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# GARDENS

## ILLUSTRATED

THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL GARDEN MAGAZINE

**CAROL KLEIN: FERNS**  
Propagating from spores,  
bulbils and division

**TOWERING  
TOPIARY**  
Packwood House



# Spider man

BRINGING BACK CHRYSANTHEMUMS

PLANT PROFILE: IVY • WILLOW WEAVING • WOODLAND DESIGN



# POPLAR CHOICE

BELGIAN LANDSCAPE DESIGNER PAUL DEROOSE TAKES PENELOPE HILL ON A TOUR OF A TIMBER MERCHANT'S GARDEN AND REVEALS JUST HOW MUCH HE RELISHES THE SIMPLICITY OF FORM AND SHAPE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICOLA BROWNE





When Danish minimalism meets Neolithic earth mounds in the heart of the picturesque landscape of western Flanders, the resulting garden is fabulously bold and fresh. Designed nearly 25 years ago by Belgian landscape architect Paul Deroose, this private garden in Aalbeke, Belgium, is stunning in its simplicity, combining grass and poplar trees with imagination and daring.

Paul's formative years spent studying in Denmark instilled a sense of purity and modernism into his design ethic that appealed to the client who wanted a simple, stylish and almost flower-free garden.

Resembling the ramparts of a castle or military bunker, long banks of earth with angled sides and level tops are set at right angles to one another around a sunken lawn. The simple long banks, covered in grass and varying in height, lead the eye

to a mature poplar plantation. The ground beneath the trees is free of undergrowth enhancing the vivid, grid-like pattern formed by the straight trunks and the horizontality of the earth banks. The overall effect is breathtaking.

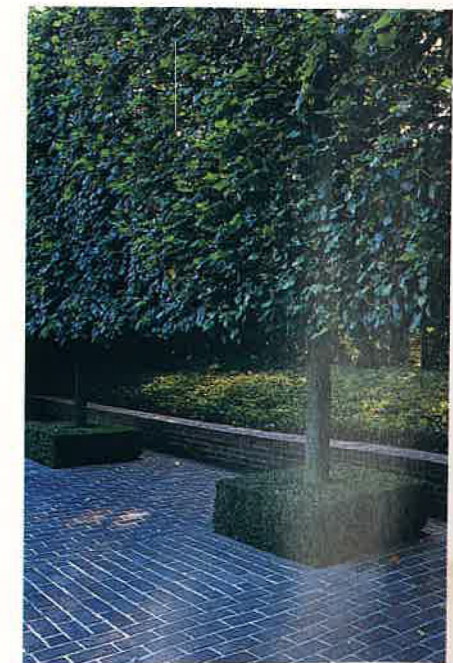
The site of the garden dates back to 1959, when architect Arthur Degeyter was commissioned by a prominent timber merchant to design a family compound of houses, offices, and timber warehouses and yards. The warehouses run the length of the south and the west sides of the 5,000 metre-square garden, forming a high and imposing boundary.

In 1981, Degeyter was commissioned once again by the owner to redesign part of the house to incorporate a swimming pool that could be used year-round. The architect's solution was a pool partly inside and partly out, built as low as possible so as not to obscure the view from the

pool and terrace areas to the garden and open countryside beyond. Deroose was commissioned to redesign the garden that had, up until then, been a classic flower garden adjoining the poplar wood.

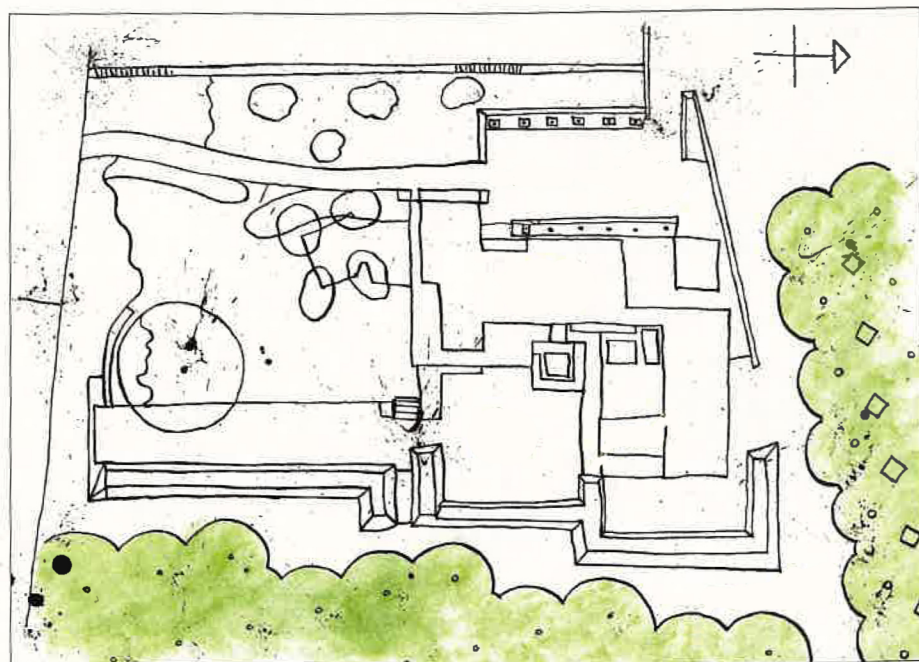
"The challenge was to make the connection between the garden and the existing plantation of poplar trees," said Paul. "Consideration had to be given to the large timber warehouses that formed the boundary to the garden on two sides. These facades had to become part of the design." Paul's solution was a series of grassed banks to link the house, outbuildings and trees together with the open countryside to the east of the house.

