

The Art Deco Garden

The first owner of Edwin Fine's early 1930s Grade 2 listed Art Deco house in Lytton Close was no less than the President of the Royal Horticultural Society of Scotland. However, by the time Edwin moved in (1977) the 150' by 60' garden was sadly neglected, with cracked old paths and overgrown shrub borders. But cometh the time, cometh the man, and Edwin likes a challenge. Together with his wife Toni, a talented artist, who provides great inspiration for ideas for the garden, he started work.

Early Days – "I built a brick path, extended the patio and put in the water feature, which I feel is an extension of the house because it brings the garden right into the house," explained Edwin.

The water feature in question is a rill that runs along the length of the patio. It is backed by a low brick wall into which are set terracotta pipes so water continually plays into the pool. The wall is capped by a bed of low-growing alpine. "The pond is netted," says Edwin, "one, to stop the leaves falling in the water; two, to deter the herons who regularly turn up for a Macdonald's pit-stop; and three, to keep the grandchildren safe. At the left-hand side, I built a bird-bath in it, about 18" square because we get so many birds here as we are so near the Heath."

Taking Gold at Chelsea – When he retired, Edwin took a year's course with the Royal Horticultural Society, "which was fantastic, especially when a group of us were invited to submit proposals for a Chelsea garden. Our designs were accepted and we were all set to go but at the last minute our mentor and lecturer was taken ill." All seemed lost but the RHS offered them the chance to adapt their plan. Seizing their opportunity, a revised and simplified scheme was accepted (it was too late to raise sponsorship).

In 2001, Edwin and his team won the coveted Gold Medal and Best Courtyard Garden in Show Award. "We had every BBC commentator on the stand every day. I think the reason it was successful is because it was so simple; it was mainly box and water and we used misters for the first time at Chelsea which looked like clouds on the water." When the President of the RHS visited their garden, he told Edwin, "One of the reasons you won is that from the moment you are given your plot of land, we had spies seeing how you work as a team. You had a difficult, water-logged plot and we were impressed by the way you all worked together to solve the problems."

The Garden Makeover – Last year, Edwin decided that the garden was looking a bit jaded. "I had a ruthless four months with a pickaxe and dug up most of my garden. I filled up 45 green wheelie bins with roots! The old dead fruit trees with enormous root systems were the worst. You dig a trench right round the tree, soak it with water, dig out some more, soak it again with a hose and dig and dig and dig. If I'd known how hard it was before I started, I'd never have done it."

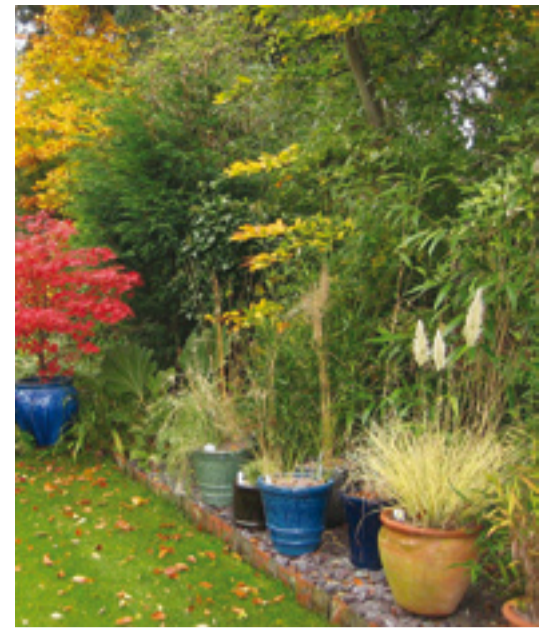
The lawn was widened by 4' to give greater perspective. I then used 30 bags of horticultural grit, 30 bags of horse manure, and 40 bags of compost. Twice a year I top-dress the beds with 6X which is the best manure and gives fantastic results."

