

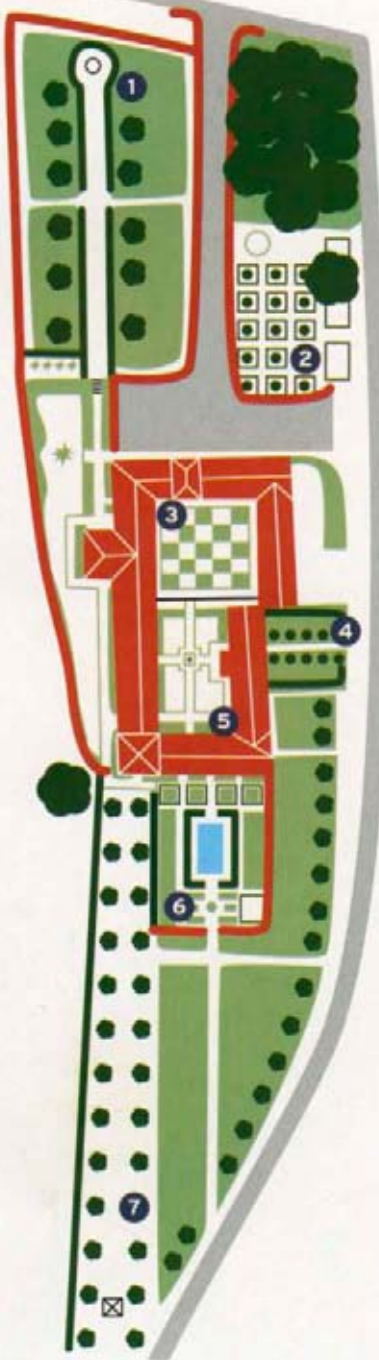
LIFTING THE SPIRIT

When they were planning this new garden, designed to offer year-round interest – even in the long Scottish winters – its owners candidly admit that many ideas came from books and magazines

TEXT ANTOINETTE GALBRAITH | PHOTOGRAPHS RAY COX



The upper courtyard of this garden in East Lothian has at its centre an aviary, which was inspired by fruit cages by Arabella Lennox-Boyd and made by Stewart & Buglass (tel: 01620-828126). The courtyard is divided into a chequerboard of 25 square beds, some cobbled, some turfed, and others planted with standard *Acer platanoides*. The standard trees are underplanted with clipped box balls, *Pachysandra terminalis* and grasses



GARDEN PLAN
 (left) 1 Dogs' tomb.
 2 Orchard.
 3 Upper courtyard.
 4 Old farmhouse
 garden. 5 Lower
 courtyard.
 6 Vegetable
 garden.
 7 Hornbeam
 avenue



When the builders first started, the garden looked like the Battle of Ypres,' says Robert Dalrymple standing in the upper courtyard of the East Lothian garden that surrounds the house he lives in with his wife, Anna, and their four teenage children, Ellie, Sophia, Honor and David. 'But rather as you look at holiday brochures, we used to look at gardens in books and magazines. I saw one photograph and thought, "yes, that is what I want the garden to be like." All you need is one photograph to get you started; all the ideas here come from books.' Which is perhaps not surprising when you learn that Robert is a book designer.

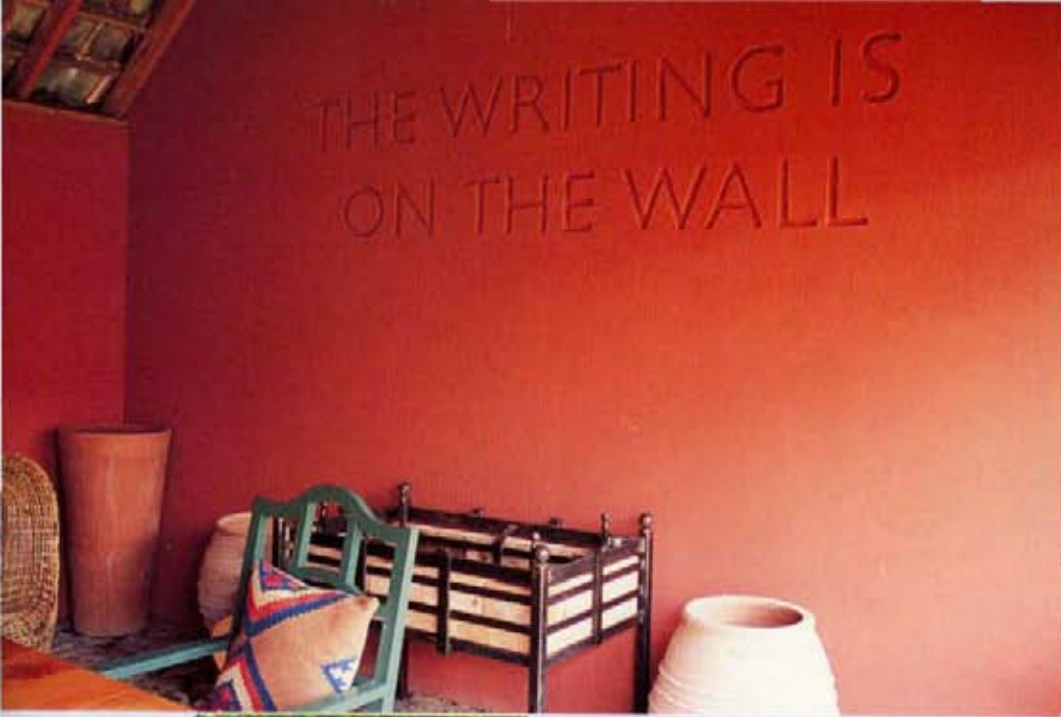
The garden was started just seven years ago. The Dalrymples outgrew their last home, 'because the children became increasingly

interested in ponies and there was no land,' so with a degree of reluctance, Robert and Anna decided to move.

