

RHS Garden Rosemoor

TODAY AND TOMORROW



RHS / CAROLINE PATTERSON

Recent and future developments at all four of the Society's gardens ensure inspiring standards of horticulture. At Rosemoor in Devon, new projects are building on an already impressive foundation

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Lady Anne's Garden, close to Rosemoor House, includes a collection of ornamental cherry trees. This area has been rejuvenated recently and there are plans to expand the cherry collection.

Rosemoor, like so many gardens, is shaped by three main influences: the landscape in which it sits, its history and the great diversity of its planting, all of which have helped it evolve into a garden of national repute.

I have had a love affair with the garden since my first visit in 1996. Although the garden is still young, its setting and the developments made in the years since the RHS took it on were, to me, amazing. In 2005 I was

fortunate enough to attain a garden manager's post at the garden, then in 2010, I became Curator.

Rosemoor is set within a valley, the River Torridge at its base, and surrounded by more than 40ha (100 acres) of woodland, providing both protection and backdrop to the ornamental plantings. The weather can be surprisingly challenging, especially for the diverse range of plants we grow, but we shape and adapt what we cultivate to suit conditions. On average we

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receive 1m (39in) of rain annually, and while the climate is usually mild, in recent winters temperatures fell as low as -16°C (3.2°F), resulting in severe losses and a rethink of our plant collections. The soil is on the whole acid loam, ideal for a wide range of plants.

Family home

The RHS was gifted the original 3ha (8 acre) garden and 13ha (32 acres) of pastureland by Lady Anne Berry VMH in 1988. Lady Anne's parents acquired Rosemoor in 1923 as a family fishing lodge (in those days

‘...Rosemoor screams its West Country roots, echoing the landscape...’

the River Torridge was a noted salmon river). In 1931 Rosemoor House became home to Lady Anne and her mother, who later designed the Stone Garden. It has the same layout today. Lady Anne's gardening enthusiasm arose from a meeting with plantsman Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram in Spain in 1959. As a result of this friendship, Rosemoor's development began: plants were swapped and travels made to places including South America, New Zealand and Japan, resulting in an impressive plant collection. When the RHS was gifted the estate, Elizabeth Banks (now RHS President) was asked to develop a master plan for the garden's future. This was followed by years of development, creating the Formal Garden, the Fruit and Vegetable Garden and the lake, along with infrastructure such as car parks and a visitor centre. Over the years the master plan has been successfully managed: today Rosemoor screams its West Country roots, echoing the landscape around



The Hot Garden (above) is best from midsummer (see panel, right), colour provided by Solidago, heleniums, daylilies, various Kniphofia and contrasting Lobelia x speciosa 'Hadsen Purple'.

it, making good use of local materials and following regional practices such as hedge laying. At the heart of the site is a flowing succession of 'garden rooms' each with an identity and purpose, but together forming the Formal Garden, at just over 2.4ha (6 acres). Other highlights are two rose gardens, Winter Garden and a Cottage Garden, complete with thatched summerhouse. The



TODAY

Hot Garden: flowers of fiery hues

Key plants: sneezeweeds such as *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer', *Kniphofia* 'Atlanta' (inset, right) and bergamots, including *Monarda* 'Prärienacht' (inset, below right).

In 2006 it was decided that, after 15 years, the old Square Garden was in need of refreshing. Christopher Bailes, then Curator, contacted local members of the Society of Garden Designers, who, given an outline of the concept, were asked to come up with an initial proposal. Designer Roger Webster was chosen; his idea was to plant in a naturalistic meadow style and entirely change the layout of the garden. Starting in autumn 2007, the site was cleared, drainage was improved, and the gradient of the garden altered to create a viewing platform at the top

of the site. Opened in July 2008 and renamed the Hot Garden, the planting is spectacularly bright and at its best from midsummer. Many of the plants used in this garden lend themselves well to the new design as their parents originate from North American prairies. By using repeating bold blocks of plants, the overall effect is enhanced. When viewing this garden from the elevated platform, the fiery colours of these perennials blend beautifully into each other, and yet are contained by the boundaries of the garden.

