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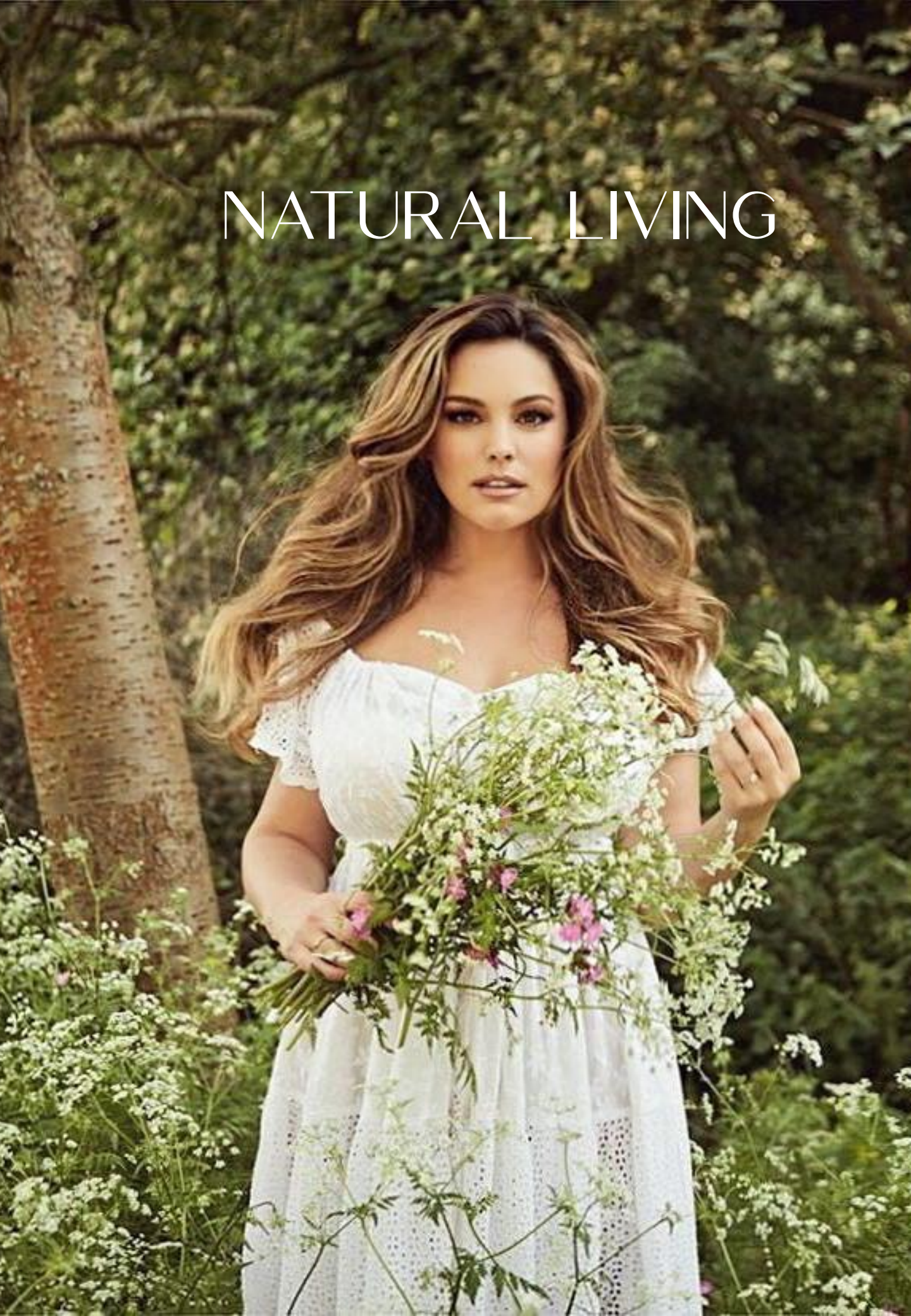
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BEAUTY P

Kelly Brook, gardening guru? *Caroline Donald* visits the former m

Brook's romantic garden. The orchard, right, is her favourite spot



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Kelly Brook wants me to admire her neatly trimmed box and inspect her brassicas.

For the actress and model, who was once voted the sexiest woman alive by readers of FHM magazine, and who attracts double entendres like bees to a honeypot, has been bitten by the gardening bug.

