

GARDEN CHRONOLOGY 1983-2021 (38 YEARS)

Arrived here in 1983 – the chronology illustrates an evolving garden where ideas were tried and tested, some did not work, others did. Gardening is certainly a learning process every day.

1983: No plants front or back, 2 almost dead apple trees, 2 Willows and 7 Leylandii

1984/87: All fences replaced in 1984. All came down in the 1987 Hurricane along with one willow and our chimney pot that scored a direct hit on next doors greenhouse.

1987: Vegetable plot established where current courtyard is. All fences replaced – this time more robust.

1990: Fruit cage built where cutting beds are now and new compost heap established where the rose bed is now.

1992: First greenhouse (where our sitting room is now) and the start of adding flower beds in the area where the current greenhouses and patio are. Apple trees removed.

1992/2000: Front driveway added, grass taken up and replaced by sleeper bed and gravel. Front fences replaced. Started taking up back lawns and adding beds and brick paths. Sheds put in at back of the garden. First paths built by Sue Wright (RIP).

2005: We moved out for 7 months whilst major remodelling took place in the house. This changed the orientation of the house in relation to what it looked out on. Deck attached and winter beds added. Two new greenhouses set up and initially surrounded by shingle and pots but later changed to current configuration. This area was bordered by a dangerous elder and Hawthorne at the time. Initially the site of our plant sales.

2006: Courtyard raised beds and water feature added. We did this as a distraction project to cope with the grief of losing my beautiful sister Siobhan and Denis's Mum Alice. (she liked to sit in this part of the garden in the afternoon sun) The planting in these 3 beds has associations with them.

2007: Summer House added to the garden, originally Aideen's working at home office but later an area to have tea on open days.

2008: Began growing and propagating succulents for the first time. Opened the garden for Seaford in Bloom and other local charities for the first time. Won Seaford in Bloom 'Plantsman's Cup'

2009: Opened for NGS for the first time as a pair with Driftwood. Charlotte Weycham, The Galloping photographed and reviewed the garden saying, "Is this the smallest botanical garden in Britain?"

2011: Leylandii taken out creating far more space and light than we imagined. Native trees added. Left with a dreadful mess of fencing as the garden borders 7 gardens at the back. Negotiated with all the owners and we replaced the fence. (They were delighted). Moved plants sale to this area and added tables and chairs for afternoon teas. Old garage with the asbestos roof taken down and new brick garage added. Climbers and a vine added to grow around the garage.

2012: New seating area added to the long border. November 2012 the street flooded and poured into the garage. Thankfully eventually managed to persuade the council to add in a new storm drain. Moved compost area from side of garage down to the end of the garden and built the compost bays.

2013: January, long period of snow and ice (think it was the last time we had serious snow). Lost lots of plants and the fruit cage collapsed under the weight of snow. Gazebo not safe due to weight of climbers so replaced.

2014: Articles on the garden appeared in Sussex Living 'Plantsman's Paradise' – copy in summer house.

2015/16: Long border revamped. Bed in front of summer house removed to provide additional seating. Hawthorne and elder hedge removed near greenhouses and raised bed and Laurel added to provide a screen. Shingle patio replaced with brick. 3 cut flower beds created and paved. Second seating area added to long border.

2017/18: Added deck to bottom of the garden for afternoon tea area. Raised brick bed added to front garden and front borders revamped.

2019: The hazards of having pots on the top deck meant that the joists were rotting from all the watering. Whole deck replaced after we rehomed a family of toads who had taken up residence there.

2019/21: After opening the garden for the NGS and others for 10 years we decided to have a year off to travel a bit more and undertake a major revamp of the back garden. Little did we know at that time how Covid and other health issues would impact on these plans. In the end it turned out well as our great helpers Dan and Matt Smith worked through lockdown, and with social distancing, they were able to undertake hard landscaping and heavy jobs in the revamp. We got to do the nice bits of planning and planting.

We had three major reasons for the revamp, Climate Change was the first, some very invasive plants/weeds was the second and finally we needed to create spaces that were more manageable for our age. We seemed to be spending our lives watering after 3 years of incredibly dry summers and the Willow tree that dominated the central part of the garden was taking away water and beginning to undermine the paths. When we moved here 38 years ago it would have been unheard of to leave Echium, Dahlia, Gingers, and Cannas outside to overwinter, now there is no problem.

The Invaders

Three plants had become the bane of our lives. **Aegopodium Podagraria** (variegated ground elder). I love the plant, but it has no place in a mixed border. We only keep it in pots now and touch wood we have eradicated it from the garden.

