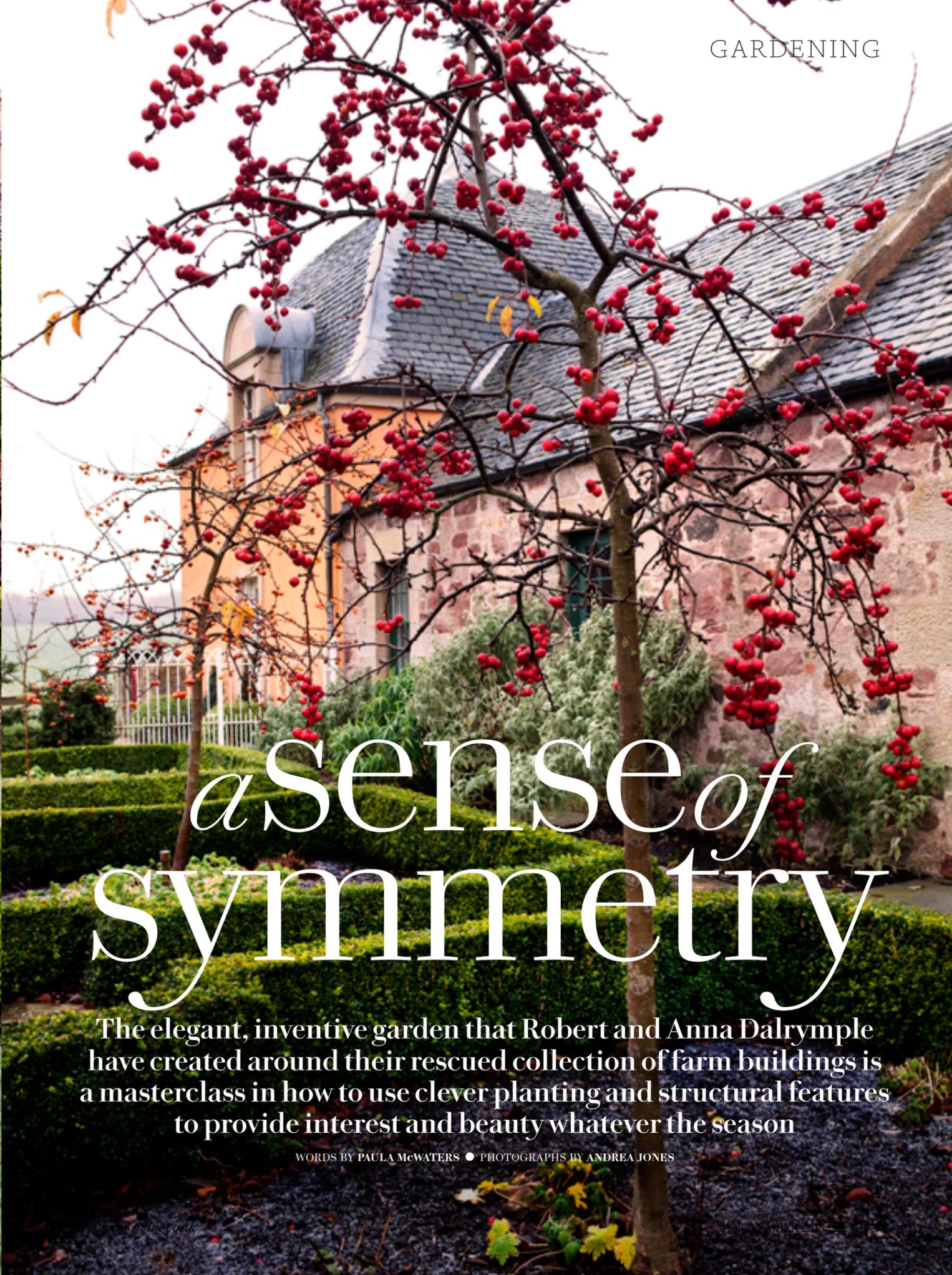




THIS PAGE A striking aviary forms the centre of a grid of 25 squares, which have been grassed, paved or planted with evergreens  
OPPOSITE The glossy bright fruit of the 'Red Sentinel' crab apple trees in the kitchen garden provide welcome colour