As well known for her generous curves and racy calendars as for appearances on TV shows such as *Strictly Come Dancing*, Brook, 37, has been hard at it for the past 10 years. Ever since she bought her 15th-century Wealden



PARADE

Model's Kent patch to hear about her hidden passion

farmhouse and surrounding five acres in Kent, she has been discovering the joys of getting down and dirty in the flowerbeds. She actually knows her stuff, but only recently has she been sharing her passion with her Im-plus followers on social media.

She has sold most of her designer frocks, closed her London bar, and these days is as likely to post pictures of oxeye daisies at sunset, or of her immaculately tidy potting shed, as images of herself squeezed into a revealing outfit – to the dismay of some of her more ardent gentleman admirers.

They will be disappointed, too, that her smouldering handsome fiancé, Jeremy Parisi, 32, also a model and actor, makes frequent appearances in her posts, between the hollyhocks and the box hedges. He lives in Paris, but makes good use of the Eurostar, and is at the house when I visit, lurking indoors while we talk gardens until we all sit down to a lunch of chicken pie and salad from the veg patch.

This is a rare invitation. It is the first time Brook has allowed a print publication through the gates, and she's a little wary. She guards her privacy fiercely

and is firmly in control of images on her home turf. "It's OK being a sexy calendar girl, but you are only connecting at one level," she says. "I am actually revealing more than I did on the calendar."

All this care over getting the perfect picture of a trug full of peas, or nonchalantly parking her Pashley bike in front of the herbaceous borders, marks what she hopes will be a new career direction. "Most of my TV work is celebrity-orientated, but I watch and love things like Gardeners' World. I would love to be on something that shows my passion for that."

“It's OK being a sexy calendar girl, but you are only connecting at one level. I am revealing more here

She first saw her grade II listed, rose-covered farmhouse when she was working in Los Angeles. "I got so bored of not having any seasons, never seeing any change," she recalls as we sit in the sunshine drinking coffee on the cobbled terrace, with nothing but birdsong filling the air. "It was like living in a car park – it was concrete everywhere."

So she started to trawl the internet. "I am from this area, my family live locally and it was a bit of a whim, really. I was earning money and thought, 'I need to invest in something that will be my forever home.'"

Brook is clearly not just a pretty face: after she won a beauty contest in her teens, her career took off, and by the time she was 19, she was investing in property. "When you are acting and stuff, you get a lot of time off," she says. "I was always buying properties, renovating them and selling them on. I had done three in LA and a couple in London."

"My job is really paying for my hobby, but luckily my hobby was lucrative at the time, because house prices were going up and up."

Brook would throw herself into the renovations. "My family like working with our hands – my great-grandfather was a piano maker, my grandfather was a gardener and my dad was a scaffolder. I have definitely got that in my genes. I like making things, digging and planting."

The property had once been an apple and pear farm, and there are remnants of the old orchard at the top of the hill, behind the house. As for the gardens, the previous owners left well-established "bones" – including a lime walk, a laburnum arch, a swimming-pool area and a pond – though she had to remove a clutter of overgrown plants to reveal them.

Her first job was to get rid of the thick boundary hedge of leyland cypress. "It was so dark," she says. "You didn't see any sky, you didn't see any indigenous trees in the background. Now we have sun, it makes all the roses and plants thrive so much better."

We walk round to the other side of the house and look at the grassy slopes leading up to the lime walk, which are dotted with yew and rounded box topiary. Her years in front of a camera have given her a good eye for the bigger picture: she sees the garden



Strictly come pruning Brook has added immaculately clipped topiary to the existing landscape. She has been working on the garden since she bought the Kent farmhouse about 10 years ago



as a whole rather than merely focusing on discrete areas.

"You couldn't even see the lime walk before," she says. "These yew hedges that look like little soldiers going up the hill they were a maze. I clipped them down to the bare trunk. I didn't think they'd ever grow back, but they did. It took about five years and now they are really manageable."

What of the lime walk itself? "I've created a spring bank there, with lots of daffodils, crocus and hellebores." Brook also cleared the sloping woodland behind the house of brambles so the bluebells can flourish, seeding foxgloves, oxeye daisies and poppies to come later. "I like the idea that, as you walk around, everywhere has a different vibe," she says.

Around the house are cottage plants such as *Alchemilla mollis*, lupins, irises, lavender and foxgloves, with dahlias, hollyhocks, anemones and rudbeckias to come. Someone comes in to help with the mowing and heavy work, but Brook swears she planted them herself, and picks up ideas from gardens she has visited.

She's also been planting up old galvanised bathtubs in different styles, as well as little crates of wild flowers, inspired by the meadows at Great Dixter. Then there are the masses of roses: covering the walls of the house; lining the flagstone path; filling the box parterre. When put on the

spot, Brook can't remember all the names, apart from one growing over an arch, the bluish-pink 'Maid of Kent' – how could she not have that?

