



Everything but the man

Sandra Bullock

on being single.

Interview by Jim Shelley

Cooler shakers

Bootsy Collins, James Brown,
BB King and other giants

Mother trouble

The woman who shaped Bill Clinton

TELEGRAPH HOME

Superwoman in exile

Shirley Conran's Bordeaux farmhouse



Seeds of rebellion

The gardener who's weeding out the cardi-and-cords brigade. By Natalie Meddings. Photograph by Antony Medley

Autumn is here and for serious gardeners everywhere it's full graft ahead – pruning down, pulling up, sinking bulbs into sensibly prepared soil. But gardener Andy Sturgeon, 33, has a better idea. 'It's dangerous getting too serious about gardening,' he says, pulling up an old canvas chair under the pear tree in his London garden. 'When it's a list of jobs to tick, you forget to enjoy it. People think they need to know loads. That it's a lot of hard work. But it's much simpler than that. Gardening's just about getting things going, helping things to happen.'

It's the principle that *Planted* pivots on. Written by Sturgeon and published this month by Hodder & Stoughton, the book gently prods readers to see a garden as a place in which to unplug, tinker and enjoy oneself. 'I loathe formula,' he says. 'Manicured lawns,

herbaceous borders – that stuff's a mystery to me. A garden can never be an exact science.'

Sturgeon approaches gardening as if it were painting by numbers. Like a kid with a fresh set of Caran d'Ache, he might slap a wet-green Gunnera against egg-yellow daisies, rhubarb among marigolds – and see what fetches up.

It's not what we're used to. *He's* not what we're used to. Gardening folk are mostly safe sorts, mustard-keen and woolly-clad. But there's not a cosy bone in Sturgeon's body. He's got no cardies, no cords, just a creased kind of careless look and a pair of worn, callused hands crammed with credentials.

'My interest kicked in early,' he says. 'Every kid does mustard and cress, but I remember being really excited, checking the windowsill every five minutes.' After horticultural college, he formed his own landscaping firm and

moved into garden design. At 28, he went travelling for three years, touring Africa and Asia. 'I admit I like adventure,' he grins. 'But to me, it was just as exciting seeing vanilla pods growing. When I climbed Kilimanjaro, I kept tripping up because my eyes were on the ground all the time, looking for plants. I'd have loved to have been a Victorian plant-hunter.'

Back in England, he set to work on the book. 'But I always have to get back in the garden,' he says. 'It balances me. I can't not do it.' This summer, Sturgeon won a silver gilt award at Hampton Court Flower Show.

With its stylish photography and down-to-earth, demystifying advice, *Planted* looks set to be a gardening bestseller. Sturgeon shrugs, 'They're saying gardening's the new black, aren't they? I don't know about that. It's just growing things.'