

**Hungerdowns  
Hungerdown Lane  
Ardleigh  
COLCHESTER  
CO7 7LZ**

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26 February 2010

Dear .....

I did enjoy coming up to visit you in Walberswick and I think your house and garden are lovely. I can quite see why you upped sticks and moved. You have already made the house look fantastic with all your beautiful furniture and rugs, not to mention the grand piano! The drawing-room is going to be absolutely dreamy with the new window you are planning which will look out over what is going to be a spectacular garden.

### **MAIN GARDEN**

We discussed the L-shaped beds in the main garden and I think they look really good. Not only do they give a delightful formality to this garden, they also provide you with the most perfect growing conditions for a huge variety of sun-loving plants. There will be no competition for light, water and nutrients and I can guarantee that grandchildren will love racing round them! I have recommended a combination of shrubs and perennials that will bring both borders to life and marry happily with the existing planting. Once the roses come out you can decide which ones you like and which will have to go. They may all be fine. As you quite rightly said, it will be important to echo the plants across from border to border and I have allowed for enough plants to do that. I have also suggested that we plant two variegated hollies at the apex of the L of each bed. These can be trained over the next few years into 'wedding cakes'/tiered topiary and will give a focal point all year round but particularly in winter. As far as the colour scheme goes I have gone for pinks, pale blues and a few whites, with different textures of foliage, and some good autumn stems and flowers. There are many different scented plants there, including irises, philadelphus, lavender and pinks. Unfortunately there are no more Papaver 'Patty's Plum' until the Autumn but I can certainly get some for you then.

As a foil to the eyecatching planting in these central beds, the borders that line the boundary of the garden should simply be clipped into a neat hedge just allowing the odd tree to grow up to its natural height, as we discussed. The level of the hedge can be a good 12" to 18" lower than it is at the moment to allow the top to grow up again and then, in future years, it can be kept clipped neatly without having to saw through thicker stems/branches. I agree with you that the laurel on the left-hand side could be removed and the yellow-variegated euonymus whose colour jars with the white variegation elsewhere. I have included several white-variegated euonymus in the proposed planting list to be used in the gaps so they can echo across the garden. I would also suggest moving the purple-leaved *Pittosporum* 'Tom Thumb' from in front of the green shed to elsewhere and replacing it with one of the euonymus which will light up that corner with the pretty pink scented *Viburnum x burkwoodii* 'Anne Russell'. I have included a few perennials which will like the shade beneath this hedge and will provide some pretty ground cover, like *Vinca minor* 'Variegata'.

The raised bed at the end of the garden is a very effective way of making the garden seem really spacious (which it is!) as it provides a step up to a different level and takes the eye on beyond the beautiful, shapely tree with its wooden table and chair. In my sketch I have reduced the eucalyptus trees to round shrubs, which is what they stand a good chance of growing into when stooled. I think this is a tree surgeon's job as it is quite tricky felling trees of this size next to buildings *and* your fence and the little retaining wall of the raised bed. The tree surgeon would also know exactly where to saw the tree off to the right growing-points for you then to benefit from the healthy juvenile foliage which is so prized by flower arrangers, glaucous and rounded.

In the raised beds I have been quite careful to restrict the palette to just five variegated dogwoods with wonderful winter stems, *Cornus alba 'Sibirica Variegata'*, underplanted with *Persicaria 'Darjeeling Red'*, *Alchemilla mollis*, *Astrantia* and *Tradescantia*.

The back of the house needs some clothing and you are quite right that the roses are more trouble than they are worth and they do nothing to beautify the walls especially as they do not adequately cover the fairly solid black trellis. This trellis will be extremely useful but needs covering up with some good-looking, preferably evergreen foliage. I am suggesting *Clematis armandii 'Apple Blossom'* which is scented and has wonderful glossy evergreen foliage and is easy to train. I have also suggested an ornamental quince, *Chaenomeles 'Pink Lady'*, which also has pretty evergreen foliage and grows up to 5 foot only (very important not to plant over-vigorous climbers here). In the beds at the base of the wall which get direct sun all day I would definitely grow all your favorite herbs. These will not only be dead easy to pick so close to the kitchen, they will also smell lovely as people brush past them, and you will be tempted to look after them well as you will be using them all the time. You could intersperse them with some of the pinks that I have included for planting in the L-shaped beds too. As the drawing-room windows are changing, I have just suggested that you plant my absolutely favorite ceanothus, 'Gloire de Versailles', which does not train as a climber and is slightly deciduous but has a very pretty habit and wonderful powder-blue flowers for most of the summer and autumn. This could go beside the drawing-room door instead of the buddleia.

## FRONT GARDEN

At the front of the house I think your instinct to enclose yourself more is absolutely spot on. I have drawn a sketch to show how I see a hedge of *Viburnum tinus 'Eve Price'* working with a pair of gates which I would definitely recommend you commissioning from a local joiner who will be able to shape you some handsome gateposts and some pretty palings along the gates themselves...much better than going for something off the peg. The *Viburnum tinus* can continue round and be shaped in an inverted curve down to meet a low scented hedge of Christmas box, *Sarcococca confusa*, with two balls (they grow naturally into balls) of a dwarf euonymus that I love called *Euonymus microphyllus variegatus*. All this will make the entrance to your house really something and you will feel much more private.

I have also included some scented shrubs, as it is so lovely to get a waft of perfume when you arrive at the house and leave it, and, in the little front garden, I do think that two snowball trees would look so pretty tucked into the corners where I have shown them on the plan.