The Ornamental Grass Collection – "After a visit to Maine USA, where I'd seen grasses that I'd never seen before, I decided to make a feature of them. I laid a permeable membrane along the right-hand border and covered it with 45 bags of large slate gray chippings." Today the grasses are displayed in a collection of beautifully glazed ceramic and terracotta pots. Their form and structure can be studied a close hand. Some of Edwin's favourites are: Evergreen grasses, Deciduous grasses, Panicum shenandoah, Pennisetum orientale, Miscanthus strictus, Pennisetum Hamein, Carex variegata, Miscanthus Little Kitten, Chondropetalum tectrum, Miscanthus Nippon, Juncus 'Elk Blue', Hordeum jubatum, Juncus spiralis, Lagurus ovatus, Liieria 'Taupe Sunset', Stipa tenuissima.

Plants come from Blooms of Bressingham, Diss, Norfolk and Knoll Gardens, Hampreeston, Wimborne, Dorset.

Two large and beautifully coloured acers mark the end of this section. The lawn is adorned with three wind-sock seagulls that everyone loves.

Beds And Borders – Edwin is a hands-on, pragmatic gardener, not much given to fashion and fancy planting plans; he buys his plants from local garden centres on principle 'because if we don't support them they will disappear'. He recommends Finchley Nurseries in Burtonhole Lane – 'a wide choice of plants and always very helpful'; and North One Garden Centre at 22 Englefield Road, Islington – 'a fantastic range of exciting plants'. Every plant has to earn its keep but he isn't afraid to move things around



Edwin Fine's Art Deco garden in Lytton Close

frequently: "Don't do it in high summer, but if it's cool and damp and the weather forecast isn't bad for a week, you put it in and water it and there's never any problem."

Well stocked borders fringe the immaculately kept lawns and there are many unusual shrubs and perennials. I was particularly taken with an Arbutus unedo with its strong architectural foliage. Tucked neatly into a dark and shady corner near the house is a small collection of ferns.

The Children's Garden – At the back of the garden where the old Henrietta Barnet apple tree still flourishes, is the children's sandpit and wendy house. Here he plants sunflowers, courgettes and strawberries to ensure that the love of gardening passes on to the next generation.

He also tries to make the children aware of their wider responsibilities to the planet by getting them to bring along plastics and cardboard for recycling when they visit the Suburb with grandpa!

Wild Life – As the house is near the Heath, there is plenty of wildlife and (herons apart) Edwin does his bit to encourage it. As we were discussing this article, a great spotted woodpecker alighted on the bird feeder. "We have bird-boxes, seedheads and a

wood pile and I encourage stinging nettles for butterflies."

Edwin is a great believer in visiting other gardens to get ideas to improve your own patch. Capel Manor is recommended because you can see lots of different gardens in a small area and the

HGS Horticultural Society has a good programme of visits (call Lorraine for details on 8455 0721).

You can visit Edwin's garden at 15 Lytton Close when it opens for the Yellow Book Scheme on 29 June from 2-6pm.

ANNE CRAWLEY

The median is the message?

Rainfall over the past winter (October to March) has been a little under average at 15½ inches, compared with a mean of 16 inches. April has continued this trend with an average total of 2½ inches. It was not the very wet month that we seemed to be promised (or threatened with) in the weather forecasts. Indeed, well over half the total fell in the last four days of the month. However, the soil was nicely wet for gardeners as a very dry February (just over half an inch) was followed by a well above

averagely wet March. Compared with a mean of a little over 2 inches, there was almost 3½ inches. This was the fourth wettest March since 1980. January, too, was wet, though not as unusual as March.

It can be interesting to look at the median or midway figures for the months. Unusually high figures will drag an average up so that it is not a true indication of what one might expect to experience. For instance, a mean of 1.96 inches for February might seem little different from a mean of 2.16 inches for March. And yet

the chance of getting over the median of 1.47 inches in February is only 50%, while in March the median of 2.09 means 50% of years will have more than this much higher figure. November and September are the months with the largest differences between the median and the mean. May is the only month where the median is larger than the average, meaning that the coming month has a 50% chance of experiencing more rainfall than the mean of 2.36 inches.

