

A crackling view

ON Saturday, London's night sky will be lit by roman candles, Catherine heels and trails of fireworks like shooting stars. It is the 10th anniversary of Guy Fawkes's attempt to blow up the houses of Parliament so the pital can expect spectacular fires and pyrotechnics. London's plethora of parks come into their own, but for Londoners who live around the pital's private communal gardens there are often great parties.

Cleveland Square

visi Orsini, 32, is an Italian interior designer who has lived a flat in Cleveland Square, W8, for the past five years. The square's large white terraced houses were once home to 19th century bankers Samuel Montagu and Lionel Rothschild, and are now divided into spacious flats. The garden in the middle of the square is host to a stunning fireworks party on the closest Sunday. "There is a huge bonfire, a queue and barbecue," says Orsini. "I love the way the piped music is synchronised with the fireworks. Everyone brings their friends."

Madbroke Gardens

Physician and comedian Guy Fawkes and his wife, Gala, a nature designer, have lived in a spacious three-bedroom flat at Madbroke Gardens, Notting Hill, for 11 years. Their flat has access to the Stanley Crescent gardens, which also host a fire party. "There are hot dogs, mulled wine and music," says Guy. "Everyone has a clear-out for the bonfire. One year I lent some chairs and they never came back. I've always suspected they were used on the fire. Stanley, our son, is free and will really enjoy the spectacle."



Ready: Lettsom Gardens bonfire organiser Katherine Down with garden committee treasurer Simon Dean



£219,000: Grove Park, Camberwell, SE5. A one-bedroom split-level flat close to Lettsom Gardens. Through Wooster & Stock (020 8299 5310)

St Margarets

Publisher Iain Parsons and his writer wife, Alex, have lived in the pleasure gardens area of St Margarets in Twickenham for 17 years. There are three communal gardens and their house backs on to the one that holds the annual firework party.

Once a year Londoners living around a garden square can get a spectacular bonus, as Anthea Masey discovers

"I don't think we have ever missed a year," says Alex. "When our children were growing up we used to invite all their friends over. We would cook some chilli con carne and then head for the fireworks. "It is an event which really pulls the community together, although problems about getting insurance mean we can no longer have a big bonfire, which is a pity."

Lettsom Gardens

Lettsom Gardens in the Grove Park area of Camberwell at the top of Camberwell Grove is one of London's best-kept secrets. Extending over several acres, this once-derelict plot is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a formal garden.

Named after Quaker physician Dr John Coakley Lettsom, whose house sat at the top of Dog Kennel Hill, the garden belongs to the council but is managed by a local committee.

Unlike other communal gardens, anyone can apply for a key, and some of the 300 keyholders come from as far as Myatts Fields and Brixton.

Katherine Down, who lives with her husband, Andrew Harris, and two children Freddie, 17, and Shura, 12, is secretary of the garden committee, which organises the annual bonfire night party, which is held on the closest Sunday.

"The children bring their Guys and everyone gets a small prize. We start making the bonfire at 10am with a clear-out of the gardens.

Camberwell and nearby Peckham have a reputation for being arty — Camberwell College of Arts is close by — and Katherine says that one year local artist Christopher Clack made a huge eight-foot wicker man. "It was impressive and quite spooky; it was sad to burn it, but we did."



Safe and sound: Italian interior designer Orsini's spectacular musical firework party: pets are best left at home, with