

Prepare for an explosion of colour at a spectacular Borders country house. By **Raoul Curtis-Machin**

# All coming up roses

**H**idden away in a deep and sinuous valley in the Borders is one of the finest flower gardens in the country. Once through the unassuming gateway, you descend the drive into a wonderful landscape which reveals itself bit by bit as you continue downwards.

Finally, amid the well-spaced parkland trees you reach the house, which forms the perfect centrepiece to the wood, water and valley. And today's the day you've got a chance to see it for yourself. Whatever the weather, get in your car this afternoon and go.

Owned by Rose and Anthony Foyle, Carolside House is about a mile north of Earlston, east of Galashiels. The main event – the walled garden and plant borders – is round the back, as if the fuss and frivolity of flowerbeds would somehow compromise the elegance of the house. This is a wise move because Rose Foyle's genius for flower combinations and her uncompromising English garden style need detached space to be appreciated truly.

The sheer volume of rich colour hits you first as you enter the walled garden through the first pergola, then you start to register the subtle, refined scents of the roses. So many roses confront you in this garden it is virtually impossible to tell which one you are smelling, unless you go right up to a bloom and stick your nose in it.

"My greatest love is roses – I love them all," declares Foyle with a theatrical sweep of her arm. "It's not possible to name a favourite because I keep seeing new ones to add to the garden. Mannington's Mauve Rambler – a beautiful rich mauve – is a real beauty right now, as is the sweet pink Windflower, which looks great in a herbaceous border because it looks almost like a perennial. Abraham Derby (apricot) is another favourite, and Eglinton is a great rose here, often flowering until November."

The magic of this garden lies in the plant combinations – the carefully planned mixture of roses, perennials, hedges and other shrubs, some frothy like *Alchemilla mollis*, others structural such as box and cotinus. The overall effect is a glorious exuberance of flower colour and foliage, with plants climbing on each others' shoulders to show their happy smiling faces. This is quite an achievement – some of the coldest parts of the

country are found in the Borders, particularly around the bottoms of inland valleys like the Leader Water where Carolside sits.

"This is a very cold garden, at least two degrees colder than the road [the A68 up the valley side]," Foyle explains. "I've tried everything over the years – we'd get a line of destroyed lavenders in a chilling wind, where the whole lot would then have to come out. Catmint is great because it is much tougher than lavender. If I love a plant madly, I'll have tried it in three different places. Sometimes a plant doesn't look right because it's in the only place where it will grow. It takes a long time for things to grow here."

The Foyles have been at Carolside for 17 years (Anthony has now retired from running Foyles bookshop on Charing Cross Road, London, the largest family-owned bookshop in the world), and they are enthusiastic about their garden opening today for charity under Scotland's Gardens Scheme.

"I love to share the garden," Foyle says. "I like the pergolas [by the doorways and between parts of the garden] because they give people a chance to huddle together and talk, in contrast to the paths along which you are always moving." She is either highly modest about her own design abilities or totally unaware of it, because the gardens have been superbly laid out. What the short

pergolas really do is create a sense of enclosure and intrigue – a channelled glimpse of the rich luxuriance beyond – before you move out into the open areas. She has also created a series of small "secret" gardens off the main elliptical walled area, including an informal herb parterre, an orchard, a lilac walk and shade borders.

The real beauty of these gardens is the fact they are all subtly linked by the repetition of certain plants. In addition, parts are joined up with linear views, making the whole garden feel as one, and enabling each component to have its own character. This is one of the hardest things to get right in garden design, but it often comes down to basics such as using one colour of paint on all the woodwork. The doors and seats in the walled garden, for example, are all a particular shade of blue – Dix by Farrow and Ball.

"The green in it makes it a lot warmer than those cold Atlantic blues," Foyle says. Against the wall and beside one of the garden seats is a

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Rose Foyle's talent for garden design has created a stunning mass of blooms at Carolside House

PHOTOGRAPH: ANGELA CATLIN

huge white abutilon, still covered in blooms, thriving out of the wind and with the warmth of the wall behind. There are many plants jostling around it, all complementing each other and creating a wild but beautiful effect.