The same applies to **Houttuynia Cordata**, which again is lovely in the right place but not in a mixed border. Because of composting bits of it found their way into the courtyard raised beds where it choked everything. We have not yet won the battle of getting rid of all of this, but we are on the way. We changed all the soil in the three courtyard beds and did not replant any of the old plants into these beds. We still have it in two other areas of the garden, but we are trying to stay on top of it.

The third invasive plant that choked everything else off were some types of **Celandine** and other members of the Ranunculaceae family. We think they must have come in with some soil improver or courtesy of the birds. One of the leaves looks deceptively like Geum and I have been known to lovingly pot it up only to discover later in the season that it was not Geum. Hopefully, this is now gone from the courtyard and we will just have to keep on top of it in the borders.

AND as if nature were getting back at us for ejecting her plants, bindweed has made an appearance for the first time in 20 years. It even had the temerity to flower. Denis is on a new mission to get rid of it.

What and who has influenced our new planting and the new beds?

We had a new water meter fitted in 2019 and the first year was a bit of an eye opener in terms of the increase in our water bills. We wanted to create some spaces that were less reliant on supplementary watering.

We had visited Beth Chatto's garden in Essex and then saw the Beth Chatto Trust exhibit at Hampton Court in 2019. We were drawn to recreating a version of a drought garden. We had read quite a few different books and articles on the subject. In 2018 we had also visited Olivier Filippi's Mediterranean garden in Sete, France. Like Beth Chatto his fantastic garden is planted with no watering in mind.

A further influence at this time was Jimi Blake from Huntingbrook in Co Wicklow, Ireland. Not so much in terms of the drought garden (Wicklow is probably the wettest place on earth) but in terms of planting some more exotic plants that are now in the long border.

Our remodelling took place in the late Autumn of 2019 (when the big willow was taken out and the ground was prepared for the spring). The serious work began as lock down started and was slightly frustrated by sourcing materials. We are completely indebted to Dan and Matt Smith from Ace of Spades for all the hard landscaping, tree removal and their 'can do approach to whatever we asked them to do. Dan came up with the sourcing of the stone circle when our original suppliers let us down.

The top bed required a huge amount of additional soil to get it level but was a lovely bed to plant and a few weeks after planting it had filled out and the hard landscaping was softened by the plants. We were too late to get sweet peas into this bed in 2020 so we are really looking forward to how this will look in 2021. We have kept the colour palette simple in this bed with pink, purple, white and cream. (although I have a feeling the Echium is going to be red)

The lower bed (the gravel bed) has been really successful and plants that we have struggled with in the past like Monarda have thrived.

The top of the long border has been revamped keeping some of the old structure but adding the Olive tree, Gingers, Cannas, Tetrapanax, and other exotics.

The middle bit of the border, where we are fighting off Houttuynia Cordata, has had lots of Dahlia added (they have been moved from the cutting bed) so that we can give them more space to flower.

We have added more bulbs everywhere to provide some spring interest.

Plant sales and final comments –

We start these in April of each year and continue them until August. If you want to hear about them, you can be added to our mailing list. We are always happy to take plant pots and labels back to recycle them and cut down our use of one-time plastic.

We hope our revamp provides interest for visitors who have seen the garden in its various incarnations and to new visitors seeing it for the first time.

Aideen & Denis Jones

November 2020

Below list of suppliers, trades people and nurseries

Dan Smith, Ace of Spades - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100024703242320>

Beth Chatto- on line nursery - <https://www.bethchatto.co.uk/>

Olivier Fillipi- blogs and other information - <https://www.jardin-sec.com/>

Jimi Blake , Huntingbrook , - daily information on planting and on line courses
- <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Landmark---Historical-Place/HUNTING-BROOK-GARDENS-326862913473/>

James Ridgen, Treefella – tree surgery and disposal of green waste
<http://sussextreefella.co.uk/>

Pelham Plants – superb nursery near Laughton - <https://pelhamplants.co.uk/nursery/>

Staverton nursery - <http://www.stavertonnursery.co.uk/>

Elizabeth MacGregor nurseries <https://www.elizabethmacgregornursery.co.uk/>

KPS – compost , top soil - <https://www.kps.uk.com/>

Allwoods nursery- pelargoniums and succulents <https://www.allwoods.net/>

Twelve Nuns Nursery – Hartington gingers - <https://www.twelvenunns.co.uk/nursery/>