



# WILD AT HEART

A walled garden in the Scottish Borders is the setting for a romantic blend of old roses, stately delphiniums and blowsy perennials, planted in a relaxed cottage-garden style that contrasts with understated Georgian elegance

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Great clumps of *Alchemilla mollis* line the path through deep borders of delphiniums, catmint and *Cephalaria*.



**F**EW ERAS CAN MATCH THE 18TH CENTURY FOR understated elegance, and Carolside, which sits within a secluded valley in the Scottish borders, is a persuasive example of the power of restraint. The handsome façade of the period house gazes south over a bend in the Leader Water while, on either side, wooded hillsides rise up steeply, as if they were green backcloths in some exquisite Georgian theatre.

The effect is of perfect harmony between architecture and setting yet not all is as it seems. Behind the house is one of the most wildly romantic gardens in the country, a place where constraints have been loosened and a passion for plants has found its full expression.

It is this contrast between its measured surrounds and the sensuous heart of Carolside that makes pushing open the door leading to the elliptical walled garden an exquisite pleasure, like biting into a dark chocolate and finding a sweet and delicious centre. Here, within these curving walls, is a rose garden to rival that of Malmaison, although its creator, Rose Foyle, has looked not to France but to the gardens of Northern Ireland that she knew as a child to provide her with inspiration for the garden.

A love of one, singular flower has defined Rose's life for as long as she can remember, ever since her grandmother encouraged her as a child to bury her face within her roses and inhale their scents.

**Above** The handsome Georgian house hides a romantic rose-filled garden, set within wooded hillside.  
**Right** Gallica rose 'Orpheline de Juillet'.



Later, as a young wife in London, the flowers that Rose grew on her patio were but a hint of the rose garden that existed in her head. It was only when she and her husband, Anthony, arrived at Carolside 25 years ago that Rose finally had space to fully realise her vision, setting 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' and 'Blush Rambler' loose to hang in luxuriant swags, and planting the beds around the walls with the pre-1900 Gallica roses that are her abiding love.

Gallicas are among the oldest of all cultivated roses. They include the Apothecary's Rose, *Rosa gallica* var. *officinalis* and



**Above left** An honesty

box greets visitors  
**Above** Delphiniums

tower in the shelter  
of Carolside's walls.  
**Left** Climbing roses

'Ispahan' and  
'Complicata'

*Rosa mundi* (*R. gallica* 'Versicolor'), with its distinctive carnival stripes. Today the Gallicas that bloom at Carolside form a Plant Heritage National Collection and Rose can identify each one without first having to glance at their labels. She greets them like old friends and describes

with great precision their subtle tones even when she is not actually in their presence.

Rose has an artist's ability to commit shape and shade to memory, working out her alchemical recipes for fresh combinations without recourse to pen or paper, and understanding instinctively what to plant beneath them to best offset their charms. *Campanula persicifolia* 'Cornish Mist' is a favourite, its sky-blue flowers making the perfect foil for the pink and white roses that are Rose's favourite shades to grow.

Yet while the romance of the Gallicas has her in its thrall, Rose is still susceptible to a new passion: "Last year I fell in love with the hybrid tea 'Blue Moon'. What a rose! It is a true love affair – that lilac blue shade that fades to pale pink is so beautiful."

She has other obsessions. "I am mad about my herbaceous border and also about my Blackmore & Langdon delphiniums."

Carolside sits in a heavy frost pocket and the soil, although fertile, is free draining but despite this the roses flourish, aided by regular applications of mushroom compost. The summer months, when the garden is open to the public, pass in a flurry of



Rambling roses make this secluded arbour a heavenly place to sit



weeding and deadheading. The tangle of growth, however, goes mostly unchecked and so visitors who walk the paths are brushed by gloriously scented blooms, including the lavender that spills over the edges of the borders.

Rose says her aim has always been to create a cottage garden, and so strawberries and artichokes grow among the roses, while sweet peas wind their tendrils around tall canes.

