

glorious gardens



ABOVE *Euphorbia characias* has a long season of interest. **BELOW** Rock plants, like anaphalis, enjoy the naturally rugged setting at Attadale. **RIGHT** Spectacular rainbows are a beautiful bonus from life in an area of high rainfall. **INSET** Nicky Macpherson with her daughter, Joanna.



Influences of the Himalayas can be found in the rhododendron dell, where the century old trees have grown to a great height, falling to their knees with their own strength, before rerooting and rising up again in gnarled curves, twisting sideways to catch the light. The water seeping down the jagged face of the cliff at the back of the dell freezes as the weather becomes colder, with long barbarous icicles hanging from the rockface, a place which must be quite magical in the depths of winter.

Baron Schroder, who lived here in the late 19th century, planted the dell. He was also responsible for the network of paths - rediscovered after the great gales - and the avenue of *Thuja plicata*, which extends from the dell down towards the sea where there was once a jetty for the Schrodgers' steam yacht.

The succession of environments at Attadale roll easily together. 'I find that as you simplify one bit of the garden, you complicate another,' Nicky says, and so the garden goes on evolving. Strolling through the grounds you may encounter a giant caramel cat, nicknamed Monster - for his girth rather than demeanour. He walks seven miles down the coast from his home, stays for several days until his owners pick him up, then begins the whole trip again. Obviously, he's as much a fan of Attadale as the thousands of visitors who travel many miles to delight in this mesmeric Highland garden.

Attadale, Strathcarron, Wester Ross, Ross-shire IV54 8YX. Tel: +44 (0)1520 722603. Open April -Oct, daily except Sun, 10am-5.30pm. Holiday cottages also available, see www.attadale.com



GARDEN NOTEBOOK

Scottish gardener Nicky Macpherson offers some tips on coping with local conditions

- Learn from local gardens that you admire. It is no good trying to grow Mediterranean plants in a waterlogged peat bog. We use plants from the Himalayas, wet coastal areas such as Chile and the north western US. Anything with



- *magellanica* or *sibirica* in its name will flourish. A helpful book is *Right Plant, Right Place* by Nicola Ferguson (Cassell Illustrated, £26.99) available from bookshops or try www.amazon.co.uk
- Wherever you live, you should make the most of the surrounding landscape. In the Highlands, we need windbreaks, but it is also important to keep some views of the hills and water as focal points.

- Observe the landscape - how the burns cut through rock, how deer paths follow the contours of the hill. Arrange paths and rocks to imitate what you see, and keep formality for the kitchen garden.

- Spent mushroom

compost makes an effective mulch, retaining moisture in the soil - all the rhododendrons thrive on it.

- Attadale's aluminium and glass geodesic dome is by Solardome. Sizes range from 12ft to 25ft in diameter, and prices start at £3,825 (excl. VAT). Solardome, tel: 0845 450 2155. The domes are available to export to the United States. www.solardome.co.uk