

April 24, 2021

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# Garden NEWS

THE UK'S  
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GARDENING  
WEEKLY

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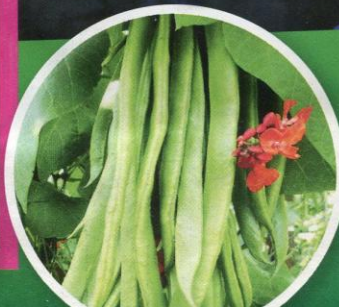


**4** Get on top of those pesky aphids



*Carol Klein*  
**'Improve the soil to help your plants'**

**BEST-EVER BEANS!**  
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# Garden OF THE WEEK



**Gardener** Sue Martin

**Location** Brickwall Cottage,  
Frittenden, Kent

**Size of garden**  
Approximately a quarter  
of an acre

**Soil** Heavy Wealden clay

**Been in garden** 32 years



## Jewelled colours in a Cottage Garden

Magical planting and a bold colour palette ensure that Sue Martin's Kent garden is bursting with impact and interest

**Words** Fiona Cumberpatch  
**Photos** Marianne Majerus

As the sun lowers in the garden of Sue Martin's cottage in Kent, the exuberant borders appear to be illuminated. Spangled with skeins of glowing orange, purple, sapphire and amethyst blue, Sue has melded plants with bold

tones to create a kaleidoscope effect. Foliage is equally carefully chosen to create a dramatic backdrop.

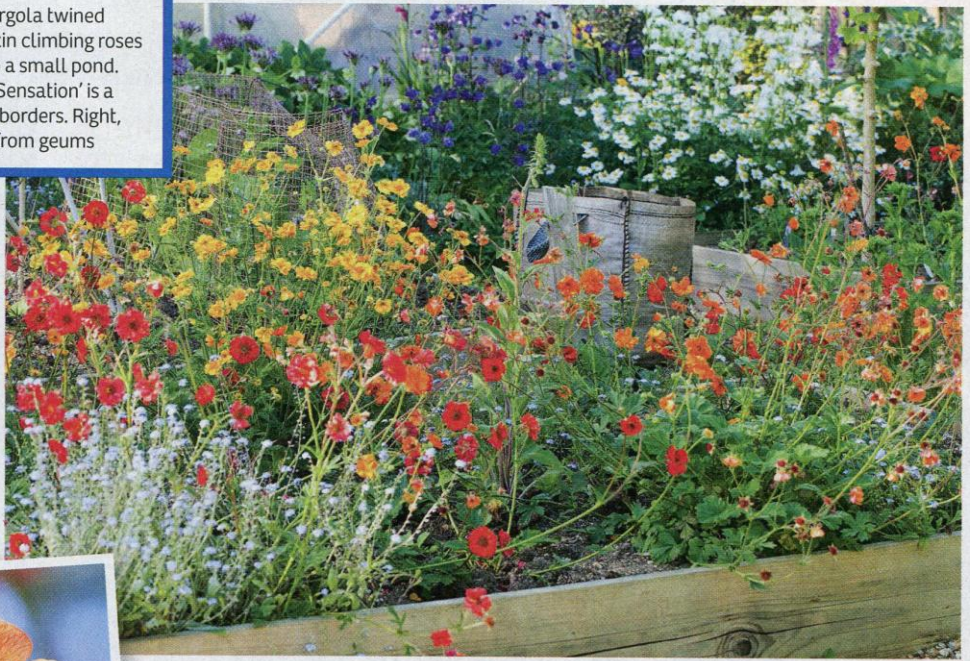
"A friend once told me that a flower bed should be as wide as the fence or hedge behind it to get the right proportions, and that's a good principle to be guided by," says Sue. "Having said that, because I love plants so much, my borders just seem to get bigger and bigger!"

