

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was 2002 when I first started jotting down what I should be doing to care for the plants in our garden and to make the most of fleeting moments when I was back from Hong Kong. I realized I knew nothing about gardening. My neighbour and friend Robert Vernon of Bluebell Nurseries became my first mentor. There followed two years under Rosemary Alexander's tutelage at the English Gardening School, a year at Broomfield College in Derby and time at Brooksby College in Melton Mowbray – all this while flying in and out of the Far East. There followed lectures at the Gardening School of Coton Manor, courses with Rosemary Campbell Preston at The Plant School, voluntary work at Bluebell Nurseries and study days under Tony Kirkham with the International Dendrology Society. The notes and scraps of paper grew feet high and needed organizing. Basil Postan thought it might be a book and the door to Pimpernel Press was magically opened. To him, to Jo Christian and Gail Lynch, who put their faith in it such a while ago, I shall always be deeply grateful, as I am to Becky Clarke for her calm and assured design. My brother-in-law Andrew Kerr of Bennett and Kerr Books read through it for me. When Nancy Marten became its editor so much good sense was drummed into it.

But there are many people who should be thanked for help given wittingly or unwittingly over the years whose wisdom has formed the backbone of this book. Starting with the particular, I am so grateful to Ian Limmer at Peter Beales Roses and Michael Marriott at David Austin Roses for their many years of support and encouragement on rose care, and to Millais Nurseries for their unstinting help regarding the care of rhododendron and azalea. Sally Gregson at Mill Cottage Plants has for a long time patiently answered questions on the care of hydrangea and epimedium. Christine Skelmersdale, owner of Broadleigh Gardens, Chris Ireland-Jones of Avon Bulbs and Chris Blom of Bloms Bulbs have often pushed me in the right direction, and I live with Anna Pavord's book *Bulb* on my desk. The European Box and Topiary Society has given me guidance concerning box, in particular tracking that new scourge, the box tree caterpillar. Neil Lucas's Knoll Gardens is a paradise for those learning about and selecting grasses – there have been many calls to him over the years, answered always with immense patience and kindness. Philip Bolt wrote with wonderful clarity in *The Plantsman* about cardiocrinum, which helped me to grow the plant much more successfully. Articles by Lia Leendertz and Stephen Lacey have been particularly helpful on brugmansia care. Kelways Plants has answered many questions on peonies, as has Oliver Groom on salvias, Edrom Nurseries on gentians, McBeans on orchids, lockyerfuchsia.co.uk on fuchsias and Pictorial Meadows on the, to me, as yet unexplored territory of planting meadows. Dr Glynn Percival has been here often to help with problems such as honey fungus and phytophthoras affecting woody