



# secretish gardens



*Open the gate on to some of the loveliest gardens in Norfolk, as the stories of seven horticultural heavens are told in words and pictures, writes*  
**ROWAN MANTELL**

TRAVELLING through Norfolk you often glimpse, behind high flint walls or topiaried hedges, a glorious profusion of flowers flowing into the distance or a series of serene green avenues and lawns stretching past borders vibrant with seasonal colour.

They are not exactly secret, many welcome paying visitors, but they are often hidden from the road or surrounding countryside by sheltering hedges and walls. Inside, gardeners are creating luscious, lavish landscapes, inspired by the plants they love, or the sea, or history.

Gardener and garden writer Barbara Segall moved to East Anglia 30 years ago and was thrilled to discover these idyllic gardens being tended beside cottages and farmhouses as well as in the grounds of grand estates.

Her latest book is a hymn to the hidden gardens of her adopted home and includes seven from Norfolk. The pictures are among the final works of her friend and renowned garden photographer Marcus Harpur who died, aged 52, before publication.



At **HUNWORTH HALL**, near Holt, a remarkable formal garden has taken shape behind high hedges. Owners Henry and Charlotte Crawley researched the past of their home and decided to reinstate its Dutch-style pleasure gardens, including flowing lines of manicured hedging, twin canals and a folly, and fantastically topiaried trees cut into balls, cones, parasols and medicinal flasks (Henry was a doctor.)

**Above:**  
Hunworth Hall in the Glaven Valley



**Left:**  
Yew topiary pyramids at East Ruston Old Vicarage

At **EAST RUSTON OLD VICARAGE**, near Loddon, Barbara finds the stunning series of gardens created from bare fields by Alan Gray and Graham Robeson. The maze of hedged gardens range from clipped pyramids of topiary to swirling masses of flowers and famously not only lead visitors through a succession of beautiful spaces but also 'borrow' views of Happisburgh church and lighthouse by cutting windows through hedges.





At **WINTERTON LIGHTHOUSE** she sees the site of Robinson Crusoe's first shipwreck – and a new garden which wraps around the recently renovated lighthouse. It is lush with tall silver, mauve and green plants mingling in curved borders.

At **HOVETON HALL**, near Wroxham, Barbara finds a garden which makes the most of its watery setting with a lake, streams and pools incorporated into the design and wildlife and wildness encouraged alongside more formal planting schemes.

At **RAVENINGHAM HALL** the garden of the president of the Royal Horticultural Association, Sir Nicholas Bacon has swathes of snowdrops every spring plus an arboretum, a Victorian-style stumpery of trunks and trees, a 19th century glasshouses producing melons, figs and apricots, a new lake, sculptures by Lady Bacon and a new time-themed garden in honour of the family ancestor Sir Frances Bacon.

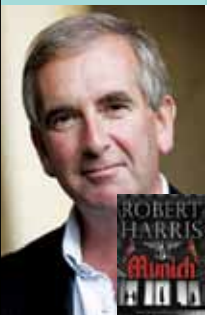
At **PENSTHORPE NATURAL PARK** Barbara says the 'unexpected jewel at the heart of the site' is the Millennium Garden. Originally a farm and quarry, Pensthorpe is now a wildlife haven, visitor attraction and series of water gardens and courtyards, providing year-round colour.

At **SILVERSTONE FARM** garden designer George Carter has created a blend of sculpture, architecture and gardening, with outdoor rooms created from hedging and filled with more topiary and lawns and ornamental obelisks, benches and pots. ♦

*Secret Gardens of East Anglia*, by Barbara Segall, with photography by Marcus Harper, is published on September 7 by Frances Lincoln. Barbara will be talking about the book at Jarrold, Norwich, on September 28

Left: Winterton Lighthouse  
 Top: Hoveton Hall Garden  
 Left: The gardens at Raveningham Hall, near Loddon  
 Below: Pensthorpe Natural Park





## AFTERNOON TEA WITH ROBERT HARRIS

**Wednesday 20 September, 2.30pm**

We are absolutely delighted to welcome Robert Harris – bestselling author of *Fatherland*, *Conclave*, *An Officer and a Spy* and many others – for a very special afternoon tea event, the day before the official publication of his latest book, *Munich*.

Tickets and more info [jarrold.co.uk/events](http://jarrold.co.uk/events)

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Photos: Marcus Harper