

A COUNTRY *classroom*



Lovingly filled with unusual plants, Lucy Redman's Suffolk garden provides a place of learning for her garden design students and an enchanting playground for her children

PHOTOGRAPHS MARCUS HARPUR WORDS WIDGET FINN

When you peer over a high hedge at the thatched roof and rose covered walls of Lucy Redman's home, the ten foot high fibreglass pot beside the front gate gives you the first hint that this is no traditional Suffolk cottage garden.

Maryanne Nicholls' giant *Vessel* towers over visitors, giving an Alice in Wonderland introduction to a garden ▶



PREVIOUS PAGE Mown paths lead under a willow tunnel in Lucy Redman's cottage garden, in Suffolk.
INSET Lucy and her children, Tilly, 5, and Flori, 3, with their homemade maypole.

THIS PAGE A view from the house down to the lawn, borders and grass parterre.





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Lucy enjoys using dramatic colour throughout her garden. 'I love the wacky green of the 'Gooseberry Fool' sedum combined with *Euphorbia cyparissias* 'Fens Ruby' and a touch of *Heuchera* 'Chocolate Ruffles'.'

The garden is full of visual concepts, some created by Lucy herself, like the Whirligianum Obeliskii - wrought iron obelisks topped with stained-glass windmills. She scours auctions and rubbish tips: 'I love reclaimed stuff, I'm a complete Womble'. 'Breast Sculpture' is a spiral of plough breasts rescued from the farm skip, backed by a metal screen. It's surrounded by *Arundo donax*, melianthus and grasses to soften the outline and cast dramatic shadows.

Lucy Redman aims for inspiration, humour and fun in the garden. 'I don't want to be labelled a garden designer,' she says, 'just a plantswoman with a family and a taste for quirkiness.'



The Lucy Redman Garden, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Designed by Lucy Redman, National Garden Centre, British Red Cross, by appointment. Design course held on 15 July. www.lucyredman.com

rowing skirts and silver bangles. It was the idea of an Augustus John painting at the Garden School, where she did her design training. Her love of plants was inspired by her mother, Frank Knight, formerly a florist, who encouraged her love of plant design. Roy Lancaster as her

TOP A living willow arch leads to a willow urn. The main garden and grass parterre lie beyond the decorative metal gate. ABOVE A wicker tunnel doubles as garden feature and playground.



TOP LEFT Cobbles in the parterre swirl into leaf shaped beds. TOP RIGHT The turf tree seat. ABOVE Lupinus 'The Governor' and Geranium pratense 'Mrs Kendall Clark' mingle with fragrant sweet rocket.

'greatest hero'. She admits that she is an antidote to the 'less is more' fashion in garden design. 'My style is maximalist, the garden is chock-a-block full of plants because I love them and want to grow all the varieties that I'm interested in.'

The house sits in the middle of a three-quarter acre site. When she arrived seven years ago there was just a row of poplars, a beech hedge, some climbing roses

and an old apple tree. The poplars were the first to go, but the apple tree remains.

Sandy loam soil provides good conditions to grow a variety of plants, including a mimosa and guava gum, which flourish in the microclimate created by the thatched roof of the cottage. There was no overall garden plan, 'just a sketch on an envelope'. The garden's development mirrors her growing family. 'I planted my first border on my hands and knees through the winter when pregnant with Tilly, then she helped to lay the cobbled lawn when Flori was almost due.'

Lucy runs her garden design courses from a garden pavilion beyond the purple meadow, its living sedum roof blending perfectly with the rust and greyish-green painted walls. The whole garden is used to illustrate garden design principles on a human scale.

A croquet lawn in front of the pavilion provides some visual calm before you are led past the willow igloo hideaway with stone seating inscribed with the children's names and through the living willow tunnel to the coloured borders.

The borders viewed from the house reflect its interiors. Maryanne Nicholls' *Walking Man* sculpture strides through *Geranium palmatum* and *Cryptotaenia japonica*

GARDEN NOTEBOOK

Pick up some quirky design ideas from Lucy's three-quarter acre garden, near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, where unusual plant varieties flourish in the sandy loam

CONTACTS
SCULPTURE AND
TERRACOTTA
POT SUPPLIERS● **Vessel and Walking****Man sculptures:**

Maryanne Nicholls, Ipswich, Suffolk.
Tel: +44 (0)1473 830241.
www.maryannenicholls.co.uk

● **Recycled copper pod:**

Cary Norman, Greenshaw House, Holbrook, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 2RQ.
Tel: +44 (0)1473 328834.

