



Alexandre experiments with paths, rarely wide, made of different materials, colors and textures, letting visitors sink into the rich tapestry his garden provides. Here, a yew "fountain" complements *Eremurus himalaicus*, giant alliums and *Alchemilla mollis*. Right: Pink Japanese anemones spill over dwarf boxwood edging.

W

hen I grow up, I want to be a garden!" Alexandre Thomas, the little boy who said that some 40 years ago is now a star of the French garden world. After training at the Gembloux landscape architecture school in Belgium, he went on to transform the plot around his childhood home in Normandy into a major showcase garden, called Les Jardins Agapanthe (Agapanthus), after a favorite flower. It resembles its maker: original, elegant, full of subtle charm, meticulously presented but never "uptight," and above all, bubbling over with enthusiasm. Alexandre's mother, Joseline, supported his dream all the way, taking him when he was still a toddler on her rounds to all the local antiques dealers. Today he collects both rare plants and exquisite garden furnishings, which enhance Agapanthe at every turn. Mum helps weed and discretely runs the tea shop.

Work on Agapanthe began in 1985, when a flat surface of about half an acre was bulldozed into contrasting levels — here a sunken field of

