

GOING DUTCH



In the garden
with Wendy Matheson

Amsterdam's Canal open garden days have been an annual event in the Dutch horticultural calendar for many years. They are open to the public for the third weekend of June and although very similar in size and planting materials given their position on the canal banks and the strict building code of the day, the designs do vary.

Similar to the Open Garden Schemes in the UK the revenues from the entrance fees go towards a designated charity. In Amsterdam this is The Canal Garden Fund which helps with financial support for the restoration of historical planting, statues and garden houses.

This year's 29 gardens included both private and commercial properties incorporating museums, offices, banks and galleries. The construction of the Amsterdam canal belt in the 17th century included not just stately homes but also coach houses, garden houses and arbours.

There are antique garden rooms designed in the 18th century as grand highly ornamented pavilions giving an impression of a diorama, enlarging the plot.



The Coach houses were situated behind the main house either on the next canal or the backstreets. These accommodated the houses' horses and carriages and the coachman would have lived upstairs. The garden houses and arbours were where the occupiers would have played games, took tea and entertained.

Although there are still many antique garden houses there are also some interesting new and contemporary designs including some with oriental influences, very apt given the strong trading links with the Orient and the Dutch.

For your diary next year's Amsterdam Open Garden Days are to be held on June 14-16.

Accompanying me to Holland was a fellow garden designer from Hampshire. We took the opportunity to pay homage to two landscape designers of great influence in modern day design. Firstly, Mien Ruys, a prolific and highly influential landscape architect whose garden in Dedemsvaart was originally attached to her father's nursery and Mien was given the space to show both her clients and nursery visitors examples of how to use space and planting. Since her death in 1999 the gardens have been run by a trust. She began designing in the 1920 and left a legacy of over 3,000 designs.



Secondly, we visited the private garden of a leading figure of the New Perennial Planting Movement, Piet Oudolf. After closing the nursery business in Hummelo, south east Holland which he and wife Anya ran for over 30 years, Piet has built a dedicated studio in the garden and works full-time as an international landscape designer working on very prestigious private and public projects.

As with Mien Ruys, Piet uses his own garden to experiment and play with ideas, designers gardens are often very different from those designed for clients because of this continual experimentation.

The De Stijl movement heavily influenced both of these designers especially Mien as she knew the architects and designers of the time. This was evident when we were lucky enough to have time in our schedule to visit the iconic Rietveld Schroder House in Utrecht.

De Stijl's fundamental principles of the geometry of the straight line, the square, and the rectangle, combined with a strong asymmetricality; the predominant use of pure primary colours with black and white; and the relationship between positive and negative elements in an arrangement of non-objective forms and lines were very significant in Dutch and German design of the time.

We returned inspired and agreed to "Go Dutch" once more as they are many varied and interesting gardens to be visited in The Netherlands.

Websites of interest

- www.mienruys.nl
- www.oudolf.com
- www.scotlandsgardens.org
- www.ngs.org.uk



This house would hold up as a very contemporary and modern house in 2012 - just imagine the impact it had in 1924. The building is now a listed monument and UNESCO world heritage site

Don't forget to look at gardens open during the summer in your area under Scotland's Garden Scheme and if visiting England and Wales, The National Gardens Scheme.

The gardens at Boath House are now open until end of September under The Scottish Gardens Scheme from 2-4pm daily. Lunch and afternoon tea must be pre-booked. Proceeds to Highland Hospice and designated SGS charities.

CONTACT WENDY

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