“The garden is not big and it is not grand,” says Rose. “Anyone who comes here can find something that relates to their own garden.” She is touchingly modest about any claims that her garden

**Top** Borders overflow with *Campanula persicifolia*, *Agastache* and *Alchemilla mollis*.

**Above** Formal areas have smart box hedging.

## TOP TIPS FROM ROSE FOYLE

- Spray for fungal diseases the moment the leaves come out and continue to spray every three weeks. If you wait for the first signs of disease to appear it will be too late.

- Leave space between roses to allow air to circulate. Planting them too close together encourages blackspot and mildew to spread between bushes.

- Feed roses in spring and again in July. We use a general fertiliser and it works well.

- Deadhead frequently to encourage fresh blooms to open. I use a pair of snips to remove the heads from cluster roses and my fingers to snap off single flower heads.

- Prune in October to tidy up the roses after flowering and then do a more refined pruning in spring, removing any dead wood.

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# CAROLSIDE GARDEN NOTEBOOK

This sheltered, walled garden is a densely planted delight

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## ORNATE FLOURISHES

Rose resists any urges to make Carolside 'grand' but she enjoys the occasional dramatic flourish, so ornate gates found on the estate have been restored. Local blacksmith James Brotherton has also made additional similar gates and a pergola.



## PERFUMED DELIGHTS

The high walls that surround this garden trap and intensify the roses' heady fragrance. Opening the door leading to the garden is akin to taking stopper out of a perfume bottle.



## GOOD MIXERS

With the exception of the Gallicas – and a parterre next to the greenhouses filled with the David Austin rose 'Eglantyne' – the roses at Carolside are grown in mixed borders, often with peonies, which finish blooming just as the roses start to flower.



## GARDEN CHALLENGES

The garden's position adjacent to the Leader Water means that the soil, although fertile, is very free draining. Mushroom compost is added to the borders to improve soil structure.

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## ALSO IN THE AREA

*If you are visiting, Rose also recommends these locations:*

### HISTORIC HOUSE

**Mellerstain House** is one of Robert Adam's greatest achievements. It stands among magnificent parkland, with a formal garden created by Sir Reginald Blomfield. Mellerstain House, Gordon, Berwickshire, TD3 6LG. Tel: 01573 410225; mellerstain.com

### NURSERY & CAFÉ

**The café and deli at Floors Castle** sit within the walled garden that is also home to the Castle's plant centre. This is currently being revamped and is due to re-open in summer 2016. Floors Castle, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 7SF. Tel: 01573 223333; roxburghe.net

### LITERARY GEM

The spirit of **Sir Walter Scott** still inhabits the house that inspired much of his work. His library is a treasure trove of rare books, literary letters and first editions. Abbotsford, Melrose, Roxburghshire, TD6 9BQ. Tel: 01896 752043; scottsabbotsford.com



is anything out of the ordinary.

Others beg to differ. In his book *Scotland for Gardeners*, nurseryman and garden critic Ken Cox describes it as ‘brilliantly planned and executed’, praising it as: ‘one of Scotland’s finest private gardens’. Rose’s own gardener, Mr Tuft, says: “Mrs Foyle doesn’t realise just how special her garden is,” although so far she has resisted his urging to keep the garden open into August. “I want visitors to see it at its very best,” she insists.

Rose works in the garden every day and continues to move it forward gently. A recent project has been to create a new winter garden beyond the walls and open up vistas to carry the eye from one area to the next.

She even has plans to break with her pink scheme and to introduce an apricot border centred on the deep orange English shrub rose ‘Summer Song’. She is relying on the fresh green tones of *Alchemilla mollis* to prevent it from becoming strident because that might disturb the romantic atmosphere, which is as much a part of Carolside as the roses’ heady perfume.

Rose says of her enchanting garden: “My hope for the garden is that visitors find themselves lost in it for a few hours before they go back to their busy lives.” ■

*Carolside Gardens, Earlston, Scottish Borders TD4 6AL.*  
*Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday 24 June to 31 July, and by*  
*arrangement. Tel: 01896 849272; carolside.com*

**Above** Mounds of catmint billow onto garden paths.

**Right** Simple, single blooms of *Rosa* ‘Complicata’.

