

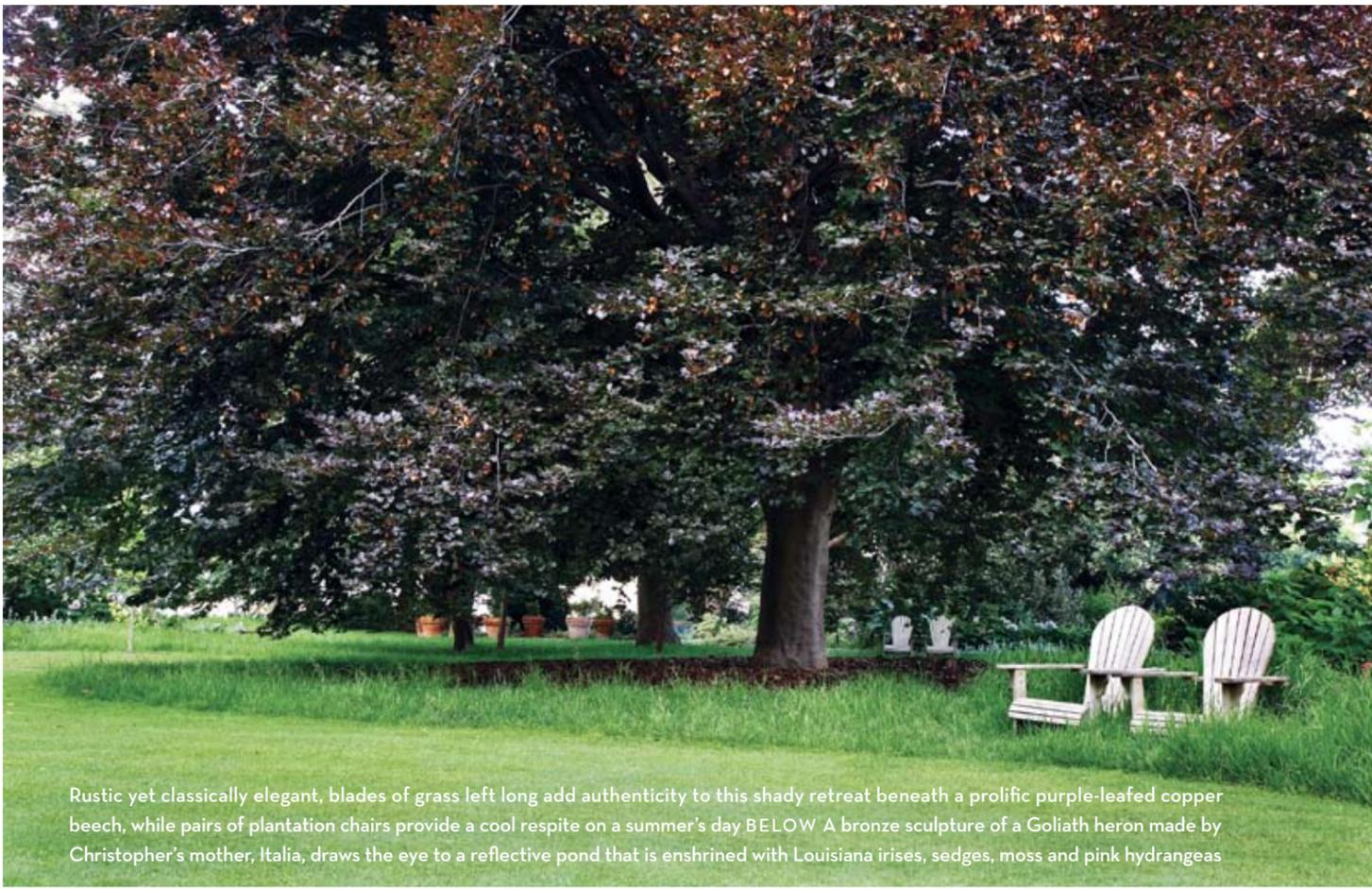


At Beechwood, colour-themed borders are part of the garden's signature style. In this meadow-like planting scheme, 'Duet' roses planted amid Anthericum, assorted gem-coloured Penstemon, pink and white *Gaura lindheimeri*, Anisodonteia, lime-green Artemisia, Lychnis and Hemerocallis welcome visitors to this imposing woodland retreat