Most importantly the walls of the house here also would really benefit from having some neatly clipped shrubs to cover the brick but stopping before the weatherboarding starts. I have quoted for two 5-litre pots of *Pyracantha* 'Orange Glow' which has pretty flowers, foliage and berries and, at that size, should already be starting to be trained up a bamboo structure (that is how I have bought them before from the nursery so I am hoping they will be...whatever happens they'll be a good size). These would go on the central wall and then it would be an effective contrast to have a variegated euonymus clipped against the right hand wall thus lighting up that more shady area. I have drawn in an old stone sink which they have all over the place at Sissinghurst and they look very decorative. Here it would be in the shade but a little variegated ivy or *Vinca minor variegata* would be happy there and would drape nicely down the sides.

Well I think that's about it as far as the planting for this Spring goes. I would be very happy to come and bring all the plants and plant them just charging for my time actually working at £25 an hour. It would be essential that Frank should dig over the beds with some good organic matter, like the soil conditioner we used last time, so I and, I hope, Bernardine can plant straight into the beds. We can dig the odd hole ourselves where you will not know exactly where it should be dug in advance. We will plant everything with Rootgrow (which I will charge at cost as last time...we will probably use 3 litres at £20 per litre).

Next Autumn I would recommend planting a good palette of narcissi, tulips and alliums in the beds and a really good combination of scilla, crocuses, anemone blanda, snakeshead fritillaries and camassia in the lawn at the front of the house. I will compile a list for you then. I am also quite tempted to recommend that you plant a particularly good dahlia called 'Rosella' in the L-shaped beds. Look it up on the internet and see what you think. All you have to do is stake them and then deadhead them and they flower from July until the first frosts!

The attached planting list is based on current availability. I am away from Wednesday to Friday next week...back late on the 5<sup>th</sup> so do ring when you have had a good chance to look through it all and give it some thought.

With best wishes,



**Sarah Vermont**

**“Wickstead”, Walberswick, Suffolk  
Proposed Planting Spring 2010**

<b>SHRUBS</b>	<b>£</b>
Caryopteris clandonensis ‘First Choice’ x2	10.60
Ceanothus ‘Gloire de Versailles’ x1	5.30
Ceratostigma willmottianum ‘Forest Blue’ x2	10.60
Cistus ‘Sunset’ x2	10.60
Convolvulus cneorum x2	14.00
Cornus alba ‘Sibirica Variegata’ x5	27.50
Cornus sanguinea ‘Midwinter Fire’ x2	13.00
Daphne odora ‘Aureomarginata’ x1	16.00
Euonymus japonicus ‘Aureomarginatus’ x5	25.00
Euonymus jap. ‘Micr. Aureovariegatus’ x2	10.60
Euphorbia ‘Portuguese Velvet’ x5	12.00
Ilex aquifolium ‘Argentea Marginata’ x2	14.00
Lonicera purpusii ‘Winter Beauty’ x1	6.50
Nandina domestica ‘Fire Power’ x2	16.00
Pennisetum villosum x4	20.00
Penstemon ‘Garnet’ x2	12.00
Philadelphus ‘Belle Etoile’ x2	12.00
Pittosporum garnettii x2	16.00
Pyracantha ‘Orange Glow’ (5L) x2	24.00
Rosmarinus ‘TuscanBlue’ x2	11.00
Sarcococca confusa x10	50.00
Syringa microphylla ‘Superba’	6.50
Viburnum tinus ‘Eve Price’ x10	60.00
Viburnum opulus ‘Roseum’ x2	10.60
Viburnum x burkwoodii ‘Anne Russell’ x1	5.30
Vinca minor ‘Argenteo variegata’ x5	22.50
Weigela ‘Florida Variegata’ x2	10.60
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>452.20</b>

**CLIMBERS**

Chaenomeles ‘Pink Lady’ x1	6.50
Clematis armandii ‘Apple Blossom’ x1	14.50
Lonicera per. ‘Serotina’ x2	18.00
Solanum ‘Glasnevin’ x1	9.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>48.00</b>

**PERENNIALS**

Achillea ‘Rose Madder’ x10	16.80
Agapanthus ‘Streamline’ x10	21.50
Agapanthus ‘Torbay’ x10	21.50
Alchemilla mollis x10	14.80
Anemone x hyb. ‘Lady Gilmour’ x10	19.00

Aster novi-Belgii 'Ada Ballard' x10	16.80
Astrantia good pink x 10	16.80
Ceratostigma plumbaginoides x5	9.50
Delphinium Guinevere Group x5	8.70
Dianthus 'Laced Monarch' x10	16.80
Digitalis 'Pam's Choice' x10	14.80
Digitalis x mertonensis x10	14.80
Dicentra spectabilis x5	10.80
Euphorbia c. 'Portuguese Velvet' x5	10.80
Geranium 'Ann Folkard' x5	12.00
Geranium wallichianum 'Buxton's Variety' x5	12.00
Heuchera 'Plum Pudding' x5	12.00
Iris 'Deep Black' x10	19.00
Iris 'Jane Phillips' x10	19.00
Iris pallida 'Argentea-Variegata' x10	19.00
Iris sibirica 'Cambridge' x10	19.00
Lavandula 'Hidcote' x10	19.00
Paeonia l. 'Agida' x2	10.80
Perovskia 'Blue Spire' x5	9.70
Persicaria affinis 'Darjeeling Red' x3	6.50
Phlox maculata 'Alpha' x5	10.80
Pulmonaria 'Cambridge Blue' x5	10.80
Salvia nemorosa 'Ostfriesland' x5	10.80
Scabiosa caucasica 'Blausiegel' x5	10.80
Sedum 'Stewed Rhubarb Mountain' x5	10.80
Sedum 'Iceberg' x5	10.80
Tradescantia a. 'Osprey' x5	9.70
Verbascum chaixii 'Album' x5	8.70

**Subtotal 451.00**

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**TOTAL 951.20**