

A photograph of a garden path leading to a wooden bench, surrounded by lush green and yellowing foliage. The path is paved with cobblestones and covered with fallen leaves. The bench is made of light-colored wood and is positioned in the center of the path. The background is filled with dense green and yellowing leaves, creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall scene is bright and vibrant, capturing the essence of autumn.

AUTUMN BOUNTY

A beautiful restored walled garden in Suffolk is at its most glorious at this time of year as leaves turn to gold and its abundant harvest of fruit and vegetables is ripe and ready for the picking

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Sue and Adam Paul are surveying their latest crop of pumpkins and squash, and marvelling at the heights they have reached. "We had to ban them from our kitchen garden and grow them in the cold-frame yard outside because they were scrambling over everything in sight," Sue says. "I even had to take a machete to one of them," remembers Adam, grinning. "It had escaped over the wall and climbed 30 feet up a fir tree with pumpkins dangling way out of reach!"

Squashes are not the only things that grow well on this long-cultivated soil. Adam and Sue have honed their skills over many years and, in their three-quarter-acre kitchen garden, the fruits of their labours are everywhere to be seen. The crinkle-crinkle walls (which date back to the 1780s and follow a curvaceous, serpentine path instead of a straight line) are clothed with espaliered plum, cherry, apricot and fig trees, while 49 cordon apple and pear trees line the wide grass paths and a mini orchard of 22 different apple and pear trees is laid out in lawn. Either side are rows of healthy, verdant vegetables waiting to be picked.

Adam's grandfather bought Parham Hall and the surrounding farmland in 1926 and despite the main hall being demolished in 1968, leaving a smaller house for the family to live in, the kitchen garden has remained intact. "Although ours is not a large, grand estate, we're fortunate to still have much of the old infrastructure and equipment,"

STYLE
Traditional kitchen garden with mini orchard
 SEASONS OF INTEREST
Spring, summer and autumn
 SIZE
Three-quarters of an acre
 SOIL TYPE
Well-worked but originally clay with underlying chalk

OPPOSITE A medlar encircled by a wooden bench offers an inviting focal point at one end of a striking vine-covered pergola

THIS PAGE Bunches of 'Black Hamburg' grapes mature in the glasshouse above benches of colourful potted pelargoniums

Adam explains, pointing out the original cold frames, cloches and apple store.

All this has enabled him to make use of the space as a training ground for other gardeners. Both he and Sue take pleasure in following time-honoured methods to help get the best possible results from their space and they have much good advice to pass on. Adam feels passionately that the old skills should not be lost and when he was a lecturer in heritage gardening at nearby Otley College, he would bring groups of students here to work alongside him and learn traditional growing and pruning methods.

For about 20 years, until 1999, Adam and Sue had to be content with using the walled garden as what Adam describes as "a glorified allotment", after his father had grubbed up the original kitchen beds to grow gooseberries commercially. But in 2000 they called in local horticulturalist Paul Miles, who had acted as a garden adviser to the National Trust, to draw up a new layout. The design is a triumph – as lovely to look at as it is productive – its grass paths, edged with Sue's flower borders →



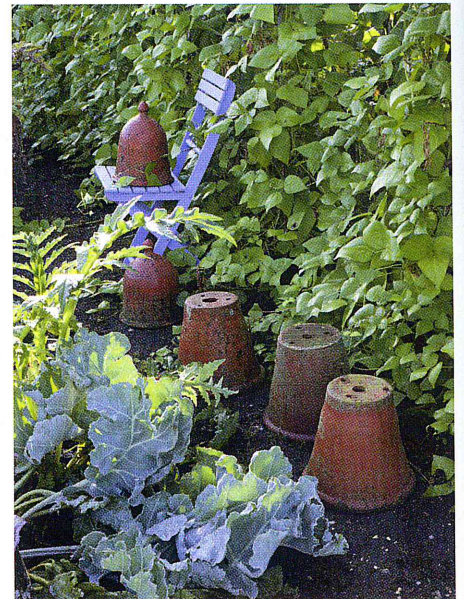
THIS PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT *Pyrus*
communis 'Nouveau
 Poitou'; dessert apples
 'Lord Lambourne';
 intensely coloured
Malus domestica
 'Gascoyne's Scarlet';
 different varieties
 of squash ripen in a
 sunny spot; a 'Catillac'
 pear tree thrives by
 an unusual crinkle-
 crinkle brick wall
OPPOSITE Rows of
 celery, beans, leeks,
 celeriac and bright,
 jaunty dahlias fill the
 highly productive
 vegetable beds in
 the old walled garden

and punctuated by wide, vine- and rose-covered pergolas, partially screening the views of the vegetable beds, soft fruit and apple and pear trees.

Pruning holds no fear for Adam – he trained in advanced fruit production at Hadlow College in Kent and has studied and practised his art extensively – so the cordon apples and pears along the paths, espaliers on the walls and pyramid-pruned fruit trees in the mini orchard are both shapely and healthy, with very little spraying. As well as growing a wide range of apples – all chosen for their great taste, successional ripening times and good keeping qualities – he revels in holding taste tests for visitors to demonstrate the enormous variation of flavours among pears. “Don't ever think that a pear is just a pear,” he says. “Nouveau Poitou’, ‘Black Worcester’, ‘Catillac’, ‘Beurre Hardy’ – they are all so incredibly different.”

Sue grew up in Singapore, so she favours more exotic fruit and has added to Adam's collection with loquats, strawberry grapes, cape gooseberries and kiwi fruit. A persimmon tree that outgrew its pot ➔

With elegant
 espaliered
 fruit trees and
 plentiful rows
 of verdant
 vegetables, the
 garden is as
 lovely to look
 at as it is
 productive




THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Shallots dry in front of an old stove; a maturing fig; striking stems of ruby chard; sea kale flourishes by a row of terracotta pots and rhubarb forcers; an array of colourful chrysanthemums; produce is kept at its best with the help of an old-fashioned water cart **OPPOSITE** A large Sussex trug is used to collect the plentiful harvest of 'Red Miller's Seedling' apples

now fruits well in the ground. They also grow alpine strawberries, including the tiny, sweet, white ones, as edging to the vegetable beds. A recent visit to chef Raymond Blanc's garden at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxfordshire inspired Sue to try new vegetable crops including chickpeas ("lovely frilly leaves and easy to germinate"), spelt and amaranthus. She also favours cut-and-come-again lettuces because single-harvest ones leave rather unsightly gaps in the rows when picked.

Protection is one of the keys to Adam and Sue's success with their crops. Barn cloches, wire cages, rhubarb forcers and fleece are all used extensively. "I always have a ready supply of clothes pegs to hold down fleece round a pea crop or to pin flea-beetle netting in place," Sue explains.

Careful planning helps to reduce maintenance: the grass paths are wide enough for the ride-on mower, smaller paths are just the width of a lawn

rake for tidying up and there is leaky-hose irrigation throughout the walled garden, which Adam views as essential in their ultra-dry part of Suffolk.

"To enjoy a productive plot throughout the seasons, you need to keep on top of the work," he adds. "Run a hoe between the veg rows before the weeds take hold, and don't try to do too much. Better to have a little area and keep it neat than to be overly ambitious and risk everything flopping and collapsing into a complete jumble." The beautiful kitchen garden the couple has cultivated prove that these are wise words indeed. 

i Parham Hall gardens, near Framlingham, Suffolk, are open by appointment only to groups and, occasionally, individuals. Please email sue_paul@hotmail.com to enquire. A self-contained holiday flat, Garden View, is available through suffolk-secrets.co.uk.