Their current home is a steading, a collection of old farm buildings on four sides of a courtyard surrounded by open countryside and approached by a long track that winds through fields of wheat. Robert was persuaded when he noticed the property was protected from the northwest by a row of mature lime trees. 'The steading was derelict except for one remaining cottage,' he explains. 'But you could see it was in a sheltered spot.'

From the moment work began on the tumbledown buildings, Robert and Anna starting thinking about the garden. 'We really had to as the garden was right there, especially the upper courtyard which was in the middle of everything.' They began working out a plan and

THIS PAGE Yellow *Phlomis fruticosa* grows among catmint and peonies (top). Wheat fields surround the garden (below). **OPPOSITE** The walls of the loggia (top left) are decorated with a motto - MDF letters were set into the wet plaster and later removed. The sundial (top right) is by Michael Harvey. The lower courtyard is turfed (below right). William, the African Grey parrot (bottom left), lives in the aviary (middle left)







the builders laid out the bones of the garden at the same time as they built the house.

The upper courtyard is reached through an arch that links the stables to the house itself. It opens on to a chequerboard of 25 square beds: standard trees underplanted with box, tall grasses and *Pachysandra* are interspersed with squares of lawn and cobble sets. The focal point of the courtyard is a Victorian-style aviary whose occasional resident is William, an African Grey parrot; mostly he prefers to fly free. On the northeast side of the courtyard is an open loggia for entertaining, although, laughs Robert, 'It's not often that we need a shady place to eat outdoors in Scotland.' More frequently, the family eats at a table outside the kitchen.

Planting was chosen to work year-round. 'We wanted plenty of shape that would look good especially in the winter, which is long and dark this far north,' says Robert.

The planting is 'boosted' month by month by a succession of bulbs, including snowdrops, spring snowflakes (*Leucojum vernalis*),

In the vegetable garden (main picture), raised beds surround a rusted-iron urn planted with *Atriplex hortensis* and cosmos. The gate inset with three painted garden forks was inspired by George Carter's gate illustrated in *The Garden Book* (Phaidon)

different types of tulips and alliums. 'Each square has its own planting, so there is a blast of colour at any one time,' Robert explains. More colour comes from terracotta pots planted with evergreen Mexican orange blossom, *Choisya ternata*, a tough plant which produces scented white flowers in the spring.

Once this area was finished, Robert turned his attention to the lower courtyard, situated just 15 centimetres lower and directly in line with the upper courtyard – 'The axis runs straight from the arch.' He had in mind a pair of colourful herbaceous borders, with plants spilling out over the stone paths, but at this point Anna put her foot down: 'With three daughters she wants to keep the space for the wedding marquee.' Instead a large copper is surrounded by lawn, and Robert planted perennials outside the steading, above what has become the vegetable garden. Here two beds run along a terrace with plants luxuriantly overflowing on to the paving. As in the upper courtyard the focus is on a long flowering season. 'I chose plants that had proved themselves consistently reliable in our last garden and planted them repeatedly along the terrace.' Thus white peonies, deep pink *Centaurea hypoleuca* 'John Couatts', catmint, *Phlomis fruticosa* and red *Crococsmia* 'Lucifer' are interspersed with annual white cosmos providing colour that will last until the autumn.

The centrepiece of the walled vegetable garden is a rectangular pond surrounded by an arcade of willow that is cut right back every winter. The pond is fed by the rainwater that runs off the pantile roof of the steading.

The layout of the kitchen garden has been kept deliberately simple in order to blend in with the surrounding farmland: vegetables are on one side, cutting flowers for the house on the other. The space is bound by a tall stone wall with a wooden gate inset with three, green-painted garden forks in place of bars – another idea found in a book. This is flanked by a young hornbeam avenue, and opens on to a walk leading to a beech pyramid and, beyond, a pond with a swimming hut.

This is one of several walks round and through the garden. The path that leads back to the kitchen on the south side of the house is lined with lime-green *Euphorbia wallichii* alternating with *Cotinus coggyria* 'Royal Purple' and underplanted with hostas.

A topiary walk planted with box and holly, *Phillyrea*, *Viburnum tinus* and Portugal laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) leads from the kitchen through a bright red gate and on, between newly planted beech hedges, to the 'dogs' tomb' surmounted with a finial from one of the Holyrood Brewery buildings that was demolished to make way for the Scottish Parliament.

Round the other side of the house a row of pollarded limes is underplanted with deep blue *Geranium x magnificentum* and swathes of catmint to contrast with the traditional yellow-ochre limewash of the old farmhouse walls.

'This garden is a juggling act,' says Robert, who admits none of this would be possible without the expert help of Guy Donaldson, who has worked in the garden since work began in 1999. 'If we can keep all the balls in the air, there should be interest all year round' □

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The old farmhouse garden is planted with *Phlomis russeliana* and *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'. A sunny border by the house contains *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote', santolina and sages. The south side of the house has a border planted with *Euphorbia wallichii* and cotinus. The swimming hut, inspired by photographs of the Prince of Wales's garden at Highgrove, was made by a local fencing contractor; it overlooks the lake, which is fringed by weeping willows

