

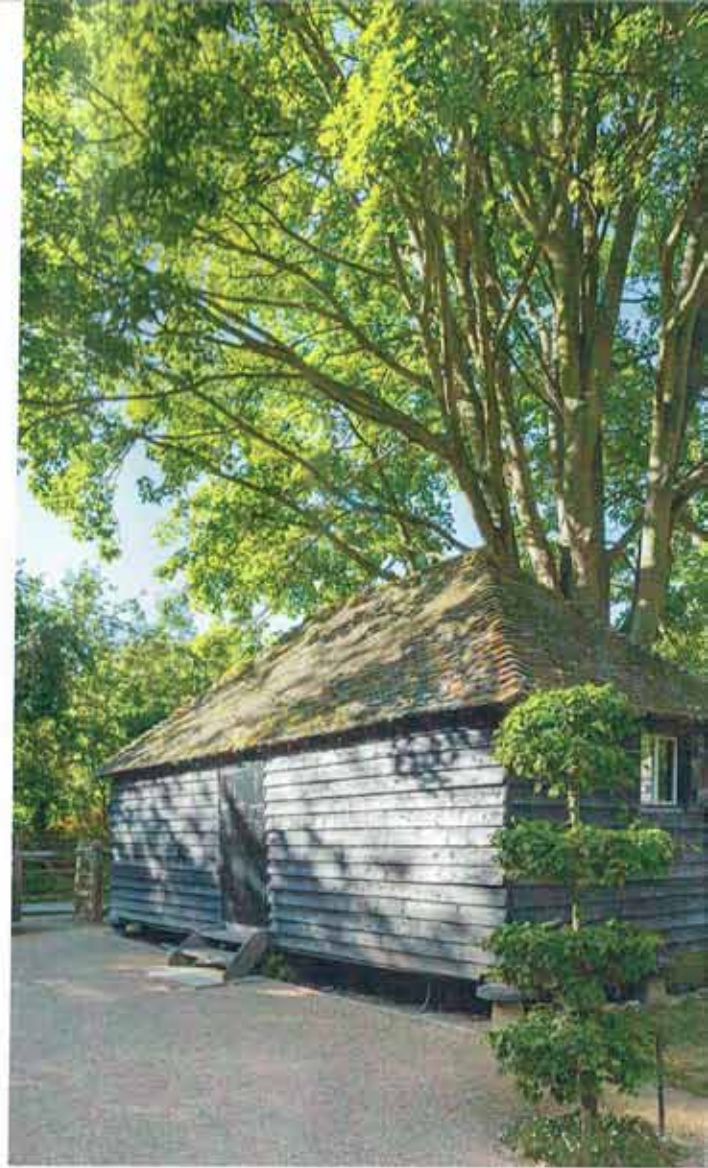
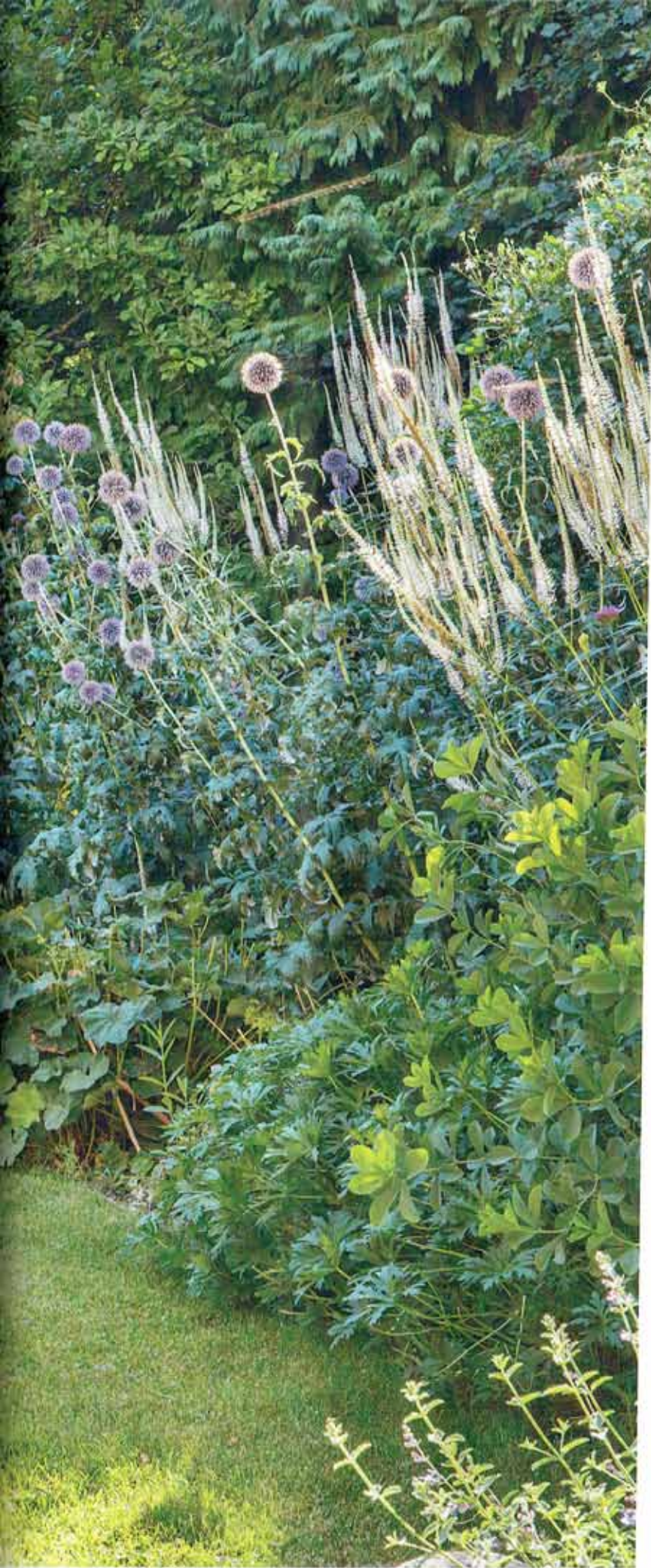
A lush garden scene featuring a large, mature tree with a thick trunk and dense green foliage. The tree stands on a well-maintained lawn. To the right of the tree is a large, dark green, rectangular topiary bush. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall purple flowers and yellow flowers in the foreground. The overall atmosphere is serene and well-tended.

