

SECRET GARDEN (solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

This is a [Rows Garden](#) puzzle. The Rows clues (giving one answer for the first and last rows, and two answers for the rest) correspond to each of the labeled rows in the grid. The Bloom clues giving 6-letter answers correspond to one of their respective colored hexagons, with answers to be filled in either direction. In this particular puzzle, as hinted by the flavortext, there has been some “cross-breeding” of the flowers. One of the letters in a bloom in each of the rows (other than the short first and last rows) has been transplanted/swapped with another one of these letters in another bloom and row. Taking the Row answers as invariant, these cross-breeds can be observed by the corresponding Bloom answer being changed into another 6-letter answer with one different letter, that is still a valid word. These transplantations thus form a chain/loop – and if read starting from the second row, gives the clue phrase for the answer **GRAFT PEONY**. This thematically references what has happened in this puzzle, which is the transplanting of the different colored peony (indicated in the flavortext and puzzle by the common Chinese name *Mudan*) stock for plant breeding. In horticulture, this plant breeding action/process is generally called **PROPAGATE**, as hinted by the 9-lettered answer blanks below the grid, and which is the thematic answer to this puzzle. The following tables summarize the answers to the Rows and Blooms clues, also indicating the 10 changed Bloom answers:

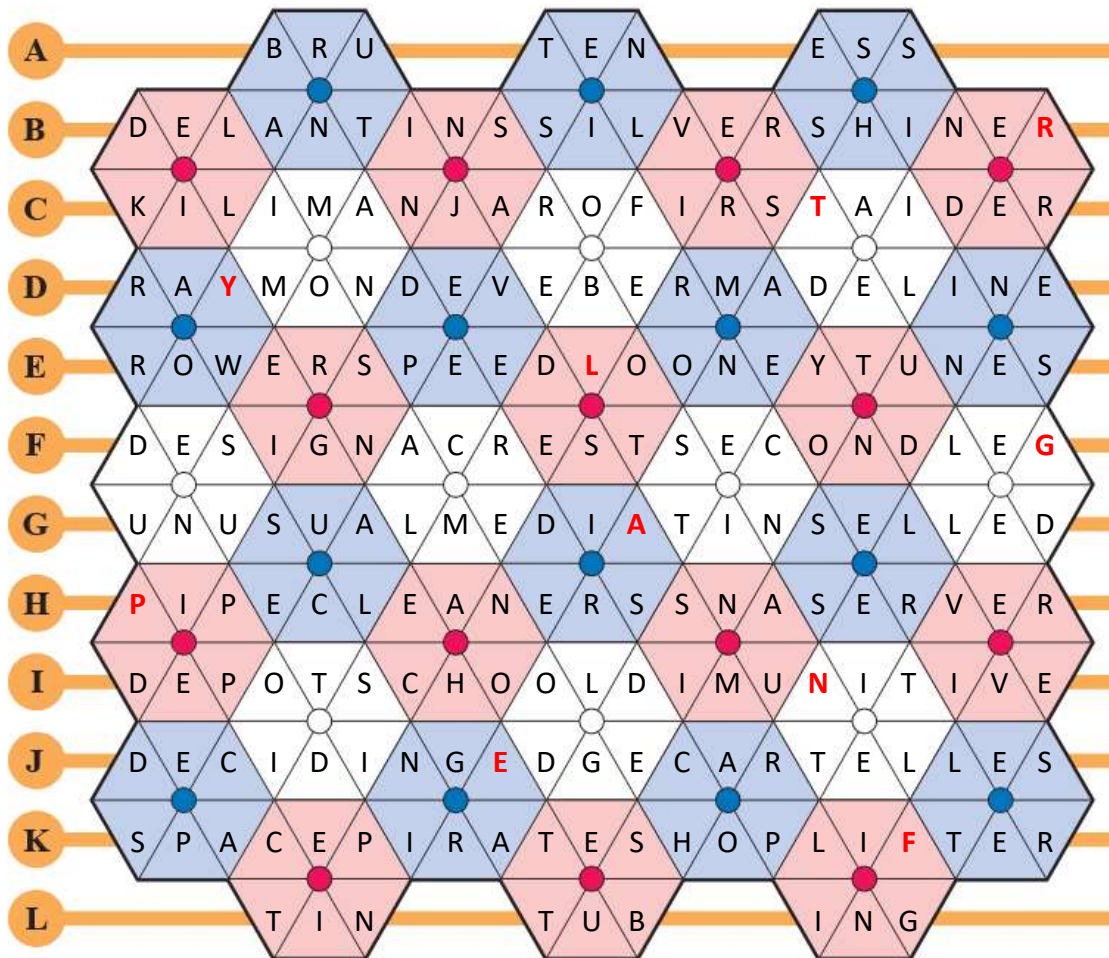
	Rows clues	Rows answers
A:	The quality or state of being savage	BRUTENESS
B:	Composer Arnold or Hugo (2 wds.)	DE LANTINS
	Relatively large, slender minnow that can be found in Ontario (2 wds.)	SILVER SHINER
C:	Africa's highest peak	KILIMANJARO
	One giving immediate treatment before medical help arrives (2 wds.)	FIRST AIDER
D:	Female winner of 1944 Tournoi de France (2 wds.)	RAYMONDE VEBER
	Ludwig Bemelmans' children book series	MADELINE
E:	How fast a sculler is going on an ergometer (2 wds.)	ROWER SPEED
	Warner Bros. animated series featuring Bugs Bunny (2 wds.)	LOONEY TUNES
F:	What a knight needs to do first to establish the device borne on top of the helm in his heraldic display (3 wds.)	DESIGN A CREST
	The latter match in a tie between two teams (2 wds.)	SECOND LEG
G:	Unconventional materials used by innovative artists (2 wds.)	UNUSUAL MEDIA
	Decorated with thin glittering strips, like a Christmas tree (British spelling)	TINSELLED
H:	Flexible tufted wires (2 wds.)	PIPE CLEANERS
	HIS is the successor to this Microsoft gateway application (2 wds.)	SNA SERVER
I:	Nepalese educational institution established within the Dharan Ghopa Camp by the Brigade of Gurkha in 1963 (2 wds.)	DEPOT SCHOOL
	Grammar term for affix used to indicate small size	DIMINUTIVE
J:	An advantage possessed by one side over another, that dominates the outcome of a conflict (2 wds.)	DECIDING EDGE
	Extinct genus of New World monkey named after paleontologist Cástor	CARTELLS
K:	Han Solo, for one (2 wds.)	SPACE PIRATE
	Retail thief	SHOPLIFTER
L:	Product by Biomerics for pharmaceutical applications (2 wds.)	TIN TUBING

