

JUNE'S GARDEN

Being able to memorize and correctly pronounce the Latin names for flowers doesn't necessarily make a gardener, but it helps when trying to identify flowers, especially when you're in the company of the experts.

In May Judy Osburn and I chose a trip through Expo Tours to visit gardens in France and England. At the last part of the trip we visited Sissinghurst, a famous castle-like home and garden first created in England by Vita Sackville-West and her husband Sir Harold Nicholson. I was trying to jot down the name of a lavender viola-like flower. The tag nearest it read, *Phyla nodiflora*. I had no idea what a *Phyla* was, but as I started to write it down, juggling with my camera, my purse, two books I had just bought, and my raincoat, the pad and pencil slipped out of my hand. Not realizing that I was talking to myself, as the rest of my group had gone ahead, a young voice answered my question of what the flower was. "Pardon me, ma'am, those lavender flowers are *Viola cornuta*, the *Phylas* bloom later." He also handed me my pad and pencil. The young voice belonged to a boy about the age of 11 or 12. When I thanked the boy for helping me, his father standing nearby said, "I say there, my boy is a proper lad and he knows his Latin."

Our tour started in France. The itinerary of the tour included many gardens I had read about and had dreamed of some day visiting; for one, Monet's home and garden. You enter this garden through a gated path that leads you to the landscaped area in front of the house. Our first view was breath-taking, as the garden was in full bloom. There is no lawn; the whole area is flower beds divided by paths and metal archways covered with all colors of roses. There were beds of pink, white and red peonies, clematis, iris, several varieties of cransbill (perennial geraniums), Love-in-the-mist (blue *Nigella damascena*), chartreuse flowered Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), Dames Rocket (lavender and white *Hesperis matronalis*), Honesty, or sometimes called Money plant (*Lunaria annua*), Columbine (*Aquilegia*) in all colors and forms, pale peach Oriental poppies (*Papaver orientale*). The flower beds were also thickly planted with many other varieties of flowers. Two large beds of annual red Geranium (*Pelargonium*) flanked the front door of the two-story house trimmed with green shutters and front staircase. The garden was styled in an informal pattern much like a cottage garden. Monet's garden was as important to him as his painting.

We were privileged to see the interior of the house. The walls were covered with Japanese engravings and those of other artists. His collection of artists had been bought and given by artists he held in high esteem: Cezanne, Renoir, Manet, Morrisot, Degas, Delacroix, Rodin bronzes, and many others. The originals are now scattered throughout the world. The ones we saw are reproductions, however it is still impressive to see so many famous paintings in one house. All the furniture is still there: the cheerful all-yellow dining room with painted table, chairs and paneled walls; the kitchen, my favorite, the walls covered with blue and white delft tiles from ceiling to floor, a wall of shining copper pots, blue and white checked gingham curtains, red tiled floor, and a pot of red geraniums dressed the blue table in the middle of the room.

To visit the famous lily pond and Japanese bridge, you walk through an underpass, as the house and garden and the pond area are divided by a railroad track. The Japanese-style garden has a path around the large pond. There are two bridges actually; however the famous one that Monet portrayed in his paintings is roofed with a trellis covered with wisteria. Huge stands of bamboo are bordered by a stream that fills the pond. To hold the one-and-a-half-foot bank of dirt and plants from the water, a woven structure made from short lengths of bamboo laces the sides of the bank.

The pond, whose water comes from the river Epte, is surrounded by weeping willows. The banks are filled with a mass of plants such as heather, ferns, rhododendrons, azaleas, iris, and roses. In the pond itself grow many varieties of water lilies. A slight breeze that ripples the surface of the water mirrors images of the willow trees, grasses and other plants that grow on the edge of its banks, shifting clouds in the sky, all lend even more interest to the large body of water.

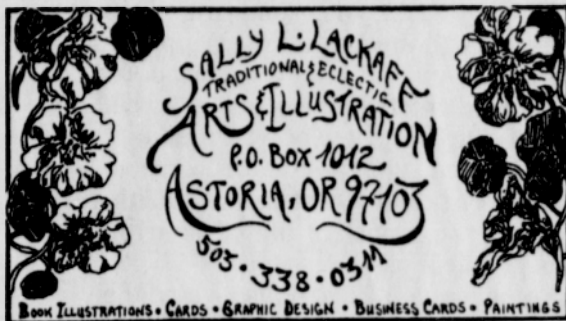
These images and the world of beauty Monet not only created but continued to capture on canvas now continues to be shared by people from all over the world because of donations and time given by foundations, societies, and hundreds of individuals. Every year the Reader's Digest selects three American artists to come to Giverny to paint and visit the region. The Claude Monet Foundation is open from April to October.

Other French gardens we visited were more formal: green stylized shrubs, not many flowers, most color is formed by adding colored rocks and gravel that make patterns when viewed from the second stories of the castles.

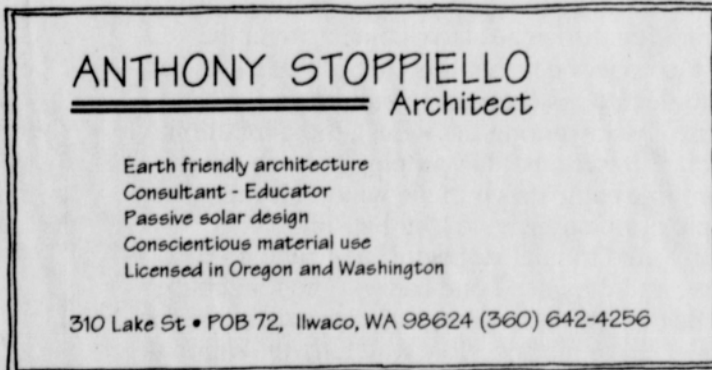
In Paris we did see beautiful window boxes and potted plants that decorate most of the buildings. In our hotel, the Normandy Hotel, huge bouquets of lilies, peonies and iris graced the entrance and the restaurant. On either side of the entrance in window boxes were simple plantings of two types of *Pelargonium*, red ivy and standard geraniums. Across the street the window boxes were planted with small cone-shaped evergreen trees, ivy, and pink geraniums. The evergreen trees gave these a more formal look.

Saying farewell to Paris, we boarded Eurostar train for a journey which took us underneath the Channel to England. I had not looked forward to traveling under that body of water, but the train travels so fast that it seemed only minutes before we were in the countryside of England.

Next month: the Chelsea Flower Show.



We're all born brave, trusting and greedy, and most of us remain greedy. Mignon McLaughlin



What in the name of conscience will it take to pass a truly effective gun-control law? Now in this new hour of tragedy, let us spell out our grief in constructive action. Lyndon B. Johnson



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Show me a man who doesn't want his gun registered, and I'll show a man who shouldn't have a gun.

Homer Cummings