● **Terracotta pots: Italian**

Terrace, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP29 4AY.
Tel: +44 (0)1284 789666.
www.italianterrace.co.uk

LOCAL NURSERIES

● **The Place for Plants**, East Bergholt Place, East Bergholt, Suffolk CO7 6UP.
Tel: +44 (0)1206 299224.

● **Woottens of Wenhamston**, Blackheath, Suffolk IP19 9HD.
Tel: +44 (0)1502 478258.
www.woottensplants.co.uk

● **Paugers Plants**, Depden, Suffolk IP29 4BU. Tel: +44 (0)1284 850527.
www.paugersplants.co.uk

● **Harveys Garden Plants**, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3SJ. Tel: +44 (0)1359 870291. www.harveysgardenplants.co.uk

LOCAL GARDENS

● **Henstead Exotic Garden**, Suffolk NR34 7LD. Open for the NGS 27 May, 1-6pm. Private visits by appointment. Tel: +44 (0)1502 743006.

● **Helmingham Hall**, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6EF. Open 6 May-16 Sept, Sun & Wed, 2-6pm. Tel: +44 (0)1473 890799. www.helmingham.com

● **Wyken Hall**, Stanton, Suffolk IP31 2DW. Tel: +44 (0)1359 253420. www.wykenvineyards.co.uk

LOST AND FOUND

Check out the local council dump or farm skip for treasures. Lucy used plough breasts from the farm skip to create a sculpture. The wash dolly in her galvanised metal collection (right) is from the architectural salvage sale at Thomas Gaze & Sons, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4LN. Tel: +44 (0)1379 650306.



THE HIGH LIFE

Living roofs are now becoming increasingly popular for their ecological and insulation properties. Lucy's Wendy house (above) and the garden pavilion have 'living roofs' made from pre-grown sedum mats. A waterproof and rotproof surface covered the roof, which first had to be reinforced, then the mats were laid on top. Q Lawns, Thetford, Norfolk IP26 4JR. Tel: +44 (0)1842 828266. [www.qlawns.co.uk](http://www qlawns.co.uk)



THE WILLOW IGLOO

To make the igloo (below) Lucy dug out a circular area and laid turf, then rammed willow wands into the soft ground, placing two wands at an angle to make a latticework design. Inside, marine ply edged the seats, which were filled with concrete and inscribed with the children's names.



GOING LOCAL

Crawford Balch of Debenham, Suffolk (tel: +44 (0)1728 860266) supplied willow to make the willow features (above left). The tree seat hazel was from an ancient woodland at Bradfield Saint George, managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (tel: +44 (0)1449 737996). A local decorative metalwork company created the Whirligianum Obeliski to Lucy's design (tel: +44 (0)1284 724504. www.nhweldfabltd.co.uk)

LUCY REDMAN'S TIPS FOR CREATIVE GARDENING

● **In order to get a nicely flowing line to a border**, lay a hosepipe on the grass and look at your idea from above before digging it out. If you are creating a curvaceous border opposite it, make sure that both beds flow like a dry riverbed as in Beth Chatto's Gardens.

● **Make the garden as fun as possible for the children.** Stepping log paths through borders, stone parterres to run around, willow igloos in which to have a teddy bears' picnic, a greenhouse to have fun sowing and growing plants and lots of yummy organic veg and fruit to keep them happy.

● **Choose a theme for a border.** Pick a part of the world that inspires you and go for plants that are indigenous to that continent or country, making sure they are hardy and suit your soil. For my Asian Border, I asked local nurseryman Rupert Eley of The Place for Plants to source the plants.

● **Link your garden to your interior colour scheme.** From our pink, purple and white kitchen you view the same colour scheme border. From the terracotta painted drawing room, you see a border with a sunset colour scheme, and a dash of blue for fun, which is intensified when the sun sets.

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The Lucy Redman School of Garden Design, 6 The Village, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 0ER. Open for the National Gardens Scheme, 16 Sept, 2-5pm, and for the British Red Cross, 23 Sept, 2-5pm. Private visits are welcome by appointment. The next 14 week part time garden design course starts on 6 June. Plantaholic Days are held on 15 June and 28 Sept. Tel: +44 (0)1284 386250. www.lucyredman.co.uk

TOP *Corylus avellana* 'Purpurea' runs through a delicate lacy haze of cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*). ABOVE The bulb and rhizome garden with irises, and Clematis supported by obelisks.