

GARDEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L

ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2008

The Essential Companion to Gardening in North London & Hertfordshire

TULIPS

The Designer Bulb
Inside Stephen Woodhams'
Modern Masterpiece

**SARAH
RAVEN**

chooses six of
her favourite tulips

GREEN VISION

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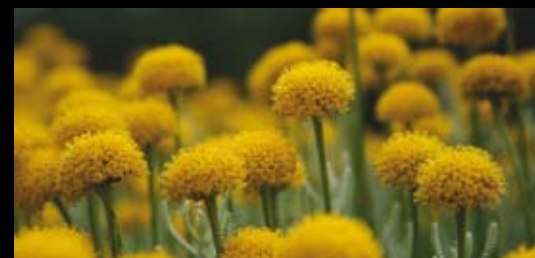
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Garden Confidential is distributed free to 42,000 selected homes with gardens in north London and Hertfordshire, with 8,000 additional copies available at local nurseries.

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WHAT TO DO with the garden? How often have we had a great idea but not known how to achieve it? Worse still you've seen the ideal garden bench only to find it comes from France; the gorgeous plant that is only available from a specialist nursery in Yorkshire; and the perfect tree that does not tolerate north London's clay soils. *Garden Confidential* will help you develop garden solutions on your doorstep.

Our first issue uncovers patios but we don't leave you there. We then pave a path for you with a guide to some of the best paving stones available with recommended stockists in north London.

Tulips can lift a small patio area and we love them. This issue pays a seasonal visit to Stephen Woodhams' garden, strewn with tulips – and asks Sarah Raven to nominate her favourites.

Spring always has us at our local nursery – impulse buying for those Summer borders. To lend a little focus *Garden Confidential* supplies you with some new ideas for plants and plant associations. Take a look at pages 15 and 25. And in keeping with our remit we let you know where you can purchase them with ease.

Each issue we plan to put gardens into an historical perspective directing you to a particular house and garden that you might not have heard of and yet is within easy visiting distance. This month we highlight a personal favourite – see page 43.

We are aware too of our natural environment, both urban and rural, coming under increasing pressure, so each quarterly will discuss an aspect of wildlife that can be easily sustained in the north London garden. This time it's all about ponds – have a look at page 55.

And finally in each issue we aim to find something different happening in the gardening world of north London. Our investigations lead us this time to Mark Wheeler at Folia Nursery. Read our four-page spread starting on page 35. In fact we were so excited we are holding our launch day there! Come and join us on April 2nd from 12 noon onwards, and see for yourselves.

Functional, informative, inspirational, *Confidential*.

Melanie

Melanie Wand, Editor

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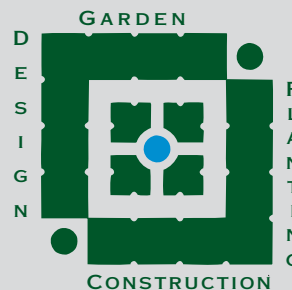


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No dinner is really complete without a potato and today everyone from the local greengrocer to the large supermarkets are displaying wonderful selections.

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Every season brings its own fair share of joys and problems in the garden. Share your pleasures and despairs with us.



The Designer Bulb

Of all the Spring bulbs it is the tulip that encompasses all that we mean by contemporary. Their clarity of form, variety, and sheer potency of colour impact dynamically against a backdrop of modernist concrete and steel constructions.

Nothing compares to the simple grace of the cup-shaped form of the tulip head. The six petals create a distinctive flower with a perfect profile which – when used in mass bedding schemes where the accent is more upon the total colour effect than the individual qualities of the flower – there is little that can compete. Contemporary garden design often likes to incorporate boldly contrasting colours as well, so that the vast palette of the tulip makes it an invaluable component. And in a starkly minimalist plan the rhythmic swathes of tulips add vitality while softening the overall effect.

Tulips have always been used historically to grow in an herbaceous border to add height and colour before the perennials take their place but now they merit attention in the new type of prairie plantings. As they work best when planted in large blocks, they therefore associate well with this type of planting scheme. Furthermore, the tulips flower and die back well before the great grasses and daisies take off, allowing such a bed to have an almost twelve month appeal.

Even in the small urban garden, tulips are essential. They are easy to plant in containers and nothing sets them off so well as isolated in an aluminium planter. Choose the colour carefully and stick to one single variety and you will find that a few pots of tulips bring alive a small place and, carefully positioned, can even create their own focal point.

