

I worked hard Gardening

Diana and her love of Gardening.

All these emails were written in 2012

One day James Lander asked me this question:.

"Do me a favor: ask your mother if Diana had any particular favorite plants, flowers, etc. And does she have any memories that might be useful to me about Diana's involvement with the garden at Château de Bosmelet?"

Regards,
Jim"

First response

Dear Jim,

I will ask my mother who is a keen gardener. I am forwarding this reply to my sisters. Natasha has taken a course in horticulture so will be able to give more detailed information. Diana loved roses but also many other flowers. As to the garden in Bosmelet she put in the flowers, as it was only fruit and vegetables before that. Her garden was amazingly beautiful. I have some pictures of the garden the summer she died that attest to that fact.

cheers
Yolanda

Second responds

Dear Jim,

Your question brought back a flood of memories. which luckily my dyslexia prevents me from giving a fuller description of.

Before Diana come to Bosmelet the walled garden provided fruits and vegetables for the residents at the Château de Bosmelet. Diana may have even started planting between 1936 and 1940. She insisted on growing many flowers, shrubs and planting trees etc. Rhododendron bushes in the woods which she may have been inspired to plant by visiting Kenwood Gardens in London. As well as roses she was also very fond of sweet peas, she loved the variety of colors. She kept Snapdragons in huge barrels near her house, the Orangerie. Lily-of-the-Valley was her favorite scent and she loved the smell of lavender. As children she would take us around the garden, allowing us to experience the the garden with all our senses; taste, touch, smell, and sight, she made us stop to hear the bees buzzing, working to make honey.

Diana not only planted at Bosmelet but also in the Village and along the path ways leading to Auffay. The descriptions of her gardens in CA and in Africa give you some idea of her passion for horticulture.

Another example of her interest was when her daughter, Hélène de Bosmelet went to to boarding school at Les Oiseaux, Westgate-on-Sea, she insisted that magnolia trees be planted along the walls of the convent. She paid for the work to be done and I very much appreciated them when I went to the school some 20 years later.

Third responde from Yolanda
Hi Jim,

I think you might get more information and an outside of the family view to how Diana was with her Garden from Lucie Tassus - Daughter of Renée Thierry. As you and your wife can talk to her in French. Granny hired Lucie to teach Natasha and I French when Lucie was a teenager. This was the first "job" Lucie had, in her very successful career, as a teacher. She is the same age as Robert and has developed this multi-sensory program for per-schoolers to experience Bosmelet. I think based on how she experienced Bosmelet as a child under Diana's special care. I know that Diana was an importance positive presence in Lucie life. So on your next visit Bosmelet maybe Robert can arrange a meeting.

Yolanda

On Oct 13, 2011, at 3:35 AM, Natasha Chetwynd wrote:

Hi Yolanda & Jim

I was busy yesterday so unable to answer you question about Granny's gardening. I can't help on the structure of the Garden as Bosmelet and only add a little to what Yolanda has already said about bringing flowers to the garden.

My deepest memory is of her love of cut flowers and flower arranging in her house. Every Friday morning breakfast had to be finished and put away promptly as M. Julien would bring in baskets of cut flowers, a plastic topped table cloth would be put on the dining table, all of last weeks flowers would be thrown away and new flowers put in all the communal areas and bedrooms to be used over the week-end.

She loved the different smells, so some of her favorites as Yolanda has already said were scented roses (which I think almost always went into her bedroom) and sweet peas. Other less scented flowers like pompom dahlias were also often used as they are dramatic and tall!

Pansies were also often used in little vases for a burst of color and they were at the feet of the pear trees along the garden wall.

Within the garden I don't remember areas designated for cut flowers as there are now, I more remember them being on the borders of the beds almost hiding the fruit and veg.

I hope this is of some interest!

Natasha

Forth response to the garden at Bosmelet

Near the house Diana made a herb garden and she grew more flowers. Diana grew beautiful African daisies about 5 feet high with very dramatic colors. Diana had original and creative ways to solve problems. For example, to keep the grass mowed, she has sheep on the lawn around the Chateau. This meant that we all went around in gumboots trying to avoid sheep droppings.

In answer to Natasha's comment

"Within the garden I don't remember areas designated for cut flowers as there are now"

In the wall garden, I do remember that Diana designated areas for cut flowers in two rows from the big iron gate, across the width of the garden. So, on to the other side of the pond, to the wall with the small green door that leads to Thierry Farm. Just as they are now. Those beds were even deeper than now and very carefully planned. They had to be as the plants stepped up in multiple layers with the back plants being well over 6ft tall. The paths of grass, forming a cross, were there, just as they are now, but with high border hedges and arches covered with rambling roses. So when you entered the garden you could wander around and not see a soul, even if M. Julien was working in a bed or other guess where there, I know as that often happens to me. I would get up early most mornings when at Bosmelet and walk across the walled garden and help Renée and Rémy Thierry milk the cows. Often Rémy Thierry would give me a small metal pail of fresh milk to give to Granny. The maid Madame Renau, under instructions from Diana would, skim the cream off the top put the cream in a bowl which was added to cooked veggies like broad beans, in US called lima beans, then the rest of the skimmed milk would be boiled and the saucepan put in the fridge.

Diana loved nature and would walk every day in the woods with her dogs, Balzac and Boville. Diana enjoyed wildflowers especially cow-parsley which she would use as decorations in her flower arranging. She even liked the wild thistles that grew next to the house especially when they flowered. When the weeds got too big she taught us how to use huge tongs made out of wood, to remove the thistles and feed them to the donkey "Aristotle". I do not mean to sound sentimental but to me and other who visited the garden under Diana's care, seemed very magical like the secret garden.

Natasha then wrote, Yolanda's comments have triggered more memories:

I agree re: Granny's love of wild flowers. Her favorites were cowslips, dainty yellow primulas, she worried that they were getting scarcer. It was Percy Savage who used the large branches and some wild flowers in arrangements, which sometimes rather shocked Granny (partly because she worried about the health of her trees!).

I think Yolanda is right about higher hedges in the garden and there was an arbor covered with climbing roses. Whilst the flowers that would often be used in arrangements were around the edges of the vegetable beds and pond.

Now it is more formal with areas that were used for veg being used for flowers and the borders being used for ornamental cabbages etc (to great effect).

Also the way into the garden was via the little door nearest the chateau, which meant the whole aspect was different (I went on a big open day week-end so the little entrance was blocked). I prefer the grand gates, it seems more appropriate but I think the whole atmosphere was more cosy and private before.

I don't know how much of the produce Robert and Laurence use now but I remember Granny being pretty much self sufficient in veg and many salads throughout the summer as well as growing stuff for the sheep in winter. She also often got the nuns and school children to come and help pick fruit when there was a surplus.

Love Natasha

Bridget wrote:

Kitchen garden was a magical haven for me also as a grandchild, I used to eat the fruits, red gooseberries (one of my favorites), apples, pears until I had a stomach ache. There were multicolored strongly scented roses round the pond with gold fish in the middle. There were also lawn paths with small box hedges which I still associate with happy childhood memories. There were flat pear trees against the kitchen garden wall and asparagus grown in sandy banks. Beautiful staggered flowerbeds with roses, pom pom dallies etc. I have also fond memories nostalgic of pots of fuchsias and pink and blue hydrangeas outside the Orangerie. In the garden at the back of the Orangerie there were beautiful lilies, and giant poppies. We spent hours shedding broad beans and peas from the garden.

Most other things have been included.

Bridget Cairns