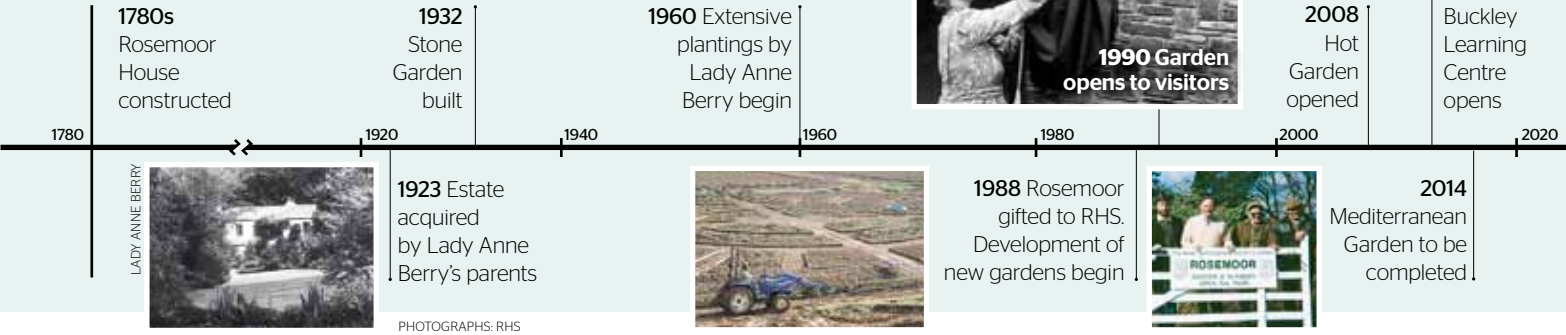


TOMORROW Forest Garden

Key plants: edible plants including perennial vegetables, herbs, trees and shrubs, including selections of *Cornus mas* and *Sambucus nigra*.

Set within the landscape surrounding our Peter Buckley Learning Centre, the Forest Garden is situated at the edge of established woodland. This is an exciting project, gathering plants that produce edible crops. Planting began in spring 2012 and will continue through 2013; eventually the planting should become self-maintaining. It is interesting to promote the use of plants not usually thought of as edible, such as *Mahonia x media* 'Lionel Fortescue', a tough shrub normally grown for its flowers in winter, but followed by fruits that make a tasty preserve. Others include *Aronia* (chokeberry), *Corylus maxima* (cobnut) and *Rubus tricolor* (Chinese bramble).

Rosemoor through the years





SHEILA DEARING



SHEILA DEARING

TOMORROW Rejuvenating the Mediterranean Garden

Started by Lady Anne, the Mediterranean Garden was originally a tennis court; planting began by punching holes in the tarmac court. Various pine trees including cultivars of *Pinus nigra* went in first, then planting expanded as time allowed. The site is now gravelled, and the central area open and flat, catching the sun and warming the soil.

Over the last few years, wetter weather has revealed problems with drainage. As a result, the five central beds are to be relandscaped in stages over the next few years; last summer we propagated the plants, and lifted the remainder in autumn. With the help of an excavator, old soil was removed, along with what was left of the old tennis court below. We backfilled with stone to aid drainage and placed a gritty soil mix on top.

Another aim is to create a landscaped garden to echo the natural habitats the plants come from, using rocks from a local quarry. In spring we will replant the first two beds in a naturalistic style; *Ceanothus*, *Helianthemum* and rosemary will form some structural planting, while herbs such as sage and oregano will be added for their fragrance.



RHS / TIM SANDALL



RHS / ADAM DUCKWORTH

Plants from areas with Mediterranean climates, such as *Helianthemum* (above left) and *Ceanothus* (above right) will furnish the replanted Mediterranean Garden.

oldest area, by Rosemoor House, still has the feel of a private garden, with a more organic layout and intimate plantings, complete with mature trees and wildflower meadows. After more than 20 years, new and old parts of the garden no longer feel separated, but as one whole.

In the last few years, visitors to Rosemoor will have seen the most development since the RHS acquired the estate: the building of the Peter Buckley Learning Centre and the teaching gardens around it, creating an allotment area, edible Forest Garden and enhanced wildlife plantings. With much hard work from the garden and site team we have created another seamless addition to the Rosemoor legacy. ●

Visiting RHS Garden Rosemoor

RHS Garden Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH; 0845 265 8072;

www.rhs.org.uk/rosemoor

Open: Monday to Sunday 10am–6pm (5pm Oct–Mar)

❖ Events: see RHS Life, p105. Stay at Rosemoor House, Lady Anne's former home: see p93



RHS

The Formal Garden under construction in the late 1980s.

Ongoing development at Rosemoor

Creating the new Award of Garden Merit (AGM) Borders

Last year we decided the old Shade Garden (inset, right), created in 2000, needed to be rethought. The area has become one of the routes to the recently constructed Peter Buckley Learning Centre (inset, below right) and the Teaching Gardens beyond. The new theme needed to blend into the surrounding gardens but still be distinctive.

We decided on a garden planted solely with AGM winners, plants that have proved to be excellent in ordinary garden use.

Work has started on the area; during winter paths were re-laid and seating areas renovated using oak milled on the estate. Many plants from the original scheme have been moved, the beds have had compost added to improve the soil, and from this spring we will start replanting. Plants have been chosen to complement neighbouring areas; it is still a shady site, so we will use a backbone of shrubs with woodland herbaceous subjects, including:

- ❖ *Viburnum x juddii*: low, rounded shrub with deliciously fragrant white flowers in spring;
- ❖ *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Rosa Zeiten': tidy, bronzed foliage with pink flowers from March to October;
- ❖ *x Heucherella* 'Kimono': elegant evergreen, clump-forming perennial bearing silvery green leaves with dark bronze veins and pink flowers in spring and summer.



RHS / MARK BOLTON



RHS / JIM WILEMAN