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The Lady

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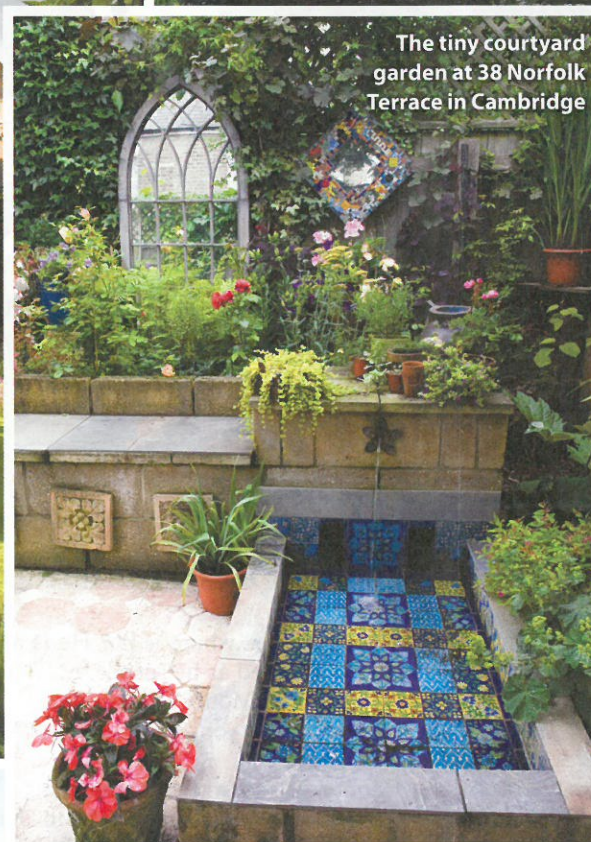
STEP INTO A Secret Garden

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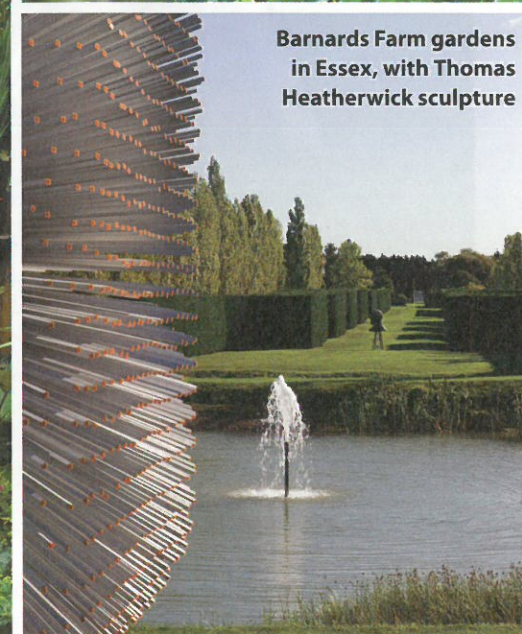
Elton Hall in the Cambridgeshire countryside



Woodland planting at Hoveton Hall Estate in Norfolk



The tiny courtyard garden at 38 Norfolk Terrace in Cambridge



Barnards Farm gardens in Essex, with Thomas Heatherwick sculpture



Pensthorpe Natural Park in Norfolk

Barbara Segall celebrates the culture, beauty and diversity of the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex

East Ruston Old Vicarage in Norfolk



The whole of East Anglia is a rather secret, unsung place, off most people's beaten track. I have come to know it well since I moved here in 1986, not least because my garden-writing life has taken me to gardens great and small, private and public, across the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. I fell instantly under the spell of this magical region and its idyllic landscapes, the spirit of which is captured so remarkably in the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable.

The four counties have their individual charms, yet are sometimes dismissed as flat and therefore possibly a little dull. In fact, the wide horizons and huge skies, the light, the sea, the farmlands and gently undulating countryside combine to provide a rich background for garden-making. Visitors to the region can find every sort

of garden inspiration here, be it bravura herbaceous borders, tongue-in-cheek topiary, sensitively sited artworks, ornamental kitchen gardens, romantic wildflower meadows or lovingly crafted detailing.

East Anglia has a great tradition of creative horticulturists, whose skill and artistry in planting their own gardens resonates in many others in the region. Those influential figures include the painter and iris enthusiast Sir Cedric Morris, who made a garden at Benton End in Suffolk, after settling there in 1938; legendary nurseryman, the late Alan Bloom (founder of Blooms of Bressingham, Norfolk) and his son Adrian Bloom; and, of course, plantswoman Beth Chatto, who has shown us how to use plants that do well in particular environments. ■

◆ *Secret Gardens of East Anglia* by Barbara Segall, with photography by Marcus Harpur, is published by Frances Lincoln, priced £20.