



■ WILD AT HEART

*Designed to capture the exuberance of his Caribbean homeland, Wayne's garden is enhanced by a mix of large leaves – courtesy of plants such as the tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*), phormiums and hostas – and bold hues. “I wanted to not be able to see the whole garden, and to have as much colour as possible,” he says.*



Me & my taste of Jamaica garden

Kingston comes to Clapham, as Wayne Amiel adds a flavour of the Caribbean to his north-facing south London spot

IF GARDENS reflect the personalities of their owners then Wayne Amiel is bright, bold and full of surprises. When planning his perfect plot in Clapham, south London, Jamaican-born Wayne was determined to reflect his Caribbean roots. But he was also savvy enough to realise that tender exotics and a north-facing garden – even in the capital's famed microclimate – do not mix. “It’s not full of plants from the Caribbean, of course. They wouldn’t survive here. It’s the colour and the foliage, the size

of the leaves, the lushness,” he explains. “It’s all fakery, really, to make it remind me of home.”

A “building site” when Wayne moved in six years ago, from the outset this was never going to be a traditional English garden. But despite being hampered by the tricky aspect, a dearth of funds (“there was no money left after doing the

“The colour, the size of the leaves... it’s all fakery”

house”) and the presence of an old Anderson shelter beneath much of the soil, Wayne was unfazed.

“My lack of knowledge was the daunting thing because previously I’d always inherited gardens,” he admits.

Armed with information gathered from gardening books and from befriending local gardeners, he set about creating his horticultural homage to the West Indies. Growing things from seeds or donated cuttings, or plants bought from London’s Columbia Road flower market to keep the cost

Garden notes

OWNERS Wayne Amiel
LOCATION 35 Turret Grove, London SW4 0ES

MONTH July
GARDEN SIZE 26ft x 82ft (8m x 25m)

ASPECT North-facing
SOIL Loamy, top-dressed each spring with compost, manure, and fed with Blood, Fish and Bone

SPECIAL FEATURES Designed over a variety of levels and divided into distinct sections, with areas of decking, a circular lawn and herbaceous borders. Feature steps, plus a profusion of pots. Planting favours bold, clashing colours and extravagant foliage





■ CLASH OR COMPLEMENT

Lobelia ‘Cambridge Blue’ echoes the blue paintwork of a bench near the lawn. And Wayne puts British favourites alongside exotic species: “I mix it up, with things to remind me of home and more traditional plants.”



■ PICK OF THE BUNCH

Musa sikkimensis ‘Tandarra Red’ is a fast-growing banana that gives Wayne a feel of home while being hardy enough to thrive in his north-facing garden. “The Caribbean bananas just wouldn’t survive here,” he explains.



■ WELL-MATCHED

A wooden obelisk has been painted blue to match items of furniture in this part of the garden, helping to give the area a clear identity. “It was a present,” Wayne reveals. “I painted it myself; I like to have a go”.



■ MOBILE HOMES

Containers play an important role, helping to overcome the lack of soil depth. Many are on wheels so they may be easily repositioned. Wayne says: “I move them to try and get them to flower. It’s a constant battle”.

down, Wayne skilfully blended large, lush-leaved specimens such as bananas, tree ferns, palms, coconut, gunneras and hostas, with swathes of bold colour supplied by more exotic species (canna lilies, agapanthus, ginger) and more familiar ones. “A friend of mine says I let the wild side of my plants show,” he reveals.

Varieties are chosen for longevity and hardiness, and

“I love it, and I don’t give a hoot!”

their ability to flourish in the shady conditions. Naturally, bold colour plays a vital role, but Wayne’s approach when planting is to avoid anything that could be branded ‘tasteful’.

“I like things that clash,” he explains. “One friend won’t sit out here, he says it gives him a headache. But I love it, and I don’t give a hoot!”

Single-minded, perhaps, but Wayne is also no stranger to compromise. Arranged on several levels, the garden has areas of lawn and decking as well as a small patio that he laid himself – in winter, with no cement mixer; little wonder he

calls it “one of the hardest things I’ve done”.

Despite initial resistance, the decking was added once it was clear that grass would not survive in such a shady spot.