# *a sense of symmetry*

The elegant, inventive garden that Robert and Anna Dalrymple have created around their rescued collection of farm buildings is a masterclass in how to use clever planting and structural features to provide interest and beauty whatever the season

WORDS BY PAULA McWATERS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA JONES



What does it take to design a garden that looks good right through autumn and even into the depths of winter? It's a challenge that is hard to pull off in a reasonably sheltered plot but trickier still in East Lothian, where frosts arrive early and snow can lie on the ground for eight weeks at a time. When Robert and Anna Dalrymple bought Broadwoodside, a derelict farmstead, 25 miles east of Edinburgh in 1998, getting the garden underway was uppermost in their minds. "We had established a lovely one at our last house, so moving here to a sea of mud was depressing at first," Anna explains. "We felt that getting part of the garden in place would be good for morale."

One advantage they did have was that it was a blank canvas. So while the builders were restoring the tumbledown 16th-century farmhouse, barns and cattle sheds to elegant plans by Edinburgh architect Nicholas Groves-Raines, Robert immediately began applying his own skills as a designer of fine-art books to draw up detailed plans for the garden, starting with the courtyard.

A love of symmetry is evident wherever you look and is highly effective, especially in autumn and winter when the bones of the garden are laid bare. "I'm quite controlling," Robert says. "I spend my days arranging pictures and blocks of text on pages and I love straight lines, so I've used them everywhere. The only place they are not in evidence is where the geography defeated us."

The natural axis that runs through the long, relatively narrow strip of land on which the house sits has been emphasised with avenues of trees and hedging. At first, they planted beech hedges



but have since discovered that hornbeam establishes more quickly, perhaps because it copes better with extremes of wet.

Robert describes the process as "painting by numbers" – recognising the natural divisions in the space you have available, then working within them. In the upper courtyard he has created a graphic design that looks good in every season. A grid of 25 squares has been imposed, centred on an elaborate aviary for their parrot William, with the other squares grassed, paved or planted with evergreens, including rosemary, box, *Luzula sylvatica*, pachysandra and sarcococca. These sit, like mats, beneath eight mophead-pruned Norway maples (*Acer platanoides* 'Globosum'), and are planted with bulbs such as alliums and tulips for late spring/early summer.

"It couldn't be described as low maintenance," says gardener

Guy Donaldson, who keeps it trim, "but at least you can easily pull out the contents of a particular square and replant if something gets old and leggy. We have a changing cast in here." Guy has been with the Dalrymples since the garden's inception and he is key to its success, bringing Robert and Anna's ideas to fruition and then maintaining them. "A garden as controlled as this needs to be kept in peak condition," he says.

Clothing the house walls with climbers, including tough evergreens such as ivy and pyracantha, and trained fruit trees in more sheltered spots, provides interest throughout the colder months. Where there isn't room for a bed at the base of a wall, there are shrubs and trees in pots, often underplanted with a fringe of grasses. As a welcoming touch, there is a generous path to the kitchen door, flanked by small mophead trees such as Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) and *Phillyrea latifolia*, which clip well and are tough enough to survive extremes of weather. The borders in between are filled with perennials and in winter, when these have gone to ground, the dark patches of bare earth look calm and ordered.

Like many of the windows and doors of the house, the gate here is painted a warm red, which contrasts well with foliage and stone, and is always welcoming, even in winter drizzle. It harks back to the days when red oxide was once much-used on farm buildings because it was the cheapest paint available. Metal urns stand on the stone gateposts either side, creating an interesting silhouette against the sky and making the entranceway look just a little grander.

