

A large blue funnel is positioned at the top of the frame, pouring a stream of water into a circular hole in a green lawn. The water creates a dark, turbulent pool in the center of the hole. The lawn is scattered with several pink rose petals. The background is a solid dark blue color.

The redesign
of her London garden
gave Tricia Guild the
chance to create
an outdoor environment
every bit as distinctively
modern as the interior
it partners

GARDEN GUILD

TEXT DIANA ROSS

PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES MERRELL



OPPOSITE A blue-glazed fountain trickles water into a pool covered with lime-green duckweed. THIS PAGE *Alchemilla mollis* and *Soleirolia soleirolii* grow through cracks in the paving; the blue umbels of *Agapanthus* 'Bressingham Blue' rise from waxy foliage



Growth [is] the only evidence of life,' according to Cardinal Newman (1801–90). Tricia Guild, founder, chairman and creative director of the eponymous Designers Guild, exemplifies this aphorism in her enthusiastic embracing of life in all its aspects and in her absolute commitment to all kinds of growth: spiritual and artistic as well as organic. For example, the Sufi mystic Georges Gurdjieff is named on her official CV as having been a powerful influence. He features on a list which includes, among others, Matisse, Howard Hodgkin, Wagner, Puccini and architects Le Corbusier and I M Pei. All are credited with helping to create Tricia's distinctive style.

Tricia Guild has been growing things from seed since early childhood, when her grandfather set aside a corner of his Hampstead garden for her exclusive use. She still loves growing herbs, flowers and salads – on her hillside garden in Tuscany, as

well as in the London garden featured on these pages. A pair of potagers, more usually found near the kitchen at the back of a house, has here been created at the front, in a departure from the norm typical of Tricia. No one but Tricia may pick anything from these plots because 'other people leave a nasty mess. When I pick anything, you can't see it's been picked.'

But this heartfelt need for order and control has to be set against an equal yearning for the romantic: as she says, 'I do like a certain amount of freedom and wildness, but it must be within a very architectural structure. The box, yews and limes in this garden need to be really well clipped to contrast with the plants growing as they want.' As they want, up to a point: what Tricia definitely does not want is any suggestion of a wild garden. Above all, she wanted a garden to reflect the modern design of the interior it now complements.

Tricia redesigned her house and felt that the

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT

Pleached limes offer shade and privacy. Lady's mantle and mind-your-own-business seed themselves between the paving stones. An aerial view of the clear geometric layout of the garden. Tricia Guild and husband Richard Polo. *Rosa 'Tuscany Superb'*. Logs are neatly stacked by the large glass doors, which make the garden an extension of the basement







charming, country feel of the existing garden was no longer appropriate. As she sees it, 'not being sentimental about the garden doesn't mean not loving it, but you have to take a firm line,' and a troublesome instinct to hang on to some of the original planting for sentimental reasons was carefully curbed by the woman who worries that carting from garden to garden a much-loved pair of stone pots she inherited from her grandparents errs on the mawkish.

Tricia Guild is used to working as one of a team. When she recognized a kindred spirit in garden designer Arne Maynard, she had no qualms about asking him to help. 'Arne and I are of like minds, but Arne has a deep understanding of gardens from below the surface. He taught me to exercise the same discipline in the garden that I do in the house, and make choices; otherwise you end up with a beautiful country border, and I didn't want that. Working with Arne has been incredibly stimulating. I think he enjoyed working with me to create a garden as modern and visually strong as the house.'

Arne's brief was to create an outdoor living space: though Tricia Guild loves gardening, she also wanted to be able to relax in her garden. 'It makes one use the space as a room rather than somewhere simply to walk around, and it is very nice to be able to sit down with a drink, and read the papers or a book.' The finished garden includes four distinct sitting areas, two at the front, two at the back; each features interchangeable arrangements

of decorative pots, scented plants and assorted *objets trouvés*.

Only a couple of roses from the original planting – *R. 'New Dawn'* and *R. 'Cécile Brünner'* – were given stay of execution by Arne, whose task was to identify a range of suitable plants to express the vivid, trademark Guild palette – lime green, mauve, violet, purple, magenta, indigo and flame, although a 'splodge' of red-hot poker did not work and was swiftly jettisoned. Happily, the laborious business of planting thousands of scilla bulbs along the cracks of the paving to create gorgeous, brilliant blue lines in spring – reflecting the indigo of the ceramic tiles in the two ponds – most emphatically does work.

To provide the illusion of romantic abandon throughout the year, a number of potentially troublesome self-seeders have been planted: *Alchemilla mollis* and the touchingly fragile mind-your-own-business soften the paving lines; *Verbena bonariensis* provides late-summer colour; *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wolfenii* contributes lime-green flower spikes; and creeping, bronze-leaved, purple-flowered bugle, *Ajuga reptans*, supplies year-round ground cover. Nevertheless, anything that wanders in uninvited, even anything as irresistible as a Welsh poppy, gets short shrift. As Tricia warns, 'you must really watch those colours, even in a country garden.' Tricia Guild describes the garden's spirit as romantic. Arne prefers minimal. It is both: the result of a remarkably successful partnership □
Arne Maynard (tel: 020-7736 9664)

OPPOSITE In the front garden, a standard *Quercus ilex* stands in a topiary-divided bed of vegetables and herbs with rosemary at each corner. THIS PAGE *Campanula x haylodgensis* 'Plena' (top left). *Rosa* 'New Dawn' climbs over first-floor balustrading (top right) and down a drainpipe; beneath it are pots of topiary, lemon verbena, *Lippia citriodora*, tomatoes and salvia. *Allium cristophii* (below)