Whether or not she gets to be a green fingered TV goddess, Brook has made her own gardener's world at the farmhouse and is obviously enjoying the new direction it is taking her in. The place is more than a mere base, however. "As much as it was a cute little cottage I always dreamt about having, it is now our family home," she says. "It is a place that captured that moment in time when my dad had been diagnosed with cancer and my brother had been posted to Afghanistan."

"There was so much turmoil in my life and the world, this home really grounded me. If everything just went to pot, I thought, 'I've got a home, I can grow vegetables, and I have an orchard and I have my own water – we have everything we need as a family.' That is the underlying emotional connection with the house."

It is up at the top, with views over the Kent Weald, that she loves most. There's a shepherd's hut and a fire pit, and she's been sowing new wild-flower areas. "My dad passed away about eight months after I moved in. He loved the orchard and I feel his spirit is here with me. For us as a family, when we spend time up there, it reminds us of him – I walk around there and I feel closer to him."

HELLO!



'I'm really proud of what I've done here. And now I'm older and happier in who I am, I'm ready to share it'

AT HOME IN HER ENGLISH COUNTRY GARDEN
KELLY BROOK
ON ROSES, ROMANCE AND HOW SHE'S FINALLY FOUND HER REAL SELF



PHOTOGRAPHS: JONATHAN WOOD/GETTY IMAGES; KELLY BROOK: ANDREW HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES





Kelly shows us around her garden, bursting with colourful blooms, a thriving veggie patch and its own lily pond, in the grounds of her beautiful home in the heart of the Kent countryside (left). "I haven't done the heavy work myself, like [#Bf](#) the landscaping and topiary, but I've been very much involved the whole way through," she says



PICTURE: JAMES WOOD; PICNIC: JAMES WOOD; BOYFRIEND: JAMES WOOD

Kelly Brook is doing a spot of 15-minute housework when HELLO! arrives at her beautiful home, deep in the Kent countryside.

It's a boiling hot day and the louvered windows of her Tudor farmhouse are flung wide open. Spicing us coming up the path, she leans out of her bedroom to greet us, a can of polish in one hand, duster in the other – and in her bra.

"You've caught me out," she squeals, before adding with an infectious chuckle: "At least you know I do my own cleaning."

It's the kind of saucy, seaside-postcard moment her name conjures up. Some 20 years after bursting into the spotlight as a glossy-haired teenager with hourglass curves to die for, the model, actress and TV starlet still possesses sex

appeal by the bucketload. It's no surprise, then, that the recent revelation that she has set her sights on becoming TV's next green-fingered goddess – the woman poised to heat up the world of horticulture – has caused a buzz.

Cynics might assume her input would be limited to masering the art of posing provocatively while pretending to prune her privets. But this is a woman who knows her onions – and more to the point, how to grow them.

The proof is in the quintessential English country garden at her charming home. Hands on in its creation, Kelly tells HELLO! it is the realisation of a ten-year labour of love as she welcomes us into the pretty sanctuary she has, until now, guarded protectively.

BLOOMING PASSIONS

"I've reached an age where I want to do things that I'm passionate about and gardening really is a passion," she says.

"I've been pigeonholed as this silly, giggly glamour girl who does bad boys, but that's never been the real me. It's a front; a role I've played along with."

"I am partially responsible for encouraging that focus because it's what people have seemed to want to read about. I didn't think anyone would be interested in Kelly the homebody or Kelly the gardener."

"Getting sacked from some TV show [in 2009 she was famously given the push from Britain's Got Talent just days into the live shows] and being in and out of difficult relationships was more of a story to tell, but some of the choices I've made in my personal life I knew weren't

Picnic time (above) Kelly is in her element having loaded up a trusty Morris Minor from Canterbury General with goodies from Chagworth Farm Shop. It's the kind of outing she enjoys now, with boyfriend of two years Jeremy Paris (together below left)



▶▶

▶▶

'I've been pigeonholed as this silly, giggly glamour girl - but that's never been the real me'



Relaxing among the results of her hard work over ten years, Kelly, 37, takes a bit of time to snail the... hydrangeas. "I've reached an age where I want to do things I'm passionate about. And gardening really is a passion," she says

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Interior life: Kelly potters around happily in her shed, which is as charming as the rest of her pretty Tudor farmhouse (below left)



for ever, as superficial as that sounds. The true me, who's in her element in her posing shed and digging around in her vegetable patch, is a very personal piece of my life that I've protected.

