

CALL OF THE WILD

*The immersive organic garden tended by
Lynn and Simon Woodward combines subtle
order with glorious rural romanticism*



Majestic *Alcea rosea* (hollyhocks) tower above perennials near The Cob (a renovated shepherd's hut), adding flashes of pink to prairie planting

The veranda of The Cob
B&B (shown left) looks out
over the apple orchard



Flowers mingle and self seed to create a wild mix of grasses and vibrant blooms, with The Cob cottage beyond



IN THE GARDEN WITH...

Growers Simon and Lynn Woodward live here with their cockapoo, Buddy.

Garden features Four-acre south-facing site with heavy, fertile loam soil, sheltered by woods. Cottage-style planting takes up three quarters of an acre, while a prairie-style garden leads to three meadows, two natural ponds, an apple orchard, The Cob cottage and a recently discovered vegetable patch.

Waving though the gravel and herringbone pathways up to Lynn and Simon Woodward's 17th-century cottage, it's apparent how this gently sloping garden seems to mould seamlessly within the Herefordshire landscape. A more formally planted garden wraps around their home, Montpelier Cottage, then the wilder meadow and orchard sections disperse gently into open farmland. Even though the couple moved here two years ago the care, love and attention for this garden is already evident. 'We had lived in a semi-rural environment in Cheshire for some time but moving here we've totally embraced the rural lifestyle,' says Lynn. 'Despite viewing many other properties in the area we were always drawn back here.'

The garden comprises four acres of sloping land. It is south facing and sheltered from prevailing winds by the surrounding woodland and its main section is a cottage-style perennial garden with a naturalistic look. 'At the top of the garden our home and a little cottage, which we call The Cob, are linked together with a gravel garden full of prairie planting, its borders kept within neatly clipped box hedges and gravel pathways.' In spring, it is a mass of yellow primroses and various hellebores. Later in the year there is a dreamy feel to the garden, with various grasses, *Verbena bonariensis*, *Knautia macedonica* and *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' wafting in the breeze.

Primroses, daffodils and tulips emerge from mid March, but from May through to October the perennials are in control, and the dense, naturalistic planting helps to suppress weeds. 'Plants such as *Dahlia hortensis*, *Aster x frikartii* 'Monch' and the >