White Mudan Bloom clues	Answers
Crime within the family	INCEST
Didn't pass	FAILED/TAILED
Earlier than	BEFORE
Fools	IDIOTS
Genus of moths formerly in Cossidae, but is now in Dudgeoneidae family	NOMIMA
Less ruffled	CALMER
Plug receptacle	OUTLET/NUTLET
Provided temporary accommodations for	LODGED
Shouted loudly	YELLED/GELLED
Still wrapped in the box	UNUSED

Pink Mudan Bloom clues	Answers
Amazon and Nile	RIVERS
Area where the miracle of Saint Michael took place, an event commemorated on 6 September	CHONAE
Flat top hills	BUTTES
Gave a gratuity	TIPPED/PIPPED
In poor health	AILING/FILING
Natural starch used as a setting agent in making jams and jellies	PECTIN
Relating to apes	SIMIAN
Restore to life	REVIVE
Rules from a throne	REIGNS
Sequel to the novel <i>Eragon</i>	ELDEST/OLDEST
Sex	GENDER/RENDER
Slain	KILLED
Stealthy Japanese assassins	NINJAS
Working right now, e.g. a policeman (2 wds.)	ON DUTY

Blue Mudan Bloom clues	Answers
Alternative medicine advocate Deepak	CHOPRA
Annoyed, irritated	PEEVED
Celebrity fitness model Jen	SELTHER
Gathering of villages in medieval Wales	MAENOR
Item in contract	CLAUSE
Not so great as the others	LESSER
Of slender width	NARROW/YARROW
Pay attention to sound	LISTEN
People on horseback	RIDERS/AIDERS
Positioned at intervals	SPACED
Russian lyric poet Sergei	ESENIN
Sikh's headdress	TURBAN
Sounds from snakes	HISSES
Trimming away excess or peeling fruit	PARING/EARING

The image below shows the filled grid with the changed letters in red:



Constructor's notes:

For this puzzle answer, the puzzle type of Rows Garden was a natural selection. The idea of introducing variety by transplanting letters within the grid also came quickly, although this added even more challenges to the construction for an already constraining puzzle type. Because all the letters in a Rows Garden grid are doubly-crossed, and any adjustments to one answer would have spillover impact to other rows and blooms. And the need for the changed words to also be valid limited/fixed the possible options for the blooms. Furthermore, the standard Rows Garden also has a fixed format using only one answer for the first and last rows, and two answers for other rows, which require relatively long limiting phrases. For this particular puzzle, I intentionally made the Rows clues more specific (unlike a typical Rows Garden puzzle), as they were necessary to confirm and reveal the aha of the 10 changed Bloom answers. Fortunately, I was able to satisfy all these constraints and achieve the desired results. The image of the standard Rows Garden grid is reused from a 2019 Mystery Hunt Rows Garden puzzle by Andrew Marc Greene and Julia Tenney.