"Everything has its place," says Foyle. "If something self-seeds, then it's taken out if it's not where it's meant to be. You have to do that; otherwise it would be chaos in this garden. The abutilon is just a shower of white blooms and has really stood out along with the little pink rambling rose Cecille Brunner, the mauve of

## TASKS FOR THE WEEK

**1** Cut down and compost foxglove seedheads if you don't want them to spread

**2** Lightly prune pyracantha to expose their berries

**3** Remove suckers – light-green, often thornless new growth – on roses

**4** Clear away basal growth around the bottom of lime trees





the wisteria and the rich purple Penstemon 'Purple Bedder'."

Foyle's garden design is not all about combinations – by the reconstructed sundial she has planted just Iris sibirica "Snow Queen", which creates a beautiful waterside effect, though the only moisture here is rain. Likewise, she has planted a single mass of huge-leaved hostas either side of a path from the orchard to the green garden door. If you stand by the orchard looking back to the walled garden the effect is superb.

At heart, though, Foyle loves to indulge her

passion for plant combinations. The shade garden borders on the way back to the house burst with filipendula, astilbe, goatsbeard, hosta, ligularia and meconopsis. "One of my favourite combinations here is Rose 'Buff Beauty' and 'Evelyn', with potentillas and the yellow leaves of the golden philadelphus. I added Hydrangea 'Annabelle' this year, to change the mood." ■

*Carolside Garden, off the A68 one mile north of Earlston, is open today, 2-6pm, entry £3 (children free). Visit [www.gardensofscotland.org](http://www.gardensofscotland.org).*

## GROWING PAINS



**CAROLE BAXTER**

**Can you tell from the enclosed sample if I have Japanese knotweed? Whatever it is, how do I get rid of it?**

Jude, Glasgow

The weed in question is definitely not Japanese knotweed but instead I suspect it is one of the bindweeds (*Calystegia*) whose fast-growing stems twine around anything they touch and they produce white trumpet-shaped blooms. Pretty as it may seem, it can be a bit of a nightmare in a garden and if you try to dig it out, leaving just a small piece of the plant's roots means it will continue to multiply.

One solution is to apply a weedkiller containing the active ingredient glyphosate. This chemical works by a systemic action: once the offending weed has been sprayed, it is absorbed into the leaves and will eventually travel right down to the roots. However, it can take as long as two to three weeks to be effective, so don't be surprised if you see nothing happening in the first week.

Remember it can kill any plant it touches, so be careful there is no spray drift on to nearby precious cultivated specimens. Unfortunately, if this weed is growing among other plants, then spot treatment will be necessary, applying the chemical only to the weed using a paintbrush, for example. You may also find repeat treatments will be necessary to ensure complete eradication. This systemic weedkiller is only effective in the growing season, so don't waste time and money applying it too early or too late in the year.

Finally, one great benefit of this particular herbicide is that it is inactive in the ground, so surrounding areas can be planted up immediately.

**Can you advise me on how to control this plant, *Arisarum proboscideum* (mouse tail plant)? It's attractive and I don't mind having some in my garden, but it also seems to be indestructible. It resists systemic weedkillers and regrows from the tiniest fragment of root if you try to dig it out by hand. I must have got some in the compost heap as I now seem to have it in every flowerbed.**

Clare McCormick, Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire

If you really find systemic weedkiller (see above answer) and hand weeding ineffective, the only alternative is to try covering the plant with black polythene or carpet to exclude the light. Leave this in place for at least one full growing season or, better still, two.

**My Victoria plum trees have set well this year, but as you'll see from the enclosed sample, some of the fruit has been affected in a peculiar way. Can you tell me the cause and remedy? I garden organically.**

C Maclean, Prestwick, South Ayrshire

From close inspection of the plums you sent, you have two problems. Firstly, the fruits are splitting. As a result of this, a secondary infection of brown rot is occurring. I suggest the reason will simply be that you have had a good setting of fruit and through either competition or lack of moisture, some of the plums have split.

Try to remove any of these damaged fruits, then you may also need to do some further fruit thinning. In future, to avoid further splitting of fruits, make sure your tree has plenty of moisture from the fruit setting stage.

**THE BEECHGROVE GARDEN, BBC ONE, WEDNESDAYS, 7.30PM**

**If you have a gardening problem you'd like Carole to solve, please write to: Growing Pains, The Herald Magazine, 200 Renfield Street, Glasgow G2 3QB or e-mail [magazine@theherald.co.uk](mailto:magazine@theherald.co.uk)**