MODERN-DAY SAVOIR VIVRE COMBINED WITH TIMELESS GRACE LEADS TO A REDEFINITION OF STYLE IN THIS JEWEL-HUED JOHANNESBURG GARDEN

TEXT KARIEN SLABBERT PHOTOGRAPHS ELSA YOUNG

# a rare find



Rustic yet classically elegant, blades of grass left long add authenticity to this shady retreat beneath a prolific purple-leaved copper beech, while pairs of plantation chairs provide a cool respite on a summer's day **BELOW** A bronze sculpture of a Goliath heron made by Christopher's mother, Italia, draws the eye to a reflective pond that is enshrined with Louisiana irises, sedges, moss and pink hydrangeas



**W**ith a canopy of stately trees as an anchor point, Beechwood, a gracious urban home in Hyde Park, synthesises energy, flair and sinuous lines. Reflecting the owners Christopher and Susan Greig's personal style, this garden seamlessly blends a hint of the classic with a treasure trove of rare and unusual plants on a grand scale, making it an unusual find among city gardens.

Emblazoned with grace and charm, this 1.2-hectare woodland retreat derives its visual interest from both its scale and focal viewpoints. Here, wide tree-framed vistas are entwined with intimate jewel-tinted planting.

The Greig's old-fashioned garden was laid out in the 1940s by Joane Pim, one of South Africa's landscaping pioneers. Famed for her extensive use of imposing trees, this leafy haven is a fine example of Pim's work. The trees that she planted appealed to Christopher when he acquired the property some nine years ago. Most significant is a colossal water oak (*Quercus nigra*) and copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) that are possibly the largest of their kind in Johannesburg.

Christopher, a celebrated jeweller with a fine-tuned aesthetic sensibility, restructured the garden's layout to include sweeping views with winding herbaceous borders that have strong architectural elements, such as stairways and terraces that mark changes in levels. The expansive garden projects that include an impressively scaled body of water, which incorporates four dams all beneath a canopy of jacarandas, were also overseen by him.

Four years ago after he had planted a strong skeleton of shrubs, Christopher recruited Debby Tenquist to help expand the collection of rare and unusual trees, shrubs and flowering perennials. 'Through Christopher's foresight, an interesting collection of certain varieties is being created,' says Tenquist, 'which is well suited to this more traditional garden.'

To the existing trees, four more copper beeches were added to help do justice to the name Beechwood, while a lime-leaved *Robinia* 'Frisia', as well as several *Acer negundo* 'Variegatum' and *A. negundo* 'Flamingo' satisfied Christopher's love for exotic-coloured foliage. Notably, the garden's many spring-flowering *Malus*, *Prunus* and *Magnolia* trees ensure seasonal colour, adding to its ethereal feel.

Other imposing features include a formal potager banked by a colonnade, a woodland meander through ▶

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Colour-coded *Lychnis*, *Dianthus*, *Gaura* and *Achillea* against lime-green *Artemisia*; candy-wrapper tinted *Zantedeschia* 'Pink Mist'; a Lutyens-style bench framed by hydrangeas; variegated foliage creates a composed relief; a lace-top hydrangea





**SHADE SHIFTERS** ■ At Beechwood, shade-loving shrubs are underplanted with perennials, such as *Thalictrum*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Cyclamen*, Japanese Anemone, *Streptocarpus* and *Helleborus orientalis* hybrids that are planted in interwoven ribbons of carefully graded single colours ■ Bands of *Digitalis* 'Sutton's Apricot' and *D.* 'Mertonensis' are used for punctuation, while *Angelica* and Arum lilies provide structure amid the loose planting

a forest of white stinkwoods and pin oaks, a 100-metre verge brimming with intense-blue hydrangeas and more recently, a wild-meadow planting.

