



Sweet VALLEY

**Bobbie Martin has created a flower-filled paradise
on this idyllic, sun-steeped Motueka property**

STORY: MATT PHILP PHOTOS: STEVE WOOSTER



The garden at the front of the house is a lush mix of euphorbias, *Iris sibirica*, foxgloves, astrantia and Solomon's seal - one of Bobbie's particular favourites.



Bearded irises thrive on the cottage bank.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO/JANNOVAAN



The rose 'Windrush'.



Cardoons, *Cynara cardunculus*.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO/JOHN PAVEL



There are moments in life when you know you're exactly where you are meant to be. In Bobbie Martin's case, that moment was 2002 and the place was Tasman's stunning Orinoco Valley, a part of the world where, for anyone who's seen it, rhapsodic feelings of belonging are easily imagined.

The interior and garden designer was visiting from London, where she'd lived on and off since leaving New Zealand in 1967. She was on the hunt for a place in her birth country to which she and her financial trader husband Peter could retire. The real estate agents' listing had described the 20ha property as being "a little bit of Provence in New Zealand", which sounded seriously tempting. The reality was even better.

"I looked down that valley," Bobbie recalls, "and then I rang Peter and said 'It's fantastic, but it's going to be a big job!'"

Guests from the UK are fascinated by the way plants here grow differently, "more rampantly or with bigger flowers".

"There was an 1860s cottage, absolutely lovely but completely rotten. But we lived in it during the time it took to build the new house."

Bobbie, who had studied at London's Ingham School of Design and the English Gardening School, designed the house during the year it took to pack up their life in London. She created a gracious, English-country style home that could provide plenty of room for friends visiting down under. Subsequently the couple decided to develop the house as an upmarket boutique lodge, converting the original barn into a cottage in the heart of the garden. Its pedigree is such now that the glossy UK magazine *Tatler* last year named Edenhouse as one of the 101 best hotels of the world.

But first the borer-ridden cottage had to be demolished and its foundation stones used to edge a terrace outside the kitchen.

And then the gardening began. It really was a case of starting from scratch because there was nothing but unfenced paddocks when they arrived. The design was determined by the valley's rolling topography and the views from the house. It was quite different from anywhere Bobbie had worked in England. "I went with the landscape. Close to the house it's more formal and there's more clipping and controlling of plants, and as you get out further into the landscape it becomes much looser and softer."

Expansive borders were planned by colour and in keeping with Bobbie's preference for a limited palette – generally two colours linked by transitional plants with striking shapes, such as hebes, phormiums and pittosporums.

Beside the house she's kept things soft, with pale cherry blossoms, the white climbing Banksia rose 'The Pearl', and lots of clematis and acanthus.

"I do repeat plantings all around the garden to tie everything together. So across the front of the house there's a lot of acanthus and *Buxus sempervirens*, underplanted with lilies and tulips.

"I love big drifts of plants, and with perennials, anything that goes well I tend to plant more of. Luckily a lot of my favourite plants, like lily of the valley and Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum multiflorum*), that I struggled with in England, tend to do well here. Guests from the UK are fascinated by that. A lot of them have serious gardens and they're amazed at the way plants here grow more rampantly, with bigger flowers."

Above left: A line of linden trees, *Tilia europaea*, rises above a row of clipped *Buxus sempervirens* with a clipped photinia hedge at the rear. At front are *Acanthus spinosus*, red cytiscus, salvias and the sword-like foliage of *Crococsmia 'Lucifer'*. **Above centre:** This grass path is edged with a neat *Lonicera nitida* hedge and white-flowered trees and shrubs, including spiraea and hawthorn.



Bobbie Martin

Coming back home after a lifetime away gave her the chance to start anew. She and husband Peter decided a quiet retirement was not for them: they operate Edenhouse as a luxury lodge for just a few discerning guests.



Clockwise from top right: The vegetable garden is surrounded by a *Photinia* 'Red Robin' hedge (its red tips are in the foreground) and features a large patch of orange calendulas as useful companion plants; Bobbie's easel: "I actually studied portraiture but everything that comes out is flowers"; The front courtyard by the house is graced by the cherry tree 'Kiku-shidare-sakura', with acanthus, hostas, lilies and 'The Pearl' roses.



Above: The sinuous form of *Moonlit Lady* by local Tasman sculptor Michael MacMillan, is framed by a hedge of *Lonicera nitida* with creamy *Sisyrinchium striatum* and foxgloves. "The sculpture doesn't have a bad angle," says Bobbie. "No matter which way the light is coming from, it looks fabulous." **Above right:** The luxurious Garden Cottage's balcony affords sweeping views over the garden.