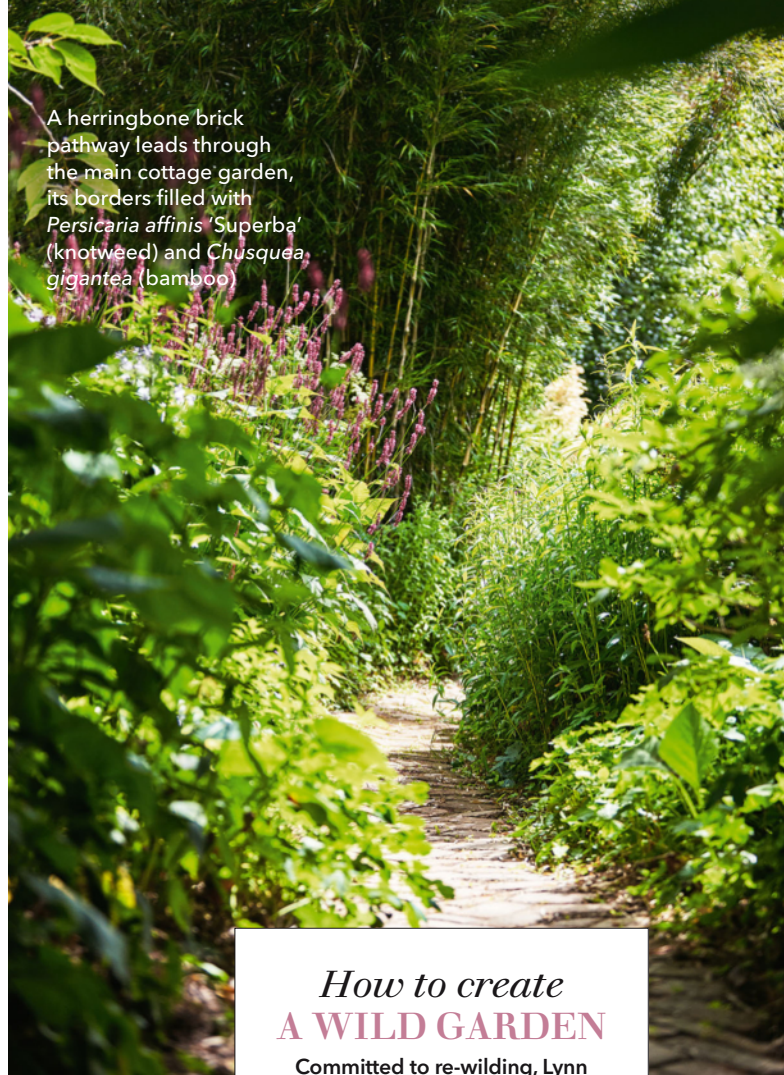


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Lynn and Simon's meadows are rich with *Daucus carota* (wild carrot), knapweed and meadowsweet



A herringbone brick pathway leads through the main cottage garden, its borders filled with *Persicaria affinis* 'Superba' (knotweed) and *Chusquea gigantea* (bamboo)

aster *Symphotrichum* 'Little Carlow', plus goldenrod *Solidago* 'Goldenmosa' and *Lysimachia ciliata* 'Firecracker' are all allowed to mingle and self seed,' says Lynn.

The formal garden leads down to three meadows via a meandering herringbone brick pathway. Stock fences form a boundary to stop deer and rabbits eating the plants and hedges of hazel and willow divide the three meadows. The first is home to the apple orchard and The Cob, the newly renovated shepherd's hut where B&B guests can stay. This cottage is built with Douglas fir timbers and a straw and lime render, and has a living roof of sedum and *Allium schoenoprasum* (chives).

'Under the tutelage of our local farmer, who has a cider apple orchard, we've pruned the apple trees here and are hoping for a bumper crop this September,' says Lynn. Paths are mown through the middle meadow during its flowering season, and they lead to a circular spot defined by *Cornus sanguinea* (common dogwood) and willow, and which also houses a clay pizza oven. The area at the end is a wet meadow with wildflowers and many specimen trees, including *Liriodendron tulipifera* (tulip tree), *Liquidamber styraciflua* 'Worplesdon', *Taxodium distichum* (swamp cypress), *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* (wingnut) and *Metasequoia* (dawn redwood), as well as two natural ponds.

Yet when Lynn and Simon first arrived, the house had been unoccupied for years and the garden was very overgrown. The couple believe it had been owned by a plantsman/garden writer about 12 years ago who created the original layout and planting. When the couple first saw the cottage it was winter, so areas

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How to create A WILD GARDEN

Committed to re-wilding, Lynn and Simon planted three meadows, including a wet meadow and wildflower area, to encourage pollinators. When planning for your own meadow, here's what to bear in mind:

- Check your garden is suitable; low-nutrient soil is necessary for a healthy meadow.
- In spring use a hollow-tine aerator over the ground to allow oxygen, nutrients and water to penetrate into the root zone. Cut hay in late summer to encourage more wildflowers.
- Grass growth should be discouraged, so sow *Rhinanthus minor* (yellow rattle). This suppresses the grass, giving other flowers room to flourish.
- When the meadow flowers have died off in September, cut everything back, clearing away all the debris. Don't use mulch because you need a poor soil for the meadow to grow again.
- Leave the tall seedheads, such as *Filipendula ulmaria*, (meadowsweet), *Daucus carota* (wild carrot) and *Dipsacus fullonum* (teasels), once the flowers are finished for birds to feast on during winter. This also helps keep a sense of structure.