Enlivened by a sense of the unexpected, the astute dynamic between tranquil hideaway and stylish bravado is tangible around every verdant corner. Throughout, formality is offset by informality and manicured elements live harmoniously with untamed ones. Decorative Italianate elements give a nod towards antiquity, while curtains of foliage are punctuated at intervals by rusted iron urns of *Buxus* balls raised on plinths. Adding to the garden's functionality, shaded spots are furnished with Lutyens benches and weathered plantation chairs to create a sense of serene time out.

The Greigs' forest-like refuge is encrusted in a plethora of blossoming shrubs, such as a variety of *Viburnums*. While *Sambucus nigra* 'Aurea' provide dapples of light green. Beneath the canopy of trees, a collection of rarely used *Plectranthus* adds waves of cool blue and white hues.

Adding to the garden's textural layers, unusual varieties of hydrangeas are planted in banks and blocks of colour, along with more common examples. 'Blue-flowering *Ceanothus* 'Cascade' and the striking *Buddleja davidii* 'Black Knight' attract butterflies into the garden,' says Tenquist. 'As do a collection of uncommon giant blue *Salvias* in the blue and white borders.'

Amid an overture of emerald foliage, one finds a rhapsody of sapphire, lapis-lazuli, tanzanite, cobalt blue, amethyst and platinum. Lively curvilinear borders are strewn all over, ablaze with uncommon perennials.

Christopher gave Tenquist and her business partner Martine de la Harpe carte blanche to plant three large herbaceous borders. Although many of the plants sourced are English country-garden favourites, an assortment of single-colour perennials and annuals had to be especially grown and strategically planted to blend into the careful colour gradation used.

Retaining a limited colourway, planting is filled with warm tones, from jasper and brilliant pulsing ruby to watermelon pink. Christopher's highly developed taste for and appreciation of a sophisticated colour palette was instrumental in helping the team to create the pink, burgundy and lime-green colour-coded borders. Providing a long-lasting rich claret are the David Austin roses 'Prospero' and 'The Prince', while 'Antoinette' gives a chartreuse foil and the repeat-flowering 'Duet' adds splashes of pink.

Notably, this majestic garden conjures up visions of an extensive woodland park where hard-working urbanites can rejuvenate their souls, while appreciating and treasuring a repository of beautiful and rare plant material in years to come.

■ *Debby Tenquist* ☎ 083 307 2424

■ *Martine de la Harpe* ☎ 083 267 8308

**COLOUR ALCHEMY**

■ A low-key palette of blue, grey and white underscores the importance of simplicity, enhanced by ornate grandeur ■ *Eryngium*, *Echinops*, *Erysimum* 'Bowles Mauve', serried ranks of Pacific Giant *Delphiniums*, *Campanula persicifolia*, the repeat-flowering *Iris* 'Victoria Falls', St Joseph lilies and *Agapanthus* 'Blue Velvet' are edged with foaming mounds of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle', Heliotrope, catmint, lamb's ear and *Erigeron* ■ This flowering spectacle is punctuated with clipped balls of *Teucrium*, waves of rosemary and spires of ornamental artichokes and *Salvias*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A shimmer of blue perennials weave their way through one of the garden's summer borders. A velvet lawn sweeps through the estate to form a structural unifier, while its dramatic curve pulls onlookers' eyes into the shade of the far garden; a bronze carpet of fallen leaves; a playful combination of purple and white *Salvias*; violet-tinted violas enveloped by *Hosta* leaves OPPOSITE PAGE The contorted branches of a *Magnolia grandiflora* rise above lacy-leaved *Acer palmatum dissectum* and is underplanted with *Coleus* and *Plectranthus* ground covers

