

beating the HEAT

photography ROBERT FRITH/ACORN PHOTO



JOSH BYRNE visits the Perth garden of an English-born journalist who has found a way to make her beloved roses and cottage garden plants thrive in the city's hot, dry climate



ROSES, ROSES EVERYWHERE

From left 'The Bourbon rose 'Madame Isaac Pereire' has an intoxicating scent; Deryn prunes 'Penelope', an old-fashioned Hybrid Musk rose; *Viburnum tinus* hedges provide structure, while climbing roses add beauty to a fence line.



See Josh visiting Deryn in her garden on Friday, May 4 at 7.30pm on ABC TV

Perth is a beautiful place to live. Its great weather, fabulous beaches and wealth of open space all contribute to a terrific lifestyle. Unfortunately, these attributes also present major gardening challenges, including sandy soil, hot weather and months of summer heat with no rain.

An ever drier climate has meant that Perth now has permanent water-saving measures in place, which limit garden irrigation. It's not surprising that, over the years, Perth gardeners have responded by creating drought-hardy gardens suited to the local conditions. The inclusion of native plants and other species with low water needs has become the norm, and the traditional cottage garden filled with romantic and often tender exotic species is becoming somewhat of a rarity. Deryn Thorpe is bucking this trend.

Deryn is a print and radio journalist, and an avid gardener. She writes for *ABC Gardening Australia* magazine (see her story on plectranthus, on page 12 of this issue), co-hosts a gardening podcast with Steve Wood called *All the Dirt*, and leads gardening tours around the world. On top of this, she finds time to tend a thriving garden on a 1200m² property in the leafy inner Perth suburb of Mount Lawley.

Born in the UK, Deryn says she owes much of her gardening style to her English roots. She spent her early childhood in Kent, often referred to as 'the garden of England', before arriving in Australia at the age of six. Despite gardening on some of the world's poorest soils,

she was determined to grow the plants she loves, and has proved this is possible if you put in the effort.

in the garden

Deryn describes her garden as something of a fusion, "a cottage garden with a bit of plant collection wrapped around a Federation-period house". The front garden is a spectacle of colour and texture. Garden beds are brimming with roses, vegetables, flowering perennials and massed border plantings. Hanging baskets and pots furnish the sweeping verandah. Two neatly manicured squares of lawn either side of the main arrival pathway quieten everything down. Established trees give dappled shade and a sense of scale to the high-set house.

The back garden is more structured, complete with arbor, parterre and sculptural focal points. Hedges and brick-edged limestone paving add to the formality. Plants are still the heroes, with great care taken in the species selection. Roses dominate and are grown in various ways to be functional as well as beautiful. Climbing types are particularly effective in providing screening along the boundary fence. An occasional cutback is all they need to keep them under control. Growing an assortment of varieties means there are flowers throughout the year.

Deryn admits cottage gardens are time-consuming, but they are fantastic for plant collectors and those who like to trial new plants. "It's a fabulous style if you like flowers, and obviously I do!" she says. "They can ►



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look messy, especially in a small space, but if you have a structured design to the garden, the informal ramble of cottage plants does not look so untidy."

Deryn also advocates experimentation. "I'm still surprised where plants thrive. For example, in the front garden, my 'Ann Tilling' pelargonium, which has luminous golden foliage, likes dappled shade, too. It romps through the hydrangeas and plectranthus, and makes the area look bright and casual.

"Out the back I'm rather pleased with the way the dry, rooty area beneath a big coral tree (*Erythrina indica*) tree looks. I have planted it up with tough plants, such as ruscus, dianella, lomandra, *Philodendron* 'Xanadu' and angel's trumpets (*Brugmansia* spp.), which are all thriving in the difficult conditions."

My visit to Deryn's house included homemade cake and tea taken on the back verandah. I left with a bunch of plant cuttings and a great deal of respect for the work that she and husband Bill have put into creating such a beautiful garden, despite the conditions. ▶

A FEAST FOR THE EYES

Clockwise from far left A pergola at the entrance is adorned with a climbing 'Pierre de Ronsard' rose; arbors, urns and impeccable paving offer a sense of formality in the courtyard, but the free-flowing cottage plants are still the heroes; a stepped display of potted pelargoniums and beds of rambling perennials create a sunny, welcoming entrance.



tricks of the trade

If you live in a hot climate and would like to create a garden like Deryn's, here are some of her tips to help you make it a success.

● **Understand your microclimate** Work out the different microclimates around your garden, and plant accordingly. Deryn grows fuchsias, hydrangeas, geraniums and begonias in a bed in dappled shade beside the front verandah. All of these would fry over summer in the more exposed parts of the garden. Drought-hardy plants are chosen for the exposed areas.

● **Condition the soil** Like most Perth gardeners, Deryn is on sandy soil. As well as regularly adding compost and mulch, 10 years ago she began incorporating kaolin clay, which has significantly reduced water repellency, and improved water and nutrient retention. More recently, she's been adding biochar, which helps prevent nutrients from leaching.

● **Use water efficiently** Given that Perth has year-round water restrictions (twice weekly watering on mains and three times with a bore, with no watering allowed during winter months), the careful use of water is essential. Deryn uses high-efficiency sprinklers to water the lawn and garden beds, and drip irrigation for all the pots. These are regularly checked to make sure they always remain in good working order.



WONDERFUL AND WATERWISE

From top Roses climb, cling and trail over vertical structures, while heat-tolerant plants thrive at ground level; an espaliered white adriatic fig in a self-watering pot is flanked by pig's ear (*Cotyledon orbiculata*). **Right** A Louisiana iris contrasts with an *Aeonium decorum* 'Sunburst'.



3 steps to rose heaven

Deryn loves roses, and has filled her garden with climbers, Hybrid Teas and miniatures. Here are some of her favourite ways to grow them.

* **TRELLIS** Roses make great screening plants, and can be trained up a trellis and along a fence line. Deryn has 'Lamarque', with clusters of violet-scented white flowers and few thorns, 'Souvenir de Madame Léonie Viennot', a Tea Rose with coppery pink flowers, mostly in late winter to spring, which repeat flowers, and 'Crépuscule', a virtually thornless rose with masses of small, apricot-yellow flowers.

* **SWAG** Growing roses on a swag, which is a chain or rope strung between posts or columns, can delineate areas within a garden. This is also a good use of space, as other plants can be grown underneath the trailing rose. Deryn uses climbing 'China Doll', with trusses of hot pink, double flowers, for this purpose, and she says that climbing 'Pinkie', which has pale pink, semi-double blooms, works well, too.

* **POLE** Deryn grows roses on a pole to add height, but not shade in her garden. 'Penelope', a Hybrid Musk rose from 1924, has the perfect shape for a pole (see page 21). It has coppery salmon-tinted buds that open to perfumed, creamy pink, semi-double flowers, which have prominent yellow stamens that fade to white. GA