"But I'm really proud of what I've done here," she smiles, gazing around at her surroundings. "And now that I'm older and happier in who I am, I'm ready to celebrate it and share it."

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Kelly was living and working in Los Angeles and engaged to *Thank U Next* star Billy Zane when she found her "forever home", which is set in five acres, complete with an orchard rich with apple and pear trees and a large outdoor swimming pool.

"As a child, I was always pining for a house that had liddie criss-cross windows and a lily pond - who knows, maybe I lived here in a former life, but when I found this place, I instinctively knew it was where I needed to be."

Her brother, a military man, was about to be posted to Afghanistan. "So there was a lot of uncertainty in my family and in the world in general," says Kelly, a Kent girl born and bred. Then, four months after she moved in, her father Ken was diagnosed with terminal cancer and the pull back home made sense.

"We had a whole year of just being here as a family before he passed away," says Kelly, who was appearing in the fifth series of *Strictly Come Dancing* when Ken died. "It was a small golden moment in time; my dad

'We're not putting pressure on ourselves. Jeremy and I are happy and just enjoying what we have'

loved this place and, when I look around, there are memories of him everywhere. He loved the orchards and it's where we still spend a lot of time as a family."

As around the same time as losing her father, her fracious on-off four-year relationship with Billy ended for good. "So here I was, single, with this old house to renovate on my own and I just threw myself into it and focused on working hard and making it beautiful. Obviously I haven't done the heavy work myself, but I've been very much involved the whole way through. I have a gardener called Michael who comes every fortnight. He's a trained horticulturist and I'm more of a maverick, so we don't always see eye to eye. But I've learned so much from him."

"I also read a lot of books about horticulture and I love *Gardener's World*. I'm completely self-taught, but you could have a serious conversation with me about your garden," says Kelly, whose grandfather was a keen gardener.

Doesn't Kelly feel she may have fanned the flames of any preconceptions about the notion of her becoming the new Charlie Dimmock or Rachel de Thame when she said earlier this month: "If I undo a button on my boiler suit I might increase the viewers?"

"My buttons would pop open, that's just fact," she deadpans, with a shrug, glancing down at her ample assets. "I've got massive boobs, there's nothing I can do about that. That doesn't mean I don't know what I'm doing."

WHERE LOVE BLOOMS

Her boyfriend of two years, 32-year-old Jeremy Parisi, the handsome Italian judo champion, model and actor she met when she contacted him via social media, can often be found out there with her, deadheading flowers and trimming back bushes.

"He's from a proper farming family, where they rear animals for food and make their own olive oil, so he rolls his eyes at me a bit when I'm banging on about the aesthetics of where this plant and that plant should go," says Kelly. "But I think he appreciates that it's been a lot of work for me and that what we have here is really special."

It appears she's finally found calm and contentment with Jeremy, who's there on the day of our photoshoot, happy to look on, from the sidelines as his girlfriend takes centre stage.

"My previous relationships were so fraught with drama and chaos," she adds. "I was going through the same cycle again and again." She had high-profile romances with rugby union players Danny Cipriani and Thom Evans before a short-lived engagement to former *Gladiator* David McInnis, who proposed within three months of them meeting.

"When I met Jeremy, I'd slowed things right down and we were friends for quite some time before we got together. I was in a better place, we'd both had some distance from the past and we were ready."

"Jeremy's had so much achievement himself with his judo and he does a lot of TV shows in Paris. He's a happy man and a successful man, so he's able to enjoy my success without feeling threatened."

She adds: "We're not putting any pressure on ourselves. We're not engaged, we've got no plans to marry. We're happy and just enjoying what we have."

With her love life flourishing and dreams of seeing her career blossom in an exciting new direction, Kelly is happier than ever. She says: "The older I've got, the more I've realised that money and fame aren't everything; it's the people you love and surround yourself with and the home life you build that are the real riches. I've done pretty well for myself on that score." **H**

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Having hoops of fun: Of her passion for gardening she says: "I could come to your home and I'd know what to buy and where to plant it – and you'd know I wasn't there to steal your boyfriend!"

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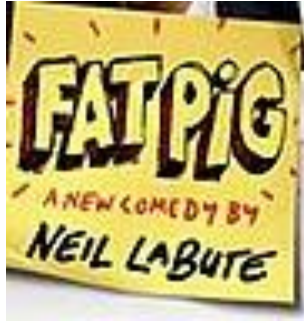
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The logo features a vibrant background of various colorful flowers, including red and orange blooms, set against green foliage. The text is overlaid on the bottom right of this floral image.











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