It's true that riotously full flower beds cover much of Sue's south-facing garden, but trees, shrubs and hedges underpin the plot, creating shade, structure and privacy. "When I moved here, the garden was like a goldfish bowl, overlooked from all sides, and with a public footpath running along one side of it," she explains. "The people who lived here previously grew a lot of

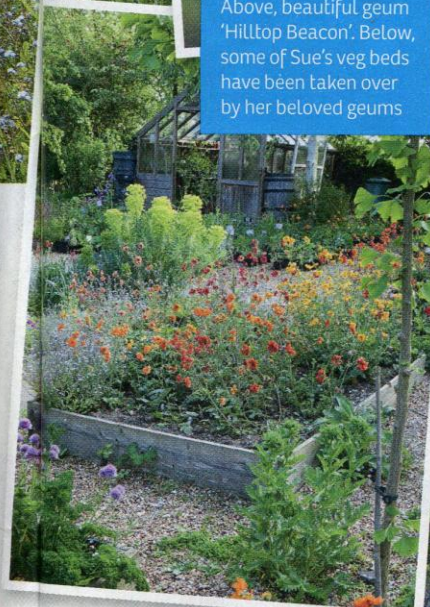
vegetables, so at least I had decent soil to go with my blank canvas."

A keen gardener who learned from her mother and grandmother, Sue started the transformation gradually. "I planted a yellow border to concentrate the mind," she says. "Next came a hedge of pleached limes to give me some privacy, and copious amounts of trees and shrubs

Left, a rustic pergola twined with David Austin climbing roses leads the eye to a small pond. Allium 'Purple Sensation' is a highlight in the borders. Right, pops of colour from geums

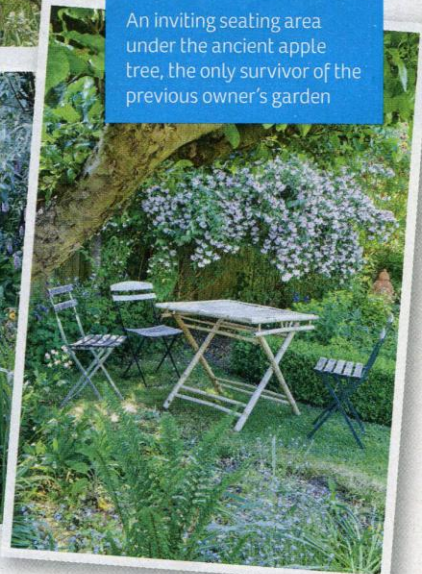


Above, beautiful geum 'Hilltop Beacon'. Below, some of Sue's veg beds have been taken over by her beloved geums



The perfect spot, next to the pink-flowered *Cercis canadensis*, from which to admire the beautiful borders. Below, Iris 'Symphony' stands out among a sea of green, blue and pink, with elaeagnus 'Quicksilver' as a backdrop

An inviting seating area under the ancient apple tree, the only survivor of the previous owner's garden



such as whitebeam, amelanchier and *Crataegus prunifolia*."

Outside the back door, a large rustic wooden pergola has been erected, and this takes the eye on a journey through the garden, along a brick path, flanked by borders containing massed 'Purple Sensation' alliums, to the focal point

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# Garden OF THE WEEK

## Highlights

Euphorbia 'Lambrook Gold' recurs through the garden, helping to knit it all together

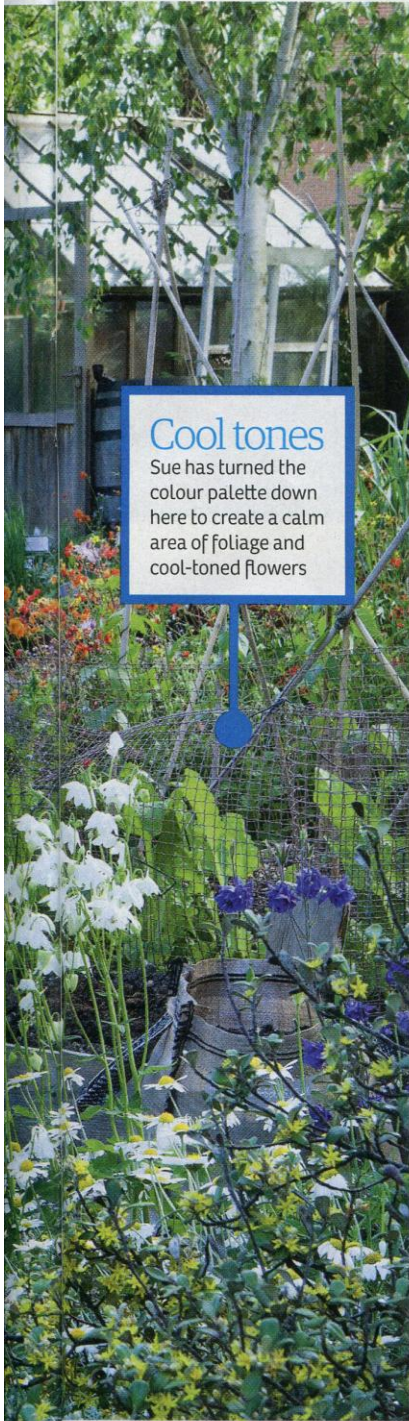
## Colourful collection

Sue takes pride in her 115-strong National Collection of geums, which brighten the late-spring and summer garden in hot orange, red, yellow and peach