Although some of the focal points around the garden are high budget, others are homemade or are opportunistic finds used in a novel way, such as the cast-iron finial for their pet dogs' tomb,

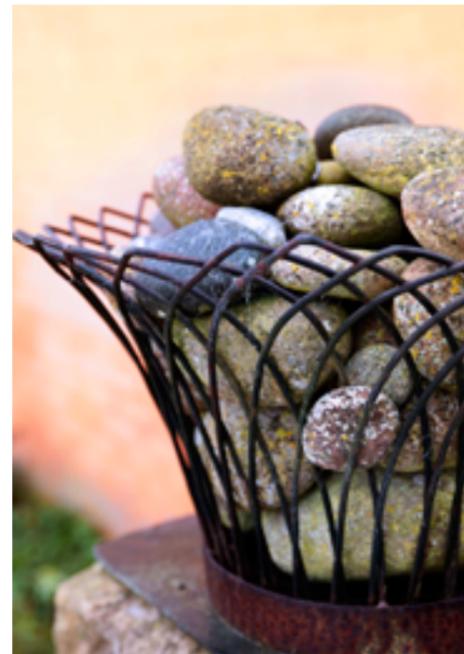
which they came across outside an Edinburgh junk shop. At the entrance to the kitchen garden is a whimsical gate featuring garden forks, inspired by one Anna and Robert had seen by the designer George Carter. Behind this, alongside raised vegetable beds and mixed flower borders, lies a long rectangular pool, which looks ethereal on a misty day. To make it highly reflective, the water is treated with dye, which is completely safe for fish, called Dyofix Pond Black. A screen of living willow surrounds it, creating a lattice of stems that seems to glow in the low light. When this gets too high, Guy cuts it back with a chainsaw and allows it to sprout again from the base.

Anna, whose job it is to add softness to Robert's linear schemes with freer planting, points out the crab apple trees that hang heavy with glossy red fruit in winter: "I like the fact that, although they were planted at the same time, they have all grown to different heights and aren't regimented." Despite Robert's desire to line everything up, nature sometimes has other ideas. 🐾

🐾 *Broadwoodside is open annually for Scotland's Gardens (scotlandsgardens.org) and by arrangement for groups of ten or more. Visit broadwoodside.co.uk for details.*

**OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** A cast-iron finial marks the grave of the family's dogs; in the courtyard, each of the bare Norway maples is surrounded by a mat of evergreen foliage to maintain

winter interest; a red-painted gate provides a warm contrast to natural stone **THIS PAGE** The flagstone path is flanked by clipped box shapes and small evergreen trees tough enough to withstand the harsh weather



## SCULPTURAL FOUND OBJECTS INTRODUCE DETAIL

*While some of the features used to create the garden are expensive, many are much more affordable, being either homemade or opportunistic finds displayed in a novel way*

**THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT** Inexpensive metal urns, bought by mail order, have been used to add gravitas to the kitchen gateway. The inscription in the stone below them reads, "Going to the dogs", as the path beyond the gate leads to the family's pet dogs' grave  
**TOP RIGHT** The gate opening into the kitchen garden adds a quirky touch with its design featuring three garden forks. Bought from B&Q, they have been fitted into a custom-made frame and liberally painted with durable Valti Opaque exterior paint  
**ABOVE LEFT** The loggia wall has been painted a warm terracotta colour, bringing a beautiful Tuscan glow to the courtyard, even on a damp evening **ABOVE RIGHT** Another set of gateposts have been topped with wire baskets filled with local pebbles - a simple but stylish idea **OPPOSITE** Robert and Anna moved into the partly completed house in 2000, and their initials, either side of the gilded inscription, mark their commitment to the project 



PLANT INTEREST IS KEY IN THE COLDER MONTHS

*In a garden as neat and meticulously planned as this one, plants need to be kept in peak condition. Designed to look good all year, it could never be described as low maintenance*

**THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT** This ceanothus bush was successfully cloud-pruned and grew against the wall of the courtyard until a couple of winters ago, when it didn't survive a severe frost. A tightly clipped buttress of pyracantha now takes its place **TOP RIGHT** The seed heads of cow parsley, growing freely beside the lake at Broadwoodside, create a delicate and beautiful structure in the mist **ABOVE LEFT** A screen of living willow forms a lattice of stems around the pool in the kitchen garden. When it gets too high, it is cut back with a chainsaw **ABOVE RIGHT** Flagstones for the paths in the garden, made of smooth Carmyllie sandstone, were salvaged from an old flax mill in Arbroath **OPPOSITE** These five globe-shaped *Prunus fruticosa* 'Globosa' trees were originally chosen for the squares in the upper courtyard but failed to thrive there, so were transplanted to the field behind the house 🇬🇧