

Providing colour year-round is a principal aim of head gardener Elliott Forsyth and this has resulted in the walled garden having different themes and aspects. The fine autumn border features sedums, asters, Japanese anemones and a wide range of other plants, including grasses, which are nicely complemented by a nearby spring border, whose plants include Pulmonaria, Trollius, Hellebores and Trilliums.

"We find April and May is a difficult time as far as flowers are concerned as there is a gap between the end of the flowering bulbs and the start of the summer flowers, so this is why we decided to create a spring border," says Catherine.

A real highlight of the garden, though, is the ornamental vegetable potager. If you thought beetroot was a boring plant, then look again, for here at Cambo they have been left to grow to full size and the resulting foliage form and colour is absolutely stunning. But the stark beauty of the beetroot is even bettered by the kale, the foliage being a deep purple with its mysterious outline continually drawing the eye. Other ornamentals here include runner beans and bright red-stemmed chard.

The two herbaceous borders, which reach their peak in July and August, are another focal point. Catherine concedes it is virtually impossible to get a herbaceous border the way you want it to be first time around, no matter how much planning goes into it, and it often takes fine tuning for several years after the initial planting to achieve the desired effect. Adjacent to these borders is a walk along the eastern wall, which is lined by flowering lilacs underplanted with nerines and bulbs.

A new feature for 2004 is a woodland garden being created on an area of ground just outside the walled garden, and elsewhere a couple of pigs have been employed to clear away invasive ivy covering a bank. The pigs have done an excellent job of rooting out the ivy, and with a multitude of snowdrop bulbs being found underneath it, the bank promises to produce a spectacular sight for many years to come.

Tucked away in the East Neuk, Cambo is a fascinating place to visit, with its woodland walks down to the sea combined with the enchanting walled garden. The estate also offers bed & breakfast, self catering apartments and cottages, an 18-hole links golf course, along with professional photography. It has something for everyone, but it is those snowdrops that make Cambo such a special place.

*Cambo Gardens. Open daily 10am to dusk. Adults: £3, children free. Dogs welcome on leads.*



*The ornamental vegetable potager*



*Catherine Erskine*



*Cambo is full of hidden surprises*



*It is the famous snowdrops that make Cambo so special*



The snowdrops cover the ground by the Cambo burn

# SNOW DROP *Splendour*

Keith Broomfield talks to Catherine Erskine at Cambo Gardens

**S**nowdrops have an enduring appeal - a sign of the approach of Spring and warm days around the corner. It is always a pleasure to stumble across a drift of these white nodding flowers and there is surely no better place to experience their beauty than at Cambo Gardens, a couple of miles north of Crail.

The estate, which is run by Peter and Catherine Erskine, is spectacular at any time of year, but it is the snowdrops that Cambo is most famous for, with vast rafts of flowers covering much of its 70 acres from the end of January through to early March.

Originally planted by Peter's great grandmother, these snowdrops, snowflakes and aconites are now the source of a thriving mail order business run by Catherine, a passionate enthusiast with over 160 specialist varieties at her disposal. The

snowdrop bulbs are cultivated on the estate and despatched to customers shortly after flowering because according to Catherine, planting them 'in the green' is the best way to ensure they prosper in the future.

"It is important that snowdrops are thinned out every three years or so. By harvesting them on a regular basis, we are not only able to support a mail order business but also ensure that the plants at Cambo retain their vigour and health," says Catherine.

Her own favourite variety is called Magnet, which features a long pedicel that enables the flowers to gently sway in the breeze.

Cambo is, however, very much a garden for all seasons and one of the main highlights is the Victorian walled garden, designed around the Cambo Burn with weeping willow, waterfall and rose-clad wrought-iron bridges. The shelter provided by the walls, combined with Cambo being situated in one of the sunniest and driest parts of Scotland, means unusual plants such as palms can be grown here. Salvias also prosper.

