

Back to square one

As Anna Dalrymple makes coffee in the kitchen at Broadwoodside, near Gifford, in East Lothian, we are interrupted by the peeping of a fire alarm that needs its batteries changed. All alarms are in order, though: the noise is emanating from William, an African grey parrot. He has been with the family for 12 years, and his occasional summer lodgings are the central feature in the courtyard garden outside — an iroko structure copied from the grand fruit cages at Ascott House, Sir Evelyn and Lady de Rothschild's home in Buckinghamshire.

The owners of this courtyard garden started from scratch to ensure year-round interest. By **Caroline Donald**

It sits in the centre of 25 squares, divided into a chessboard of cobble, lawn and low-level blocks of evergreen planting under trees tightly pruned into lollipop shapes: Dalrymple's husband, Robert, 52, a book designer with offices in Edinburgh, is a stickler for symmetry and order. As he scoots out to work, he greets me in the same fruity timbres as his writer brother, William, after whom the parrot is

named. "Shut up, William!" is a frequent shout in the family when either one gets above himself.

Broadwoodside has come a long way since the couple bought the semiderelict property in 1997. Today, it is an eight-bedroom house arranged around two courtyards, the farm buildings brought together and gentrified. Despite its relative youth, the central garden, designed by the Dalrymples and planted and

maintained by Guy Donaldson, is fast becoming one of the most influential new gardens in Scotland. What can we learn from it?

Beg, steal and borrow

Just like William the parrot, Dalrymple admits that she and Robert are shameless copyists: they found the inspiration for the layout of the garden in a book about the interior designer John Stefanidis's creation at a similar set of buildings in Dorset.

Visiting other gardens is also a great way to glean ideas: the Dalrymples were impressed by the laurel bushes at Rousham, William Kent's sublime landscape in Oxfordshire, which were trimmed to a flat top. And



The upper courtyard, with its fruit cage/aviary, is divided into a chequerboard of grass, cobbles and tightly pruned trees. The lower courtyard beyond is less formal. Above, alliums stand out against the ochre walls

Mike Wilkinson

in the sculptures and beautiful engravings that are dotted around the place, you can see the ghost of Ian Hamilton Finlay's Little Sparta, that iconic contemporary Scottish garden in the Pentland Hills, near Edinburgh.

Design and detail

Despite the optimistic inclusion of a wisteria-lined loggia in the upper courtyard, the British climate, especially in Scotland, is not always conducive to lounging around outside, so it was important always to have something to look at from warm interiors. Many of the windows face into the sheltered upper courtyard, so strong architectural features — be they plants, sculptures or the aviary — look good whatever the weather.

Large pots of flowers, perfectly placed in the centre of the cobbled squares, can be changed on a seasonal basis, but the formal layout means that the space will present a fine picture at any time of year. "It's a good garden for bad weather," Dalrymple says.

There is a lower courtyard, reached through a stone gate, where she holds the ascendancy over her tidy-minded husband. The planting in this area is more relaxed, with roses growing up the walls and the occasional *Alchemilla mollis* allowed to wander from the borders onto the paths.

Looking outwards, the views from the windows of the kitchen, one of the most used rooms in the house, take the eye up to a red gate via a narrow pathway

lined with topiary. From the other side of the kitchen, you see a border of purple cotinus against the bright green of euphorbia.

Lines of beauty

On the outer edges of the 1½-acre garden, the planting becomes less formal, but Robert's eye for symmetry can be seen in the avenues of planting such as lime and hornbeam, and in the allée of irises. A judicious run of the mower has created straight paths and sight lines to various pieces of sculpture, helping to differentiate between the managed garden and the farmland beyond. Even in the orchard, a neat square of long grass studded with spring bulbs has been mown around each tree, forming a grid that echoes the upper courtyard.

Repetition and restraint

One of the ways to create a sense of order is to use repetition and block planting, which will also give a contemporary, designed feel, rather than one of romantic disorder. In the upper courtyard, for example, each square is crammed with only one type of evergreen — box balls, yew, hebe or rosemary, all trimmed to a tidy, flat surface, like a plush shag-pile carpet.

Elsewhere, whole beds are filled largely with geraniums or pulmonarias, or have a palette constrained to three or four plant varieties. This is not the sort of garden for impulse purchases of a single specimen from a plant fair. Each has to earn its place.



Colour

In a climate where skies are often grey, colour can be lacking. Painting features and buildings is a good way to introduce it. The Dalrymples have used a deep oxblood red on their gates and window frames, while the beautiful ogee pavilion is painted in the pale orange wash traditional in the area. It acts as a perfect foil for the pink and purple planting in front.

In the long herbaceous border, cobalt blue wooden posts offer a contrast with purple, orange and lime planting, and winter cheer is provided by a living willow fence around the formal pond in the kitchen garden, woven from different varieties to provide fiery tones. This is cut back in early spring to form a neat hedge.

A sense of humour

Lastly, don't be too po-faced. The Dalrymples have included sculptures with names such as A Load of Balls (a pile of spheres in various materials), and a trio of garden forks from B&Q have been spray-painted and mounted as the top panel in a gate — again, it's an idea copied from another garden.

✚ You can visit Broadwoodside today, 1pm-6pm; scotlandsgardens.org. For more details, see broadwoodside.co.uk

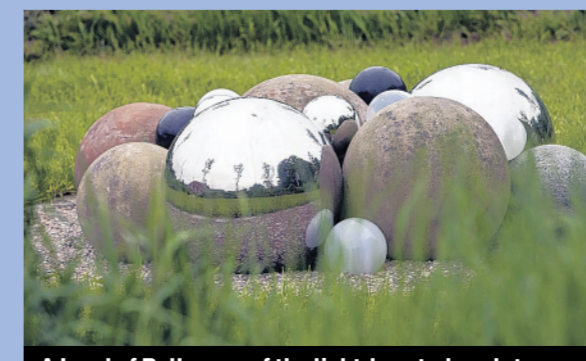
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ST See a picture gallery of Broadwoodside's all-weather gardens at thesundaytimes.co.uk/gardening



Anna and Robert Dalrymple bought Broadwoodside 15 years ago, when it was in a semi-derelict state

IT WAS IMPORTANT ALWAYS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK AT FROM WARM INTERIORS: 'IT'S A VERY GOOD GARDEN FOR BAD WEATHER'



A Load of Balls, one of the light-hearted sculptures