son Dan cares for the verdant lawns, all of which is enjoyed by the family as well as proudly shown off to garden visitors while helping raise funds for charity. “We have retained a large lawn so it can be used for family parties, croquet, and serving tea and cake to garden visitors,” says Jim. “Around the garden we have created various seating areas to enjoy views over the garden and out to the wider landscape. The garden never stops developing – we are now concentrating on improving the variety of herbaceous plants but in the decades ahead we plan to introduce more trees and shrubs to reduce maintenance.” ♦

*“I’m a hands-on gardener and enjoy doing the hard landscaping myself”*

pool, swaying *Stipa gigantea* and *Verbena bonariensis* catch the low sun at dawn and dusk.”

The garden has evolved from mostly azaleas, rhododendrons and other shrubs, as it was heavily shaded by large beech and ash trees in the neighbouring allotments. As they were lost in various storms the garden was opened up to more sunshine allowing a broader palette to be used and a more interesting layout to develop. “One thing we had struggled with was establishing a joined-up design for the garden as a whole,” says Jim. “We consulted a renowned local artist and garden designer, Julian Treyer-Evans and we asked him to come up with an outline plan for us making best use of ‘borrowed views’ to the Ashdown Forest to the east, and breaking up the garden into separate ‘rooms’. We



the space with different areas to discover. In the front garden, which faces south-west, lawns are bordered with roses, annuals and perennials in a jostle of zingy yellow, orange and crimson hues, while a wildlife pond surrounded by a sea of Californian poppies dancing in the breeze makes a mesmerising sight. The tones are more subdued as you wander through to the rear south-east facing garden that slopes away from the house, revealing different themed areas to explore, including a formal parterre, an

**ABOVE:**  
A touch of exotic planting with cannas

**ABOVE MAIN:**  
The blue gazebo is a striking contrast with the crimsons and yellow in the border

## Good to know

- 47 Denmans Lane, Lindfield, RH16 2JN. Opens for the National Gardens Scheme visits by arrangement March to October for groups of ten to 40. Entry costs £8 including homemade teas, evening visits with wine and canapés, [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)
- Sussex Gardens Trust, [www.sussexgardentrust.org.uk](http://www.sussexgardentrust.org.uk)
- Hardy Plant Society, [www.hardy-plant.org.uk/sussex](http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/sussex)
- Julian Treyer-Evans, [www.juliantreyer-evans.co.uk](http://www.juliantreyer-evans.co.uk)