“My love of gardening comes from my dad who taught me such a lot when I was growing up and when I had my first tiny garden at my Wimbledon flat”

Neat box hedges and gravel pathways create form and shape for the dense naturalistic planting



The wild meadow leads the eye to The Cob, which has a living roof of chives and sedum



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Hergest Croft Gardens (hergest.co.uk). Explore 70 acres of gardens and parkland, with amazing views towards the Black Mountains. There are many rare plants and trees to inspire you, plus a great plant shop and tea room.'

Go for a meal at... 'Chapters Restaurant (chaptershayonweye.co.uk). This family-run restaurant supports small-scale producers in Hay-on-Wye and the surrounding area. It's really good for special occasions and celebrations.'

Shop at... 'Lot51, Backfold, Hay-on-Wye (07557 194825). Alongside vintage furniture, proprietor Mandy has dolly tubs, tin baths and other treasures in her emporium that will help you add character to your garden.'

were covered in weeds and debris. They discovered the apple orchard when they were cutting back brambles. 'We've also recently unearthed the old raised beds of a kitchen garden and have now dug in plenty of manure courtesy of the local livery stables next door,' says Lynn. This area is now filled with *Iris sibirica* bulbs in spring and *Tropaeolum majus* (nasturtiums) in the summer. Meanwhile, a polytunnel covered in green mould and filled to the roof with nettles has also been cleared out and cleaned. It is now a favourite spot for Lynn, where she spends time sowing seeds and growing vegetables.

Over the two years that Lynn and Simon have lived here, there has been a lot of hard work involving cutting back, drastic pruning, digging and mulching. They have revealed an amazing garden, but it's definitely still a work in progress. 'Our mission now is to work further towards being as natural as possible in the way we garden, encouraging as much wildlife as we can and avoiding any use of pesticides or weedkillers,' says Lynn.

By introducing bird feeders and clearing the ponds of debris they now have very few slugs and snails, thanks to the abundance of visiting frogs, toads and birds. Kites, buzzards and sparrow-hawks fly overhead, rabbits and hares run in the meadows and the bird tables are full of visitors all day long.

'It's the peace and tranquillity of the gardens and the surrounding woodland that makes it feel so special,' says Lynn, 'and we still can't quite believe that we are living here to this day.'

To book a stay at The Cob Luxury B&B, visit stayatthecob.co.uk



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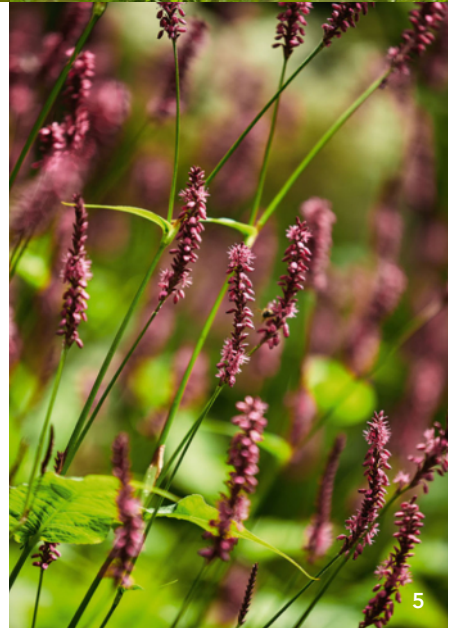
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8 must-haves for wild planting

- 1 *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' has sprays of red flowers in August and September.
- 2 *Centaurea nigra* (knapweed) attracts butterflies from June to September.
- 3 Encourage bees and butterflies with *Echinops ritro* from July to September.
- 4 Prickly *Dipsacus fullonum* (teasels) encourage wildlife through the summer.
- 5 Low-growing *Persicaria affinis* 'Superba' (knotweed) forms attractive ground cover.
- 6 Grow *Alcea rosea* (hollyhocks) from seed for flowers from June to September.
- 7 *Chusquea gigantea* (bamboo) form structure and movement in the breeze.
- 8 *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (fountain grass) brings texture to prairie planting.



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