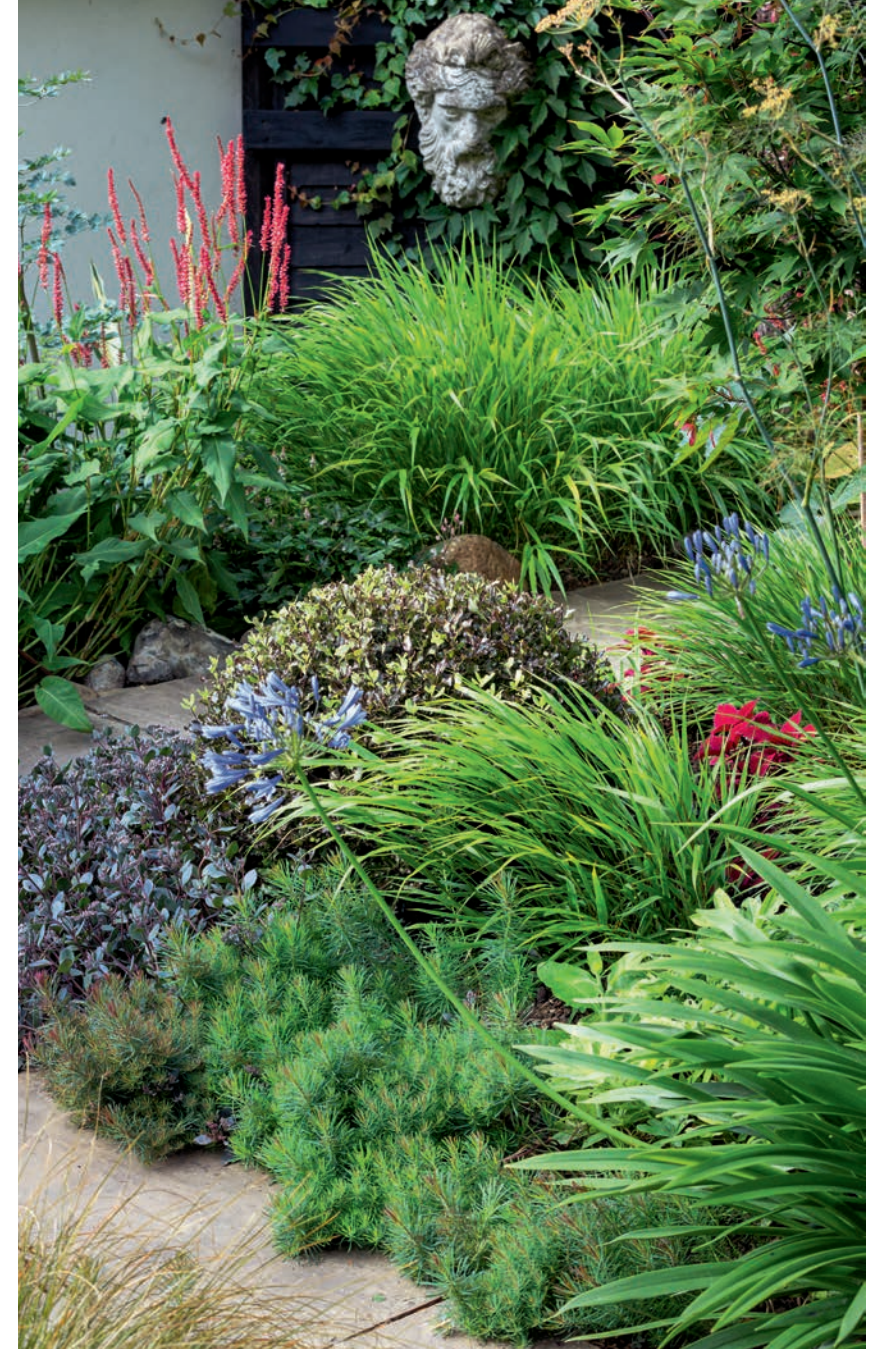


Inner SANCTUM

By adding a contemporary studio building alongside Edwardian Grove Cottage in Suffolk, designer Janey Auchincloss and her husband John have been left with a hidden, cloistered space in which they have created a sheltered garden filled with flamboyant delights

WORDS **BARBARA SEGALL** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Garden designer Janey Auchincloss and her husband John have created a modern 'cloister' garden at their home in Suffolk.



“We borrow the landscape from a garden beyond and the enclosure creates a microclimate”

boundary is formed by the neighbour’s property, while the fourth is provided by trees bordering their garden. One neighbouring tree in particular, an ancient yew, serves as a superb green backdrop –

its only downside is that it is the roosting place for greedy, noisy pigeons.