Finally, a dozen tulips in a plain vase sets off the modernist kitchen as nothing else does.

It's easy to understand why someone like Stephen Woodhams chooses to use them in his garden designs.



Every room in the house has a garden view. Its design is in perfect harmony with the contemporary and stylish interior.

The designer and his bulb

STEPHEN WOODHAMS

THE TULIPS IN Stephen Woodhams' garden are sensational. The blood-red with their heavy heads fall over the rims of their containers while the vibrant orange stand upright behind them. Both sides of the entrance door to the designer's sleek grey cubical house are flanked with metre-high concrete vases that contain tulips by the dozens. What an artful performance to welcome visitors! The simplicity and sculptural beauty of tulips are ideal components in a modern garden and Stephen's own gives a perfect lesson in style.

On entering the house, there is immediately the feeling of being outside. The whole rear façade is glass and no door other than the entrance bars the view through to the garden. Tulips play the major role

in the scene. For his exciting Spring drama Stephen has planted more than 5000 bulbs, all of one kind, in bright orange and dark red tones.

The garden has a clean geometrical layout of perfectly rectangular fields separated in the centre by three hornbeam arches. Planting in the beds is concentrated on grey and earthen colours, foliage being more important than flower. Stephen has used a mixture of glaucous Euphorbia, Acanthus, bronze Carex and silver Festuca and Santolina.

Surprisingly tulips are the only flowers. To maintain their dominance, he has given them extra height by planting them in silvery aluminium containers. Stephen has positioned them as focal points in his urban paradise adding an extra touch of glamour to the design.

For the same reason he has created a lovely still life on his terrace. A large perspex table carries old and new pots with tulips and hellebores together with lanterns and a piece of sculpture. After all, the garden designer is also one of the U.K.'s best florists. ■

WORDS: SABINE WESEMANN IMAGES: HEINER ORTH



Stephen Woodhams displays a group of small pots on a design table with mirrored top. The mix of old and new pots combined with sculpture and lanterns is breathtaking, even at night.



He uses the colour palette of a fashion designer: red and orange, softened by shades of grey and highlighted by spring green.

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CONFIDENTIAL TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Each issue, *Garden Confidential's* staff check out the products available to make all our gardening tasks easier, safer and more enjoyable. This Spring we've looked at that stalwart of any gardener's arsenal: a decent pair of secateurs.

THE IMPORTANT ISSUE when choosing secateurs is the size and ease of use. The best quality manufacturers tend to produce the same model in a range of sizes. Using a size that is too big will cause excessive strain. Take care to check the safety-catch to see if you can operate it properly, especially if you have poor dexterity or are left-handed.

There are left-handed models available but the same effect can be achieved by having the safety-catch on the top for use with your thumb.

To gain a mechanical advantage, and to make pruning easier a number of secateurs have been designed with ratchet mechanisms. Most ratchet secateurs work very well but do require a different technique for use. All ratchet secateurs have anvil type blades and cannot cut a stem at an angle, as usually recommended in books. This makes little difference to your plants but the benefits to you of using less force are considerable, especially if you have arthritic hands.

Remember that whichever secateurs you choose it is important to take good care of them. Always clean and dry the blades after use, then apply a light coat of oil or graphite.

The models pictured right have been tried and tested by our panel of gardeners. ■

Editor's personal favourite – Expensive but its angle makes it an absolute pleasure to use.



BAHCO PX-M2 ERGO

Bahco's top-of-the-range PX ERGO® secateurs' unique slicing action provides a clean, professional cut; while ergonomic design features reduce the risk of stresses and strains. A range of handle and cutting head sizes provides gardeners with a practically bespoke pair of secateurs, specific to the task and their individual needs.
Cutting width: 20mm; **Weight:** 319g; **Price:** £44.99; **Supplier:** Bahco; **Model:** PX-M2 Ergo

DARLAC SUPER CLASSIC RATCHET PRUNER

Darlac's Super Classic has the largest cut capacity in the ratchet range, capable of cutting a massive 25mm with far greater ease – at least 30% less effort required – than conventional secateurs. Suitable for large or small hands and left or right hand use. Replaceable blades and anvils are available.

