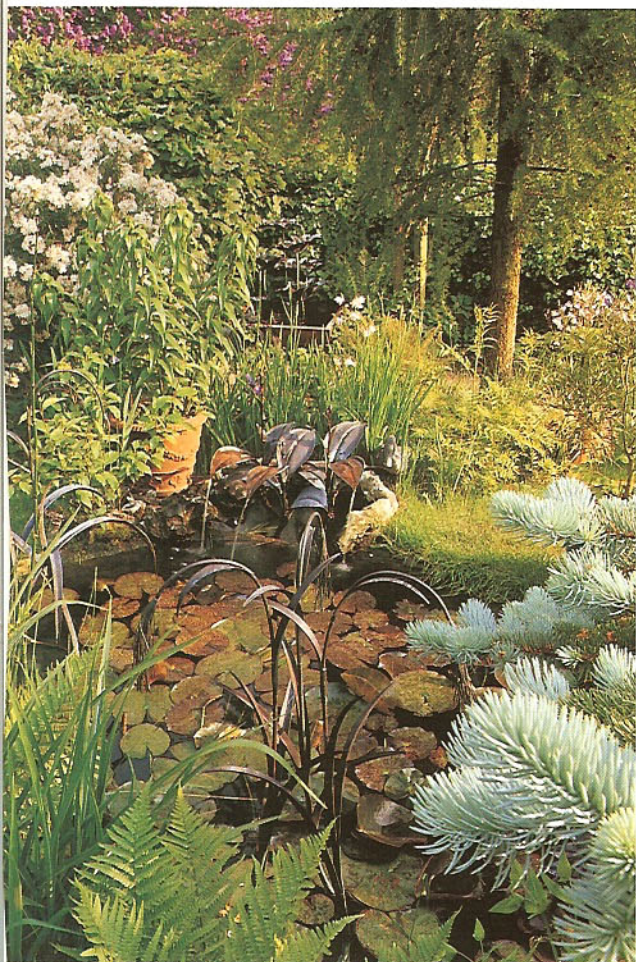




GOING WITH THE **FLOW**

Art, water, surprises and plants combine beautifully in the romantic Sussex garden Humphrey and Isabelle Bowden have created together

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Rest at one of the many seating areas in the garden of Humphrey and Isabelle Bowden and the sound of bubbling and trickling water is never far away. It comes from the numerous sculptured copper fountains designed and made by Humphrey and located in small pools or individual containers throughout the garden.

Both Humphrey and Isabelle are artists. Humphrey crafts his fountains by hand in his garden workshop, each one an original piece inspired by plants. His background is in product design, working with metals, and when the couple moved to their West Sussex terraced cottage 13 years ago, he started to develop the idea of creating fountains in copper. Hydraulics and surface tension control the flow and effects of the water.

At first, designs were based on strong, simple lines of hosta foliage or lotus flowerheads. In recent years, though, they've become more intricate with delicate bamboo, grasses and willow tree fountains, bold stands of artichokes and gunnera. 'Copper is the ideal medium as it's so malleable,' he explains. 'I love its patina and range of colours. It takes on burnished bronze and red tones when wet, and shades of blue and green when exposed to the air. When I need ideas for designs, I turn to Isabelle - she is the plantswoman and gardener.'

Isabelle is French and comes from a family of writers and artists - her grandfather was French writer Andre Gide and her greatgrandfather the post Impressionist painter Theo van Rysselberghe. She has painted all her life and held exhibitions, although she now mostly works on individual commissions. She is also a passionate gardener, working one day a week as a volunteer in the nearby walled gardens at Parham, as well as many hours in her own plot.

'When we first came, there was nothing except rows of vegetables,' says Isabelle. 'The garden was a long thin handkerchief with low hedges, no trees or shade. The first thing we did was create a terrace with a pergola near the house and plant it with climbers. I put in a few specimen trees - a contorted hazel, a pink flowering Judas and ten eucalyptus.'

The garden is about 90m (300ft) long and just 15m (50ft) wide. Over the years, its layout has evolved as a series of 'rooms' leading from one area to the next. Isabelle's love of structure and topiary is obvious in the low box hedges and clipped shrubs and the use of metal arches and arbours inexpensively made from concrete reinforcing rods bought at builders' merchants. Her planting, though, is spontaneous and exuberant. 'I love the mix of formality and informality,' she says, 'and I love to collect orphans!' - a reference to the numerous unwanted plants she has rescued from friends.