“We borrow the landscape from a mature garden beyond and the enclosure creates a microclimate,” Janey explains. “When we moved in the neighbour’s extension wall seemed to dominate, but now I hardly see it, because the focus is on the garden that has sprung up within these parameters.”

Janey started out as an illustrator and designer, but she’s always gardened, inheriting her green fingers from her mother. When she became a single parent with two small daughters, she decided to do a one-day-a-week course in Amenity Landscape and

extension’s 16-metre run of floor-to-roof windows, they glow and shimmer within the confines of the rectangular 17 x 7 metre garden.

Janey and John moved into Grove Cottage, in the heart of Suffolk’s picture-perfect village of Lavenham, in 2018. They had owned the cottage since 2016, but spent two years combining its Edwardian character with a modern extension – designed by architect friends at Project Orange – that replaced a 1970s prefab garage. An early sketch shows the bare bones of their modern cottage garden ‘cloister’, created along two boundaries by the glass-dominated facades of their house. The third

Above left The Corten steel tank collects rain water, which Janey uses to water the tree ferns. **Above right** Evergreens such as the rounded form of *Pittosporum* ‘Tom Thumb’ provide year-round structure. **Left** The spiky red burrs of ground-covering *Acaena microphylla*. **Far left** A display of succulents in pots on the traditional Suffolk black weatherboarded wall.

The word ‘cloister’ conjures up a setting in which quiet meditation takes place. The high-ceilinged, light and airy, almost greenhouse-like kitchen and studio that garden designer Janey Auchincloss and her husband John have added to their Edwardian cottage, forms a boundary that contributes precisely such an atmosphere to the garden within. But the plants and combinations that Janey has included in her design for this enclosed space are far from contemplative.

Rather, they are lively, showy and high-octane. Benefitting from the heat that is reflected off the





Above A full run of floor-to-ceiling Crittall windows integrate the garden with the house. **Left** A metal obelisk provides eye-catching punctuation at the corner of the border. **Below** Breezy fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum' makes a great backdrop to purple *Actaea* 'Chocoholic'.



Design at Suffolk's Otley College. From there she moved to Cambridge University's Botanic Garden on a one-year trainee programme before studying for a degree in Garden Design and Landscape at Writtle College in Essex. She worked in a number of gardens before setting up her own garden design business, Janey Auchincloss Designs, in 2006.

Her garden can be seen from every window in the house, upstairs and downstairs. As she points out: "We wake up with it in full sight and go to bed with last looks at it. We see it all year round so the planting had to be special." In a garden that's so visible, every plant must earn its place. Janey has manipulated scale, too, using taller plants with bold flowers and foliage and layering them with textural underplanting to create a jungle effect. She also improved the soil, which is basically clay, through double-digging and the addition of organic matter.

Recycling and repurposing are important to the couple, and the majority of the building materials were re-used. "We used bricks left over from the build, paving from around our friends' pool and timber from their demolished pool building," Janey recalls. "I must also add that John did all the hard landscaping, which included removing 20 tons of rubble left behind by the builder, laying the paving and paths, building the shed, potting bench and our new 'Sitooterie'. I merely drew the pretty picture!"

The Sitooterie, John's lockdown project, is a new seating area, complete with rusty metal pergola.

As a hands-on gardener and designer, Janey knows the value of places to sit and relax in a garden, even though she doesn't always find time herself. But she has found herself drawn to the Sitooterie, especially at the end of a day. "It gives me a totally different perspective of the garden and is the perfect place to stargaze in the evening," she explains.

Apart from that new addition, Janey's original sketch of the garden has changed little since she first began its planning. There are three beds separated from each other by paved paths, which, in the height of summer, are almost impossible to find, so luxuriant is the plant growth. "It is spectacular in summer, with all the zingy colours," Janey notes. "I am not a pastel person and I don't like pinks too much either. I favour orange, blue and purple and flowing shapes, but there is structure from evergreens, including *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' all year." Even though the tree ferns are tied up and protected in winter, they still offer something visual in that season. For early spring colour at ground level there are drifts of snowdrops and tulips. Foliage plants such as *Asarum splendens*, tellimas and tiarellas provide cover and low-level interest from spring onwards.