Meet & greet

Annie, Edenhouse's canine Guest Liaison Officer, is seen here surrounded by *Rosa* 'Charles de Mills'. On her website, Bobbie says the garden has no rigid formality but instead "all areas are manicured giving the impression of elegance".

"When we arrived there weren't many birds at all, but we now have masses – bellbirds, tui, wood pigeons, fantails."

You can hear the delight in Bobbie's voice. She was "born a gardener", she says, and recalls driving her family potty on their regular trips from Matamata to their bach at Mt Maunganui by insisting on stopping practically every time she saw wild roses by the roadside. "I've always loved flowers, can't resist them. I like big bunches, and always have lots of flowers in the house, even if it's just blossom."

In fact, the connections between house and garden are various, and include liberal use of botanical prints and floral fabrics. "The colours inside blend with the colours outside, so the house leads into garden, and the garden goes off into the further landscape," says Bobbie.

She describes the skills of interiors and garden design as "completely complementary". Fortunately the Tasman region turned out to be blessed with excellent nurseries, including the difficult-to-resist Tasman Bay Roses just down the road. "It is extremely hard for me to go past there without stopping," she says.

Even better, having spent years bridling under the limitations imposed by London apartment living, she now has space in which to indulge her passion. She planted rampant roses like 'Charles de Mills' with 'Rosaeraie de L'Hay'. They sprawl down the bank near the garden cottage, interspersed with the buttery creams and yellows of phlomis, sisyrinchium and *Rosa* 'Windrush', tied together by the magenta-flowered lychnis.

"In October and November the bank is just heavenly," says Bobbie. It's one of her favourite parts of the garden. "The roses are all out and the fragrance is commanding."

After so many years of creating English-style gardens, she's also enjoying being able to work with New Zealand trees and shrubs, with the planting in her garden roughly evenly split between natives and exotics.

"The New Zealand natives are wonderful," she says. "You can clip them, do all sorts of things to them, and they behave beautifully."

A large and productive vegetable garden turns out masses of globe artichokes, kale, spinach, sorrel, herbs and strawberries with which to feed the family and any guests staying. And elsewhere Bobbie has planted heritage fruit trees, including plums, apples, almonds, peaches and 'Morello' cherries, and plenty of olive trees, which to her surprise have all thrived despite the often heavy winter frosts. Their silvery foliage has aesthetic appeal, she says, "but a lot of it I planted for the birds. When we arrived there weren't many birds at all, but we now have masses – bellbirds, tui, wood pigeons, and fantails. The tui love the flax with its nectar-rich flowers and they all fight over the fruit trees. And we get pukeko eating all the fallen apples."

It sounds idyllic. Does she ever pine for London's hustle and bustle, ever wish she had never clapped eyes on that view down the valley and been so captivated? Hardly. "It's a totally different life from the one we had, but at this time of my life it is wonderful. And when I'm in the garden I'm as happy as a little pig in mud. Peter has to drag me away to go to town." 🐷

Edenhouse

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Inspired ideas

from Bobbie Martin, Edenhouse, Motueka



In harmony

The planting outside the Garden Cottage is a study in cleverly matched colour and form. It includes silvery-leaved cardoons and lavender, *Verbena bonariensis*, marguerite daisies, *Euphorbia mellifera* and cream eschscholzia poppies. "I love the cream ones," says Bobbie. "If the orange ones come up they get pulled out very smartly."



Lumber for lumbar support

A rustic seat made from reclaimed timber from the property and put together by the builder. Anyone sitting here is treated to spectacular views down the valley.



"I like big bunches of flowers, and always have lots in the house, even if it's just blossom," Bobbie says.



1

Dianthus

This small-scale member of the carnation family loves dry heat and rewards with heady fragrance.



2

Two at a time

French lavender teams with *Euphorbia polychroma*, a divine colour combination in the garden and in vases.



3

Daisy, daisy

Sisyrinchium striatum and French lavender suit Bobbie's preference for planting easy cottage colour in drifts.

BOBBIE'S LEMON POSSET

Edenhouse guests always ask for more when the chef whips up this sweet and sour winter treat. "The ripest 'Meyer' lemons are best," Bobbie says. Serves 8.

Ingredients • 600ml fresh cream
• 2/3 cup caster sugar • 100ml sieved lemon juice • icing sugar

Combine cream and sugar in a small pot and slowly bring to boil while stirring. Remove from the heat as it reaches boiling point. Stir for 3 more minutes, add lemon juice and pour into 8 moulds. Chill for at least 4 hours. Serve with a dusting of icing sugar. This is delicious served with fresh blueberries.