In late spring there are drifts of tulips and forget-me-nots followed by blue aquilegias, foxgloves, oriental poppies and tall purple orbbed alliums. Later, it's roses which, despite the poor, sandy soil, Isabelle has nurtured to put on a spectacular ►





PREVIOUS PAGE All of Humphrey Bowden's delicate copper fountains in his Sussex garden are inspired by the plant world. **FACING TOP** Plants and water are packed so close in this garden they seem to meld together. **FACING BOTTOM** Elegant bamboo and the castor oil plant, ricinus, make striking subjects for two water features. **LEFT, FROM TOP** A profusion of *Rosa* 'Francis E. Lester' fills the heart of a domed metal arbour; the soft sound of doves is almost as soothing as that of water; 'Isabelle is brilliant at finding interesting plant forms that will translate into good fountains,' says Humphrey. This is a pineapple. **ABOVE** The Bowdens love to sit under the cascading wisteria and relax over an *al fresco* meal.

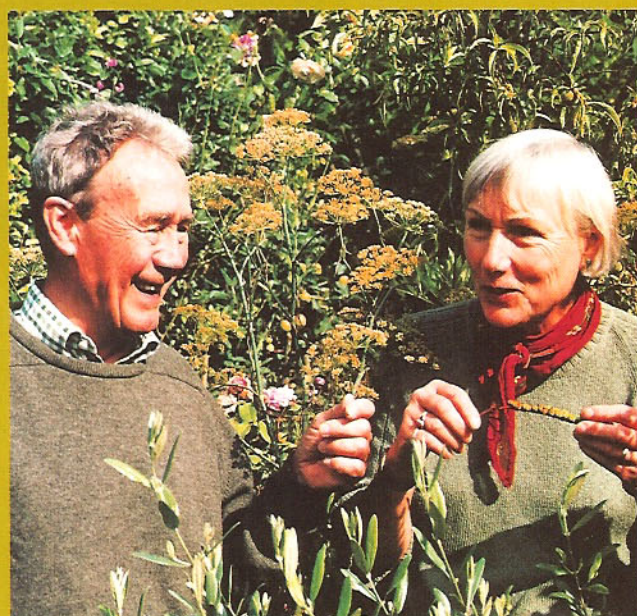
show. *Rosa* 'Rambling Rector' and 'Francis E. Lester' are the best of the climbers, and over the cottage front door she has R. 'Emily Gray' for its glossy foliage that lasts all summer. One rose trained on arches, Isabelle grew from cuttings from her grandmother's garden in France. 'It's an old fashioned one with small pink flowers - no one knows its name but it flowers in July and August.'

Among her roses, Isabelle grows fruit. Every summer she has delicious peaches from her *Pêche des vignes* - original wild peach trees. And, instead of an orchard, there is a circle of apple and pear trees trained up a huge domed metal arbour. At the foot of the trees, hemerocallis, lilies and mounds of nepeta and hardy geraniums spill onto a grassy inner circle of the arbour - a shady outdoor room where the family sit, eat and relax.

At the end of the garden is an Indian style bed on what Isabelle calls Sunset Terrace, which has beautiful views of the South Downs and catches the last of the evening sun. 'We made it after the hot summer two years ago when it was sometimes just too hot to sleep inside,' she laughs. 'It's still a great place to party.'

6 Park Terrace, Tillington, West Sussex GU28 9AE, opens for the NGS on
Suns 5 & 12 June, noon-5pm; and with wine on Thur 9 June and Sun 4
Sept, 5-8pm. Tel: +44 (0)1798 344114. www.humphreybowden.com

RIGHT An Indian inspired niche on what Humphrey and Isabelle call the Sunset Terrace. **BELOW** Humphrey and Isabelle Bowden in their garden.



FOUNTAIN NOTEBOOK

- Position a fountain within view and earshot of a place in the garden where you sit or eat out - or somewhere that can be seen or heard from the house.
- Choose a fountain design which won't get lost in the foliage.
- A fountain needs an outdoor power socket within a few metres of the pond. Cables look ugly, can be dangerous and will perish if exposed to ultra violet light. House them in 2.5cm (1in) diameter tubes and bury them out of sight. Make sure cable tubes have no joins or sharp bends so you can change pumps without digging up tubing. Pumps only last about five years.
- A pool or pond should be at least 45cm (18in) deep. Oxygenating plants will keep water clear. With no plants the water will go green in the sun, especially if it's shallow. You can kill this algae with chemicals or a UV filter.
- In small gardens, be aware of the volume of sound a fountain makes.
- Lighting a pond and fountain at night is very effective. Sideways lights below the water's surface picking up movement and drops from a fountain can look wonderful. Light should never shine in anyone's eyes.