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Hoary-handed sons of the soil have been replaced with a new genus of glamorous gardener. Alistair Duncan digs deep

# pretty green things

Green fingers, from left: Jane Brown, Jane Hudson, Camilla Astor, Lily-Joan Krause, Erik de Maerjer, Catherine FitzGerald  
Photographed at Clifton Nurseries (020 7289 6851; www.clifton.co.uk)

Photograph by Fiona Freund

# 'Decking has had its heyday. I've noticed a return to stone and granite'

Jane Hudson



## Jane Brown 36

Lives In Brighton.

**London trends** 'I think people are rediscovering that they can use a garden as another living room.'

**Garden gripes** Leyland cypresses.

**Blossoming career** The daughter of an airline pilot, Jane grew up in East Anglia and inherited a passion

for plants from her mother. She has a horticultural qualification from Otley College in Suffolk and an MA in landscape architecture from Greenwich University. She worked at Clifton Nurseries in Little Venice before joining Patrick James at The Landscape Agency. As senior landscape architect, Jane has been renovating the gardens at Eaton Square and on the Grosvenor Estate for the Duke of Westminster, and won a gold medal in the London Garden Squares Competition.

**Tough commission** One client asked if Jane could ensure that her roses were in full bloom in December as that was the only time she was around.

**Spring tips** 'Limit your plants to seven to ten key species rather than being tempted to put in one of everything - your garden will look visually stronger.'

**Says** 'People have started to realise the value of their gardens. Not just the money they can add to the property, but how much they improve your quality of life.'



## Camilla Astor 29

Lives In Battersea.

**London trends** 'People are avoiding lawns and opting for terraces with ordered beds.'

**Garden gripes** Orange terracotta pots and hanging baskets - 'they just end up neglected'.

**Blossoming career** Camilla grew up in France. The daughter of Lord Astor of Hever, she worked as a model for ten years and dated Joel Cadbury. After a gardening course at the Inchbald School of Design in Pimlico, she set up her own business as a landscape gardener. She runs a forestry business in London and a garden centre in West Wycombe.

**Tough commission** Designing a garden for the Kipling Camp (a hotel resort in central India), Camilla incorporated a volleyball court into the plans and included a howdah (an Indian elephant saddle) as the umpire's chair.

**Spring tips** 'Try just making one simple change to your garden: replacing a plant or pruning a shrub. It's also a good time to plant herbs or salads.'

**Says** 'TV programmes go over the top. They encourage people to build over-ambitious gardens using quite fragile plants that will die if they are not carefully maintained.'

## Erik de Maeijer 33

Lives In Shenley, Hertfordshire with wife and fellow gardener Jane Hudson and daughters Hazel and May.

**London trends** 'Stainless steel is popping up all over the place - sculptures, water features, even big steel needles. People are also less afraid to mix up the styles.'

**Garden gripes** 'I hate millstone water features. Also those cheap pre-made trellises.'

**Blossoming career** Belgian-born Erik grew up in Antwerp, where his father worked as a General Motors sales manager and his mother in a bank. He met Jane while he was doing a degree in garden architecture near Brussels and she was studying during a year abroad. Moving to the UK, he joined Thompson Landscapes, where he is currently senior landscape architect.

**Tough commission** 'TV programmes have made people unrealistic about what they can do. They think they can transform their garden on a budget of £150.'

**Spring tips** 'Now is the time to plant perennials: sages, rudbeckia, geraniums. They are really cheap and by the summer should have quadrupled in size.'

**Says** 'I love taking an empty sheet, having a vision and then realising it: taking the before and after photos and going "Wow."''



## Jane Hudson 35

Lives In Hertfordshire with husband Erik and their daughters.

**London trends** 'Decking has had its heyday. I've noticed a return to materials such as stone and granite.'

**Garden gripes** 'Shoddy workmanship ruining good designs.'

**Blossoming career** Jane grew up in North London (her father was a policeman and her mother a biology teacher). Studying landscaping in Belgium, she met Erik before returning to London to work for Derek Lovejoy Partnership for four years as a landscape architect. Jane then started her own business, Hazelnut Design, specialising in garden design projects, master planning and illustration work. Having worked with Erik on two Chelsea Flower Show projects, she is currently

collaborating with him on a Cancer Research UK garden there this year.

**Tough commission** Jane finds design committees a headache. 'It ends up being a mess of conflicting ideas that don't work together.'

**Spring tips** 'Try recurring shapes subtly through a design - keep it fluid. But also don't be afraid to try something new. Mix up the colours a bit.'

**Says** 'I love just giving clients a brief and allowing them to realise what they have in terms of their own garden capability.'



## Lilly-Joan Krause 28

Lives In Knightsbridge with boyfriend Christopher.

**London trends** 'People aren't going for lawns, but rather having big glass doors that lead on to subtly lit gardens that reflect the décor inside their house.'

**Garden gripes** 'Water features with shiny balls that have water oozing out, coloured gravel and fake York stone. In a word: awful.'

**Blossoming career** Lilly-Joan grew up in Hamburg, where her father was a dentist and her mother worked in an art gallery. After gardening apprenticeships in Germany, she moved to London and completed a BA in garden design at Middlesex University. Getting a job at R K Alliston (the New Kings Road garden shop set up by garden designer Harriet Scott), she started as Harriet's personal assistant and is now a landscape manager.

**Tough commission** One cookery-mad client wanted to continue the food theme into the garden. Lilly-Joan designed a huge pear sculpture as the focal point.

**Spring tips** 'Now is an ideal time to get a herb window box on the go. They look wonderful and smell lovely, especially if you bulk them out with bulbs such as white narcissus. Go for parsley, sage and chives.'

**Says** 'I love the versatility of my job. One day I'll be meeting a high-profile client in the City and the next I'll be knee-deep in Gloucestershire mud.'

## Catherine Fitzgerald 32

Lives In Kensal Rise with sister Nesta and a friend.

**London trends** 'People seem to be going for good-quality stone with clean lines, along with evergreen boxes and lawns with quality edges.'

**Garden gripes** 'Things that are out of scale: tiny garden pots or dinky benches that don't fit in.'

**Blossoming career** The daughter of the Knight of Glin, Catherine grew up at Glin Castle in County Limerick, where her grandmother ran the estate garden (her mother Olda writes gardening books).

Catherine studied English at Trinity College, Dublin before training at The Royal Horticultural Society and the Architectural Association. She then started working for five-times Chelsea gold medal winner Arabella Lennox-Boyd, where she is currently planting designer.

**Tough commission** On a couple of occasions Catherine has had to cordon off streets to allow cranes to lift vast sculptures into place. 'You should try hauling 100-year-old olive trees that cost thousands of pounds over a garden wall.'

**Spring tips** 'Shrubby wallflowers are great to get this time of year, like Erysimum. I adore all their vibrant colours and they are long-flowering.'

**Says** 'I go on plant-hunting expeditions (I recently came back from Mongolia). Wherever you end up there will always be new types of plants to discover.'