Janey says she doesn't normally like the concept of the garden as an outdoor room, but she has had to concede that this garden is just that: another room of the house. But it is like no other room, especially at the height of summer when strong-coloured salvias such as 'Amistad', 'Black and Bloom' and *Salvia confertiflora*, with its arching ruddy flower stems, jostle at hip-height below the luxuriant fronds of tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). In late summer, *Tithonia rotundifolia* 'Torch' punches through the blues and purples with its striking orange flowers. Fiery *Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Campfire' smoulders at ground level alongside the rusty flowers and foliage of *Acaena microphylla* from New Zealand (now renamed by Janey and John as the 'corona plant' since its flowers look just like images of the virus). For its vanilla-scented flowers and late summer drama, *Actaea* 'Chocoholic' is another one of Janey's star plants.

This is a place where Janey can experiment – something she wouldn't necessarily do in a client's garden. And because of this garden's cloistered, south-facing microclimate she can extend her planting choices, pushing plants beyond their

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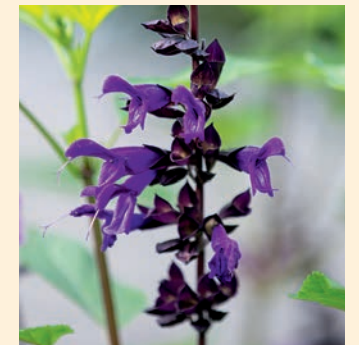
Hot TOPICS

Bold colours are the order of the day in Janey Auchincloss's vibrant, hard-working garden



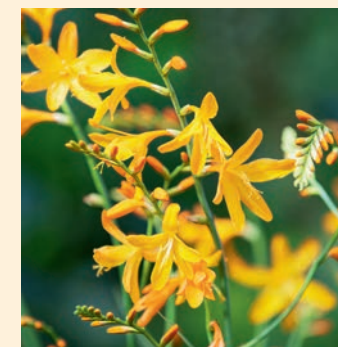
PERSICARIA AMPLEXICAULIS

Try the cultivar 'Orange Field' for whippy flowers in coral-pink above arrowhead leaves.



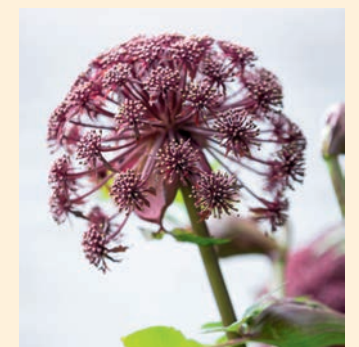
SALVIA 'AMISTAD'

Black hooded calyces enclose velvety purple flowers produced all summer on one-metre-high plants.



CROCOSMIA 'GEORGE DAVIDSON'

Golden flowers make a bright change from red varieties and team well with purples.



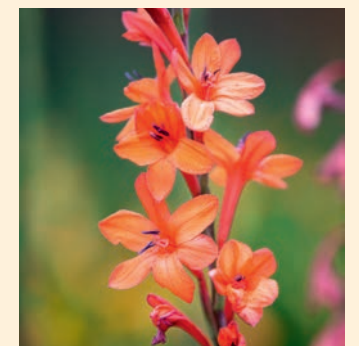
ANGELICA GIGAS

This stately biennial produces huge umbels of maroon flowers on stems up to 2.5m tall above divided leaves.



EUPHORBIA 'FENS RUBY'

Beware – this plant can be invasive, but here it provides an exuberant border edging.



WATSONIA PILLANSII

Produces spires of orange, but in cold climates its corms should be lifted in winter.



hardiness limits, seeing what will and won't survive. "It is my playground and I can see what works and what doesn't. It's just wonderful to have a manageable space where I can change things up with the basic structure always remaining, A garden this size is a moveable feast where I can edit, faff around and change things as and when. In a small space plants need to earn their place. I feel that some plants literally tremble as I go by: they seem to understand that they are under scrutiny," she jokes.

At the end of each growing season Janey assesses the overall look of the garden, sees where the gaps are and decides on changes and improvements. "I currently think it needs more height in places so

Above left A loquat and tree ferns add height to Janey's garden, which benefits from reflected light and warmth.

Top right The new 'Sitooterie', built by Janey's husband John.

Above right *Phormium* 'Maori Queen' has pink-tinged foliage.

Above middle Rust-toned *Anemanthele lessoniana*.

I may plant a catalpa or a paulownia, which I would stool to keep under control," she muses. "As far as possible I keep everything in situ over winter and summer, but I do lift the dahlias and cannas because when I've left them in the ground in the past, they have been slow to flower. My aim is to make the garden as maintenance-free as possible. I do take cuttings of tender plants such as the coleus, but I also buy new plants for spring." ■

The garden at Grove Cottage has opened in the past for Lavenham's annual Hidden Gardens weekend, but openings for 2021 are as yet unconfirmed. Janey Auchincloss Designs, janeyauchinclossdesigns.com