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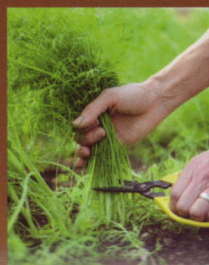
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# LAND GIRLS

Gilly Pollock - gardener, shepherdess and founder of the British Plant Nursery Guide - followed her heart to create an intriguing horticultural business

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL | WORDS STEPHANIE DONALDSON

**G**illy Pollock has founded the British Plant Nursery Guide to promote independent nurseries and encourage gardeners to discover their charms through her 'Jolly Jaunts' excursions. If things had gone the way she planned, however, Gilly would have been involved in horticulture from the outset of her working life. 'I studied the sciences at school and planned to work at a local plant research centre,' she says, 'but the centre closed, and life took me in a different direction.'

After studying business, Gilly worked for many years as a senior manager, specialising

in human resources in public and private sector organisations, including education work and the health service, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 'But no matter where I worked, I always spent most of my free time gardening,' she explains. 'I found it a great stress buster and a way to use my creative side.'

Born into a family of gardeners, she developed green fingers from an early age. Her father grew plants and veg from seed, they always had fruit bushes and the family ate a range of home-grown produce. 'Even as quite a lively teenager, I would have my own patch in my parents' garden,' she says. Ginny learned all her practical skills, such as pruning, from her parents, and as a family they would visit gardens regularly. 'Our favourite family place was, and still is, Dyffryn House near Cardiff.'

Despite succeeding in a high-flying career, Gilly always nurtured a plan to set up her own gardening business. She looked for a garden design course to fit in with family life and work, but her choices were limited, as she lives



*'I always spent most of my free time gardening'*

Recipe  
Danson

**CLOCKWISE FROM**

**RIGHT** Gilly's daughter Harriet joined the business recently; Tom the cat eyes up a knitted cupcake; trying out new products in her greenhouse; her garden provides cut flowers for the house and displays.





in a rural area and most design courses run in the daytime. Her husband David suggested an evening course in horticulture. 'It seemed like a good idea,' she says, 'so I signed up for the RHS Certificate.' Completing RHS Level 2 and moving on to Level 3, Gilly has gained a good foundation in horticulture and credibility with nurseries.

It was while she was studying that the idea for her business was born. 'Everyone on the course talked about garden centres,' she says, 'and I felt they were missing out by not using nurseries. Nurseries have the expertise, a wider choice of plants, and their locally grown plants are more likely to survive, as well as reduce plant miles. I've always felt strongly about supporting local businesses, so the idea to promote nurseries is a natural extension of what I believe in,' she adds.

Gilly began by looking into setting up a website, and conducted lots of research. She also immersed herself in social media, and has found that in the three years since she started with some simple ideas, the world of technology has changed everyone's lives. 'I've actually turned into a bit of a middle-aged geek!' she exclaims. 'I have lots of new ideas to move the business forward using technology.'

A family affair, the business is run by Gilly and David at present, although they've taken on some extra help recently, including their ▶







Nursery,' says owner Cary Carvossa. 'She has promoted us in ways which enhance our brand that would be very difficult to do on our own as a small to medium-size business.'

All this activity is life-consuming, but Gilly is committed. 'I don't seem to have much time for our own garden, but I can't think of anything better than hanging around nursery growers,' she says. 'They have so much knowledge.'

See more at [www.britishplantnurseryguide.co.uk](http://www.britishplantnurseryguide.co.uk)



*'I've turned into a bit of a middle-aged geek'*



daughter Harriet. They've also developed strong business partnerships, an example of which is an association with the Charles Ware Morris Minor Centre, which supplies them with classic cars for shows and events. This matches Gilly's vintage-style branding, which includes the now infamous knitted cupcakes found on her displays. They were christened 'Chelsea buns' earlier this year at that show, where Gilly also unveiled her 'Meet the Grower' chair, a hot seat from which her nursery

growers can share advice with and answer the questions of the attending public.

And her efforts are starting to pay off, with nurseries seeing the benefit of her hard work. 'Gilly has created opportunities for Coolings



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** A true 'land girl', Gilly keeps ex-battery chickens; and is also a volunteer sheperdess; Gilly and her husband Dave create 'Jolly Jaunts' for nursery lovers; the hot seat for growers at shows.