

AN EYE FOR DETAIL



You are going to read an article about an artist who paints flowers. For questions 1-8, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Artist Susan Shepherd is best known for her flower paintings, and the large garden that surrounds her house is the source of many of her subjects. It is full of her favorite flowers, most especially varieties of tulips and poppies. Some of the plants are unruly and seed themselves all over the garden. There is a harmony of color, shape and structure in the two long flowers borders that line the paved path which crosses the garden from east to west. Much of this is due to the previous owners who were keen gardeners, and who left plants that appealed to Susan. She also inherited the gardener, Danny. "In fact, it was really his garden," she says. "We got on very well. At first he would say 'Oh, it's not worth it' to some of the things I wanted to put in, but when I said I wanted to paint them, he recognized what I had in mind."

Susan prefers to focus on detailed studies of individual plants rather than on the garden as a whole, though she will occasionally paint a group of plants where they are. More usually, she picks them and then takes them up to her studio. "I don't set the whole thing up at once," she says. "I take one flower out and paint it, which might take a few days, and then I bring in another one and build up the painting that way. Sometimes it takes a couple of years to finish."

Her busiest time of year is spring and early summer, when the tulips are out, followed by the poppies. "They all come out together and you're so busy," she says. But the gradual decaying process is also part of the fascination for her.

With tulips, for example, "you bring them in and put them in water, then leave them for perhaps a day and they each form themselves into different shapes. They open out and are fantastic. When you first put them in a vase, you think they are boring, but they change all the time with twists and turns."

Susan has always been interested in plants: "I did botany at school and used to collect wildflowers from all around the countryside," she says. "I wasn't particularly interested in gardening then; in fact, I didn't like garden flowers. I thought they looked like the ones made of silk or plastic that were sold in some florists' shops - to me, the only real ones were wild. I was intrigued by the way they managed to flower in really awkward places, like cracks in rocks or on cliff tops." Nowadays, the garden owes much to plants that originated in far off lands, though they seem as much at home in her garden as they did in China or the Himalayas. She has a come-what-may attitude to the garden, rather like an affectionate aunt who is quite happy for children to run about undisciplined as long as they don't do any serious damage.

With two forthcoming exhibitions to prepare for, and a ready supply of subject material at her back door, finding time to work in the garden has been difficult recently. She now employs an extra gardener but, despite the need to paint, she knows that, to maintain her connection with her subject matter, "You have to get your hands dirty".

For each questions choose the answer - A, B, C or D.

1 In the first paragraph, the writer describes Susan's garden as

- A having caused problems for the previous owners.
- B having a path lined with flowers.
- C needing a lot of work to keep it looking attractive.
- D being only partly finished

2 What does "this" highlighted in bold in the first paragraph refer to

- A the position of the path
- B the number of wild plants
- C the position of the garden
- D the harmony of planting

3 What does Susan say about Danny?

- A He felt she was interfering in his work.
- B He immediately understood her feelings.
- C He was recommended by the previous owners.
- D He was slow to see the point of some of her ideas.

4 What is Susan's approach to painting?

- A She will wait until a flower is ready to be picked before painting it.
- B She likes to do research on a plant before she paints it.
- C She spends all day painting an individual flower.
- D She creates her paintings in several stages.

5 Susan thinks that tulips

- A Are more colorful and better shaped than other flowers
- B are not easy to paint because they change so quickly.
- C look best some time after they have been cut.
- D should be kept in the house for as long as possible.

6 Why did Susan enjoy studying wild flowers at school?

- A She found the way they adapted to their surrounds fascinating.
- B She used the lessons as a good excuse to get out of school
- C She was attracted by their different colors and shapes
- D She wanted to learn how to make copies of them in material.

7 How does the writer describe Susan's attitude to her garden?

- A She thinks children should be allowed to enjoy it
- B She prefers painting flowers from overseas.
- C She likes a certain amount of disorder.
- D She likes criticism of her planting methods.

8 What point is Susan making in the final paragraph?

- A It's essential to find the time to paint even if there is gardening to be done.
- B It's important not to leave the gardening entirely to other people.
- C It's good to have expert help when you grow plants.
- D It's hard to do exhibitions if there are not enough plants ready in the garden.