COUNTRY SCHEME

Sleeping beauty
AWAKENED

A tired but much-loved family garden has been given new life thanks to a carefully replanned arrangement of space and exuberant borders

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS



LEFT In little more than two years, the double herbaceous borders have filled out impressively, with pale spires of *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album', mauve pompoms of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue' and mounds of lemon-yellow *Anthemis tinctoria* 'E.C. Buxton'.

ABOVE The granary, which stands on staddle stones, is a listed building that forms the focal point of the Shade Garden.

BELOW Tucked away in a picturesque valley in north Kent, the garden is surrounded by fields on all sides.





Even in a county as blessed with beautiful houses as Kent, Sarah and Rorke Henderson's home is exceptional. Set in a pretty valley near Canterbury, the 18th-century Grade II-listed farmhouse sits in three acres of grounds and the couple fell for it instantly. "We didn't choose it; it chose us," says Sarah.

For a decade, Sarah's energies were divided between improving the house and caring for her family. "The children loved running around and building camps," she says, "but I knew the garden would need attention some day."

Then, in 2013, she met landscape architect Marian Boswall and what the pair have since achieved is astonishing. "I knew Marian was on my wavelength," says Sarah. "I'm confident in my own taste, but I'm no gardener. Without her, none of this would have happened." Marian describes the garden as a sleeping beauty waiting to be brought to life. "There was nothing bad about it," she says, "it was just a bit dilapidated. There was a beautiful granary and a lovely barn, but also an old garage, which encouraged visitors to park right by the house."

The challenge was to link these disparate elements into a coherent whole. "The first, and most important, step was to introduce a sense of spatial hierarchy," says Marian. To this end, the garage was demolished and the driveway moved, so cars now park out of sight and visitors walk across a courtyard of shade-loving plants, through a new gateway and into the front garden. This has been designed as an exquisite White Garden, in homage to the famous original at nearby Sissinghurst, which Sarah has long admired.

Round the corner of the house, there is another hint of Sissinghurst's trademark combination of formal framework and exuberant planting in the enormous double herbaceous borders that run away from the sitting room windows. The planting here is a tour de force, and it is hard to believe that it could look so good after just two years. "It did take off like a rocket," says Marian. This is partly thanks to the combination of perennials she used, including salvias, *Veronicastrum virginicum* and nepeta, but is also because of the introduction of plenty of premium top soil, a generous application of mulch





FAR LEFT The striking metal sculpture set on a stone plinth was designed by landscape architect Marian Boswall and forged by a local blacksmith.

LEFT AND BELOW Planting in the Barn Garden favours a gentle palette of soft pink *Echinacea purpurea* and hazy blue *Perovskia*.

The flight of steps links the seating area to a formal terrace that runs the length of the house.

ABOVE AND BELOW, FAR LEFT Pots of vivid agapanthus, jewel-like salvias and the blue daisy *Felicia amelloides* 'Santa Anita' were all chosen to complement the turquoise pool.





The shepherd's hut makes a romantic focal point in the heart of the meadow.

and the installation of a rain-water fed irrigation system. At the end of these borders, a gap in the formal hedge frames a contrasting view of a nascent orchard and meadow, where a painted shepherd's hut sits in a haze of wild flowers.

In fact, Marian has considered the views from the house as carefully as the views from one garden area to the next. At the back of the property, she laid a broad terrace and formal lawn flanked by clipped yew hedges to create an area ideal for entertaining on a grand scale. These flanking hedges also serve to define a new Pool Garden that encloses the swimming pool to one side, and a courtyard garden leading to the barn.

Before Marian set to work, the area around the pool had been stark and uninviting. Now there is an oak pergola, which offers a shady spot for meals, and a border of vibrant perennials, which looks fantastic next to the brilliant blue water.

In contrast, the Barn Garden has an altogether more muted palette, combining Breedon gravel, silvery oak-edged beds and a planting scheme with a nod to the Mediterranean. It is peaceful, pretty and Sarah's favourite part of the new-look design.

Recently, Sarah was reminded of how she had despaired at the sea of mud surrounding her house. "I've completely forgotten how awful it was," she says, "but now this garden gives me such joy. I could never have expected it to be so beautiful."

GARDEN GUIDE

Garden orientation The house faces north west, with the garden surrounding it on three sides.

Soil type Chalk, improved with imported top soil.

Special features Pool garden, 65-foot-long double herbaceous borders and Mediterranean courtyard.