Wayne is delighted with the way the garden has turned out. Not that he takes all the credit for it. He says: “The bits I like best are the bits I didn’t plan. Sometimes Mother Nature has the best sense of colour!” ■



■ STEP TO IT

Steep steps lead down from the garden to the basement, and are decorated with containers filled with colourful gerberas, petunias, lilies and Shasta daisies – plus a red glitter ball. “I wanted the steps to remind me of an Amsterdam flower market, one of my favourite places,” explains Wayne, who rearranges this area frequently.



■ ART IN HEAVEN

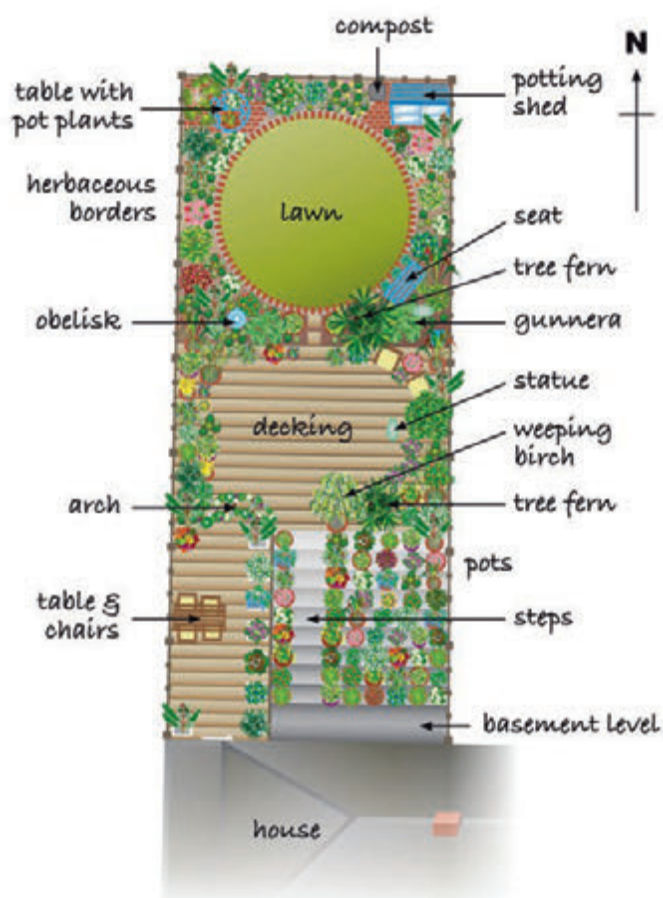
A Steve Yeates sculpture made from chips of broken bus shelter glass has pride of place in the main decking area, where plants include Gunnera manicata and Crocosmia ‘Lucifer’.

COME AND VISIT

Wayne will be opening his garden for the NGS on Sunday 21 July from 10am-5pm; see *The Yellow Book 2013* or visit ngs.org.uk

■ MAXIMUM IMPACT

*Minimalism may reign in Wayne's house, but outside bright colours and lavish leaves vie for attention. "I wanted it to be the opposite of the house, to clash as much as possible," Wayne says. The archway leading to the main decking area is covered with *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and *Clematis 'Lord Nevill'*.*



YELLOW BOOK

news

WE ARE now in the peak of the garden-visiting season, and over the next week or two there are plenty of fabulous gardens to visit – and under the National Gardens Scheme you know that your entrance money goes to charitable causes.

Here are three gardens open this Sunday (7 July):
Ashe Park, nr Overton, Hants (2-6pm) – extensive new gardens within the grounds of a Georgian Country House and Estate. Parkland and specimen trees, woodland and bluebell walks, large contemporary potager, lime avenue and several newly planted areas.
Cottage Farm, Cudham, Kent (1.30-5pm) – a cottage garden of about an acre,

with no lawn. It's a veg and fruit garden, with a tropical garden, cut flower garden, fernery, greenhouses, rose-covered pergolas and wildlife ponds. Includes the National Collection of rhipsalis cactus.
Summerdale Hse, nr Lupton, Cumbria (11am-4.30pm) – 1½-acre part-walled country garden set around 18th century former vicarage: herbaceous borders, ponds, woodland and meadow planting provide year round interest. Fine views across to Farleton Fell.

For more on these, see *The Yellow Book 2013*, or visit ngs.org.uk.

Illustration Elizabeth Payne