



"There's always something new to discover"

Wafty grasses and purple flowers create prairie-style drama in this stylish autumn garden. Owner Kristina Clode shows us around



IN THE GARDEN WITH...

Kristina Clode

AT 4 Waterworks Cottages, Brede Hill, Brede, East Sussex TN31 6HG
GARDEN SIZE Half an acre
SITE Sloping, south-facing
SOIL Heavy clay
FEATURES Indian sandstone paths lead through different outdoor zones; fire circle; geodesic greenhouse with South African plants; wildlife pond; perennial meadow in front garden
VISIT Open for NGS 6 June 2020 as part of Waterworks & Friends (10.30am-4pm). Adults £5
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FEATURE: LIZ POTTER; PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS/ANNA CK GUITTERRY

Autumn brings a colourful flourish to this stylish country garden. "The colour schemes change as the year progresses," says owner Kristina Clode, a professional garden designer who lives here with her husband Stuart and family. "In autumn it's the turn of the purple flowers – asters, *Verbena bonariensis* and sedum 'Matrona', plus red *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' and grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis*. In June, it's a very different picture – lots of pink and white, with rosa 'Harlow Carr', clematis 'Nelly Moser', peonies, tree lupins, *Cornus kousa* and magnolias in flower."

The garden enjoys a remote location in the Brede Valley, three-quarters of a mile from the main road. "We live at the end of a row of terraced cottages backing onto an historic Victorian waterworks," says Kristina. "The cottages were built in 1905 for the coal shovellers who worked there, manning the steam engines that pumped fresh drinking water to Hastings. ➤



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DESIGNER
Garden

PASSION FOR PURPLE
Drifts of aster 'Little Carlow'
weave around spikes of red
persicaria 'Firetail'. TOP RIGHT
Verbena bonariensis and sedum
'Matrona', with the geodesic
solar dome behind RIGHT.
Tactile plumes of *Calamagrostis*
brachytricha

52 Garden Answers

 BEAUTIFUL GARDENS



“The reason we bought the house was because of its garden, which is large for a terraced house and wraps around the side. These days it’s hard to find good-sized gardens that aren’t massively expensive.”

The garden presented the archetypal blank canvas. “It was full of overgrown shrubs, brambles, long grass and so many rabbits it was like *Watership Down*,” says Kristina. “We knew we needed to create a rabbit-proof fence, installing wire mesh all around the garden, burying at least 1ft of it underground. But by the time we were ready to start on the garden in 2010 I was pregnant and had an 18-month-old child, so there wasn’t enough time to tackle the fencing all in one go. Instead I took each overgrown border in turn and put wire mesh around new plantings until we could get the fencing in. Otherwise the rabbits would just eat, and eat, and eat, until everything had gone.”

Building work meant that much of the garden was obliterated, but Kristina made good use of the diggers – having the builders excavate several flat terraces

and a pond. “The garden slopes away from the house – between the conservatory and the far end of the garden there’s a 1-1.5m difference in height. We were desperate for a flat place to put a table and chairs. Drinks would just roll off the table...”

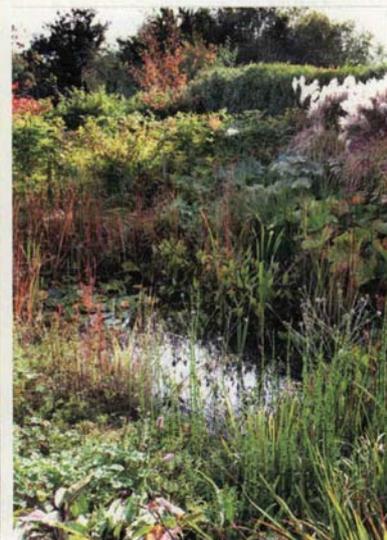
With the new extension complete, Kristina put her garden design plans into action. “I wanted a meadow, a fire circle, a wildlife pond and pergola, and to create deep planting areas for year-round colour and interest. My husband loves the lawn and it’s somewhere the children can play – though each year I chisel off more of it to create new planting space.”

New sightlines, views and pathways mean the design has a strong sense of movement. “One of the best things about the garden is that you can’t see it all at once,” says Kristina. “Hedges and tall screening plants mean the next part of the garden is hidden until you’re upon it, so there’s always a sense of exploration and new things to discover.”

A small parking area at the top of the slope leads into the L-shaped front garden ▶



SECRET SURPRISES (clockwise from top left) The solar dome greenhouse; this sunny circular border is divided into quadrants full of sedums, *Verbena bonariensis* and grasses in autumn; the wildlife pond is fringed by *Equisetum hyemale*, *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Malepartus’ and *Gunnera manicata*; seating around the fire circle; *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Firetail’





– a perennial wildflower meadow flanked by a hedge of privet, hawthorn, holly and blackthorn. “A mown path leads down through the long grass, full of butterflies and crickets, past a pond where we have dragonflies, newts and grass snakes,” says Kristina. “In spring the cherry tree is smothered with pink blossom.”

A gate in a hornbeam hedge leads into the terraced side garden. “Here I’ve created a fire circle with a fire bowl surrounded by sleeper benches that we can sit around at night. I’ve used hot-themed planting in red, yellow and orange – crocosmia ‘Lucifer’, red dahlia ‘Bishop of Llandaff’, *Rudbeckia fulgida sullivantii* ‘Goldsturm’, *Panicum virgatum*, solidago and *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’.

“At the back of the house is the new conservatory, with stepped terraces made from Indian sandstone and a shady dining area under a pergola that looks out over the whole back garden.

“There’s an ancient apple tree in the centre of the lawn, which must be about 100 years old. It’s so old and gnarled, it’s completely hollow in the middle and keeps losing its branches, but it’s still producing apples. We’ve had jackdaws nesting in it and squirrels visit.

“To the right of the conservatory is a sunny circular planting area, bisected by paths into four quadrant beds. It’s full of



It’s a very wild, loose planting style that suits the surrounding countryside

hylotelephiums and tall wavy grasses – it’s a very wild, loose planting style that suits the fact we’re surrounded by ancient countryside and woodland.

“Around the edges of the garden are some of my favourite trees such as *Davidia involucreata* (the handkerchief tree), *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* (katsura tree), *Cornus kousa*, *Magnolia stellata* and *M. soulangeana*.

“We have a couple of greenhouses including a small solar dome that we had to move from the front garden to the back. It was quite a sight to behold: four men lifting and carrying the whole thing intact down the garden, gingerly!

“Rocket grows really well in there, but this year I thought I’d try growing something more exciting, so now I’ve got restios from South Africa and other tender plants in there, such as ginger, aloes, phygelius and grevillea. It’s good to experiment.” ✨



AUTUMN HUES (clockwise from top left) Yellow-leaved amsonia contrasts with the purple flowers; hedges create natural boundaries; the fire circle with red-leaved cercis ‘Forest Pansy’ and solidago; *Actaea simplex* ‘Brunette’, *Calamagrostis brachytricha* and aster ‘Little Carlow’ (also shown above); the ancient apple tree in the lawn still produces fruit