DIANA IWI

THE GARDEN CALENDAR Your Garden in Summer

- ☛ Keep on top of the weeds: hoe regularly on dry sunny days (and remember to sharpen the hoe when you finish!)
- ☛ Use Phostrogen Plant Food every couple of weeks to boost growth of all container plants.
- ☛ Water sensibly: a good soaking once a week is better than a light sprinkling every day.
- ☛ Keep deadheading the borders and trim privet hedges every month. Don't scalp lawns; they are better left longer in hot, dry spells.
- ☛ Fill gaps in the borders in July with some of these colourful late-flowering perennials, planted in groups of three or more: Crocosmia 'Lucifer', Penstemon 'Schoenholzeri', Hemerocallis 'Frans Hals', Rudbeckia fulgida 'Goldsturm'

Norma Lewis Au Pairs

Everything you want for your home and childcare needs

Au Pairs ■ Mother's Helps ■ Nannies ■ Housekeepers
After School Care ■ Live-in & Live-out Staff Available

Tel/Fax: 020 8950 8611 (UK) 00 44 20 8950 8611 (International)

Mobile: 07956 894589 (UK) 00 44 7956 8945589 (International)



www.normalewisaupairs.co.uk

Email: norma@normalewisaupairs.co.uk

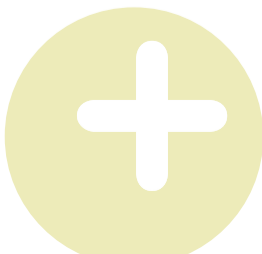
prompt, reliable electrical services

Harland + Voss

020 8451 0345

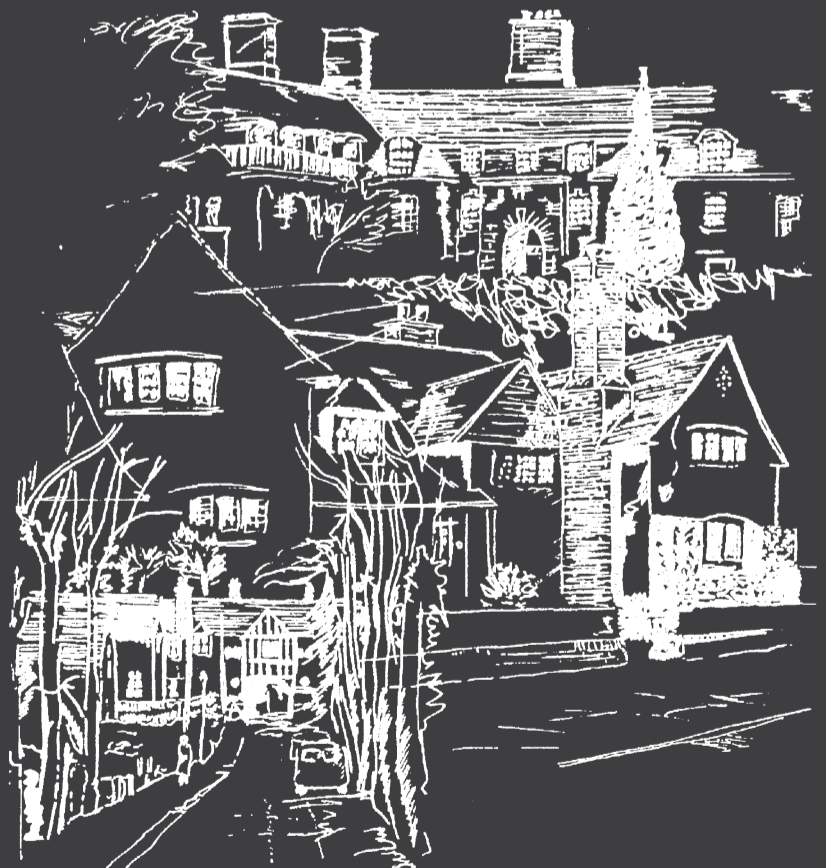
rewiring, installations, indoor & outdoor lighting,
sockets & phone points, testing, security systems

www.harlandvoss.com



Hotblack Dixon

Estate Agents - and a little more



17 Market Place
Hampstead Garden Suburb
London NW11 6JY

Tel: 020 8458 8411 - Fax: 020 8458 4992

E-mail: sale@hotblackdixon.co.uk

Web site: www.hotblackdixon.co.uk