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# Austrians seek the art of gardening

**ANTHONY CARROLL**

23 August 2008 06:37

It is a land famous for its classical waltzes, mountainous terrain, castles, yodellers and monosyllabic actor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

But it seems that Austria is lacking one thing - the knack of gardening.

And so the central European nation has turned to some of Norfolk's most picturesque and lush gardens to help develop its horticultural skills.

For the last week, 11 Austrian flower and plant lovers have been visiting gardens across the county to pick up tips on how to improve their own pieces of greenery back home.

Yesterday the group spent an hour in the surrounds of a wonderfully pruned and cared-for private garden at Plovers Hill in Strumpshaw.

Owners James and Jan Saunt were thrilled to show off their immaculately kept lawn, mulberry tree and colourful collection of pink dahlias, hostas and South African honey bushes.

The tour was organised by Austrian garden designer Petra Gmainer who fell in love with Norfolk gardens two years ago while on holiday and then read about Plovers Hill in The English Garden magazine.

She said: "At the moment gardening in Austria is only really starting now. We just do not have the gardening culture that England and Norfolk has.

"Coming here gives us all good ideas for our gardens and we have also enjoyed buying plants and flowers for back home."

However the Austrians may struggle to create their own corner of Norfolk in their gardens as their homeland's soil is heavy and full of clay compared to East Anglia's lighter and more fertile soil.

It is the Austrians' second tour to Norfolk and the gardens visited are featured in the Norfolk National Gardens open scheme.

Mr Saunt, who spends up to 15 hours a week looking after his Plovers Hill garden, said: "It is very, very pleasing to see that our gardens are being enjoyed beyond the country."

On their week-long visit to Norfolk, the Austrians, who stayed in Wells and go back home today, also enjoyed the gardens at Blickling, Felbrigg and Holme Hale halls, Pensthorpe Nature Reserve, and the Peter Beales Roses nursery.



**A garden enthusiast from Austria admiring blooms at Plovers Hill, Strumpshaw. Picture: Steve Adams**

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## Virginia

wines

## Wine Tasting Event

at Blackfriar's Hall, Norwich.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September

6.30pm to 8.30pm

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