"The banks avoid the introduction of other plants like hedges or shrubs and mean that the grass dominates with the buildings and the trees. The verticality of the tree trunks and the simplicity of the grass



OPPOSITE: THE STYLISED GRASS BANKS CREATE A SUNKEN LAWN, WHICH ALSO ACTS AS A PROTECTIVE BARRIER TO THE POOL.  
ABOVE TOP: THE CLIPPED YEW HEDGES, ANGLED GRASS BANKS AND GRID-LIKE POPLAR PLANTATION INSTIL A SENSE OF PURITY AND MODERNISM TO THE GARDEN'S DESIGN. ABOVE: A TIGHTLY CLIPPED HORNBEAM HEDGE DEFINES THE PARKING AREA.





"WE LIKE THE SIMPLICITY OF THE MATERIALS AND UNIFORMITY OF THE STRUCTURE. IT IS NOT TOO BUSY NOR TOO HEAVY AS A GARDEN," SAID THE OWNER. "WE HAVEN'T CHANGED A THING."



## DESIGNER PROFILE

Born into a family of gardeners, Paul Deroose

studied landscape architecture in Brussels followed by a number of influential years in Denmark. He spent a year with architect and landscape architect Ole Nørgaard, whose simple and elegant design approach had a profound effect on the young Deroose. During this time projects included landscaping part of the Louisiana Art Museum. Six years of study followed at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen in the 1960s before returning to Belgium and setting up his own design practice in 1971.

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banks creates very interesting shapes and spaces," said Paul.

Despite the high maintenance the garden requires (once a week in summer it takes two gardeners a whole day just to cut the grass), the owner loves the garden. "We like the simplicity of the materials and the uniformity of the structure. It is not too busy nor too heavy as a garden," said the owner. "We haven't changed a thing," he added. The garden is as attractive in deepest winter as it is in the summer, benefiting as much on a sunny day from dramatic shadows across the grass, as on a frosty day when the dark tree trunks and angled banks are emphasised.

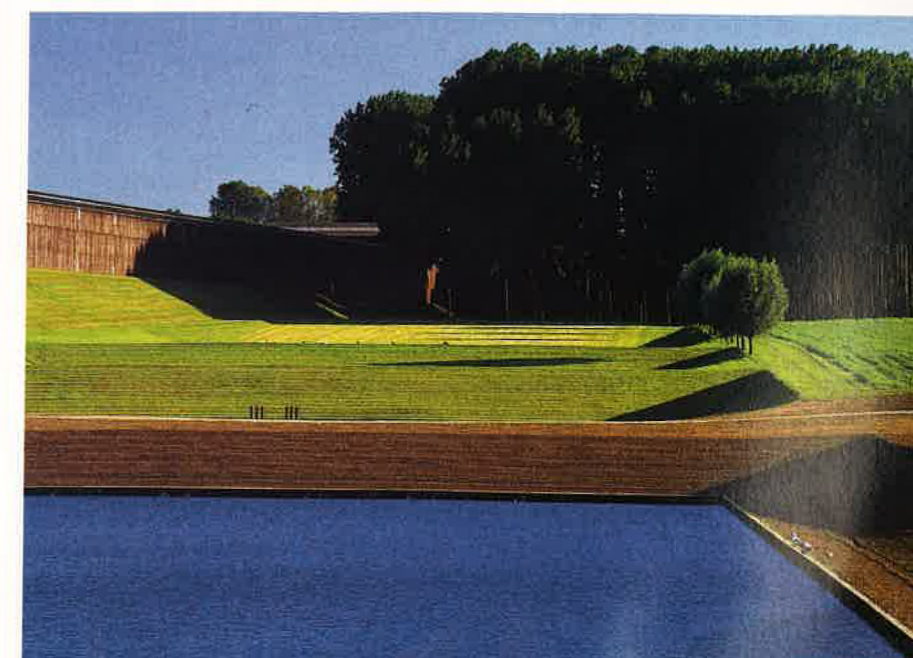
Paul's design is the polar opposite of the classical Belgian garden of formal clipped hedges and ordered flower planting and he is the first to admit that it was the male influence in the household that dominated the design process, resulting in very few flowers in the garden.

However, as a concession to the lady of the house, there is a small parterre next to the limestone pool terrace with flowers and roses, where annuals are also planted in

Italian pots in the summer. Adjacent to the south of the house rhododendrons were planted in the 1980s to add some flowering colour in the spring together with *Syringa* 'Michel Buchner' and *Osmanthus heterophyllus*. Access to the sunken lawn is down a series of granite steps, flanked by clipped yew hedges, each so precisely cut they appear solid structures. At the front entrance to the house, a line of tightly clipped hornbeam and low box hedging border the parking area while there is a small water feature opposite the kitchen window planted with bamboos and grasses.

The garden extends eastwards into open countryside, making the most of the clear view through the tree trunks. The gently sloping banks of a large reservoir, built to hold enough water to comply with fire regulations for the large amount of timber on the site, mirror the grassed banks in the garden. This practical element has also become part of the garden landscape, bringing the trees, garden and wider countryside seamlessly together. The overall effect is simply unique. ■

Drawing by Emma Dijkhu



OPPOSITE (L-R): THE VERTICALITY OF THE TREES IS EMPHASISED BY THE SHADOWS CREATED ON A SUNNY DAY. A PLAN OF THE HOUSE AND GARDEN. ABOVE, TOP: THE SOUTH AND WEST OF THE GARDEN ARE BORDERED BY THE TIMBER WAREHOUSES – A SHAPE ECHOED IN THE GRASS BANKS. ABOVE (L-R): FEW PLANTS ARE USED IN THE GARDEN BUT AN AREA OF ORNAMENTAL GRASSES ARE AN EXCEPTION. THE SURROUNDING LAND AND THE GARDEN ARE LINKED VISUALLY, AS SEEN HERE IN THE SLOPING BANKS OF THE RESERVOIR.