A sea of forget-me-nots in cool blue surrounds colourful geums, alliums and iris

of a formal pond, which is planted with iris and king cups. A fountain dances and catches the light. To the right is a lawn, "although my dog, Mr Carson, tends to create havoc there," smiles Sue. The pergola is planted with four David Austin climbing roses: 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles', 'St. Swithun', 'Crown Princess Margareta', and 'Graham Thomas'. "I chose carefully with their ultimate height in mind, because I didn't want anything growing across the top of the structures that might create a dark tunnel effect."

Sue's made a potager, divided into quarters by a home-grown box hedge, propagated from just two original plants, with a 'Czar' plum tree planted in the centre. Her greenhouse is situated in an open area surrounded by four raised beds, three of which are filled with masses of jewel-toned geums. As official custodian of the country's national collection, currently numbering around 115 varieties, Sue also has examples of these plants growing all through her garden.



### Cool tones

Sue has turned the colour palette down here to create a calm area of foliage and cool-toned flowers

## Sue's four plants for a bold border



### *Silene fimbriata*

A great plant for shade, suited to most soils. Clusters of single, white flowers with frilly petals and a zesty green calyx on tall stems above mounds of foliage. Flowers May to August, but at its peak in May. H: 1m (3½ft), S: 50cm (1¾ft).



### *Elaeagnus 'Quicksilver'*

This large, usually deciduous shrub has silvery, willow-like leaves and small, creamy yellow, fragrant flowers from early summer. Will tolerate an exposed site. Cut back after flowering and mulch with compost. H&S: 2.5-4m (8-13ft).



### *Aster frikartii 'Mönch'*

Stunning lavender-blue petals surrounding a bright yellow centre on low mounds of foliage. Flowers from July to October. Deadhead regularly. After the flowers finish, cut stems to the ground and mulch the base. Prefers well-drained soil and a sunny spot.



### *Potentilla 'William Rollison'*

With its 'hot' coloured double-red flowers, this herbaceous perennial suits a dramatic mixed border. It's low growing and clump forming, with strawberry plant-shaped leaves. It flowers from June to August and prefers full sun.

"I love the sheer exuberance of them," she explains. "They're evergreen, so provide lots of nice ground cover, and when they're in flower, they're never just one colour, but shaded versions and they come in so many different shapes." Her top tip is to divide the plants regularly. "If you do that, they'll just keep on going," she says.

The appeal of Sue's garden is the informality within its structure. "I have forget-me-nots everywhere, and later, love-in-a-mist. Euphorbias have seeded themselves and now

tie the whole garden together. But I'm careful about plants taking over. I had problems with *Allium christophii* and I find that 'Purple Sensation' are much better behaved."

At the end of her garden, where Sue used to propagate plants for sale, she's developing a flower meadow. "I removed some beech trees, sieved the soil, and this year I've planted the area with a butterfly and moth mix," she says. "It's part of the garden evolving, and I always need to have a project!"

As trees and shrubs have grown and matured, what was once a sunny site is now shaded in parts. "This means introducing

different plants such as heucheras, hellebores, primroses, lots of spring bulbs and some of the geums, which prefer shade."

As well as volunteering at the gardens at nearby Sissinghurst and visiting her greatest inspiration, the gardens created by Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter in East Sussex, cello teacher Sue can occasionally be found relaxing and enjoying the fruits of her labours. "I love sitting under the old apple tree on a hot day, or just outside the French windows on the patio," she says. "But as I maintain the garden on my own, and I can't seem to stop propagating, there's always plenty for me to do!"

## Spring jobs

**1** I'm beginning to plant out my annuals and biennials, which I've grown in the greenhouse.

**2** Deadheading the geums. They're promiscuous and in order to avoid too much cross breeding, I need to keep on top of this job.

**3** Staking, watering and tending my borders. It's a very busy time of the gardening year.