Cutting width: 25mm; **Weight:** 206g; **Price:** £14.99; **Supplier:** Darlac; **Model:** DP744 Super Classic Ratchet Pruner (anvil)

Editor's Choice – Tremendous leverage with minimum effort. Excellent value for money.



FELCO MODEL 8

Mention the word Felco and you automatically think of secateurs. The renowned Swiss manufacturers have added the Model 8 to their range, an ergonomically superior bypass secateur with an offset cutting head. This design prevents the razor-sharp pruners from sliding out of your hand, resulting in greater cutting control and unrivalled comfort.

Cutting width: 20mm; **Weight:** 245g; **Price:** £39.95; **Supplier:** Harrod Horticultural; **Model:** GGT-740 (bypass only)

SPEAR & JACKSON LARGE BYPASS SECATEURS

Maintaining plant health is essential when pruning, and Spear & Jackson's Large Bypass Secateurs can tackle growth up to 20mm thick without crushing or bruising the plant. The clean cut is made possible by 'bypass action' PTFE-coated carbon steel blades that offer cutting accuracy and smoothness, while staying sharp for longer. Contoured ergonomic soft-grip handles deliver comfort and convenience; and a shock absorber makes for a smoother jar-free operation.

Cutting width: 20mm; **Weight:** 228g; **Price:** £18.99; **Supplier:** Spear & Jackson; **Model:** 6060BS (bypass) and 6058AS (anvil)



WILKINSON SWORD POWERGEAR PRUNERS

The Wilkinson Sword Medium PowerGear® Bypass Pruner and Medium PowerGear® Anvil Pruner come with a revolutionary cutting mechanism that enables you to receive three times the cutting power, reducing any strain on your wrists, hands and arms. The handles are made from Fibrecomp™, and the non-stick blades provide a clean cut, ideal for pruning live stems.

Cutting width: 20mm; **Weight:** 200g; **Price:** £22.99; **Supplier:** Wilkinson Sword; **Model:** Medium Bypass Powergear Pruner



Clockwise from Top Left: *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Laurus nobilis* and *Photinia x fraseri Red Robin*

The demand for architectural plants has never been so great to create immediate impact in the garden.

YOU KNOW WHAT it's like... you go to your local garden centre to purchase that plant that you either wanted or fell in love with. Then you get it home and can't help feeling an anticlimax as, once positioned, it makes little impact in your garden.

Nowadays more and more gardeners are opting for larger specimen plants that will give an 'instant' effect or immediate privacy.

There is no reason why we all cannot use larger architectural plants to good effect in our gardens. Use a company that specialises in mature nursery stock. Their advice will be invaluable. Ask questions about soil requirements, size, spread, habit, etcetera. Have to hand information about your garden such as light levels, rough measurements, well-draining areas (or not) and if possible photographs of the area you want to plant up. Some good nurseries will arrange a visit to your garden to go through your requirements if you are considering purchasing a large amount of

stock. They may also have a garden designer on their team who can put the ideas to paper.

If you are impatient or want to create an impact in the garden, bigger plants give better and more immediate results. Also for their size and age these plants are surprisingly inexpensive and are actually better value in the long run.

'Laurus nobilis is ideal for north London's heavy clay soil...'

Garden Confidential asked Lucas Mariconda of Paramount Plants & Gardens which three plants he considered indispensable in a north London garden.

'I always recommend, especially in north London gardens – i.e. heavy clay soil – the *Laurus nobilis* Sweet Bay. It's an excellent evergreen shrub that prefers a sunny position. It has also become a favourite for its value in

screening. At around four to five metres in height it makes an interesting and fragrant alternative to the more common conifer or laurel hedge.

'Another personal favourite is *Photinia x fraseri Red Robin* which makes an ideal specimen shrub or tree. It has especially stunning red leaves throughout Spring and Summer and also makes an excellent screen or hedge. It prefers sun or partial shade.

'For an outstanding specimen tree I always suggest using the *Magnolia grandiflora* which has beautiful glossy green leaves and a velvet underside. The tree produces huge fragrant creamy-white flowers in mid- to late-Summer. This magnolia will grow in almost any soil condition and prefers sun or partial shade. It's very slow growing, but specimens of up to ten metres are available.' ■

For further information contact Lucas Mariconda at Paramount Plants & Gardens on 020 8367 8809.



C O N F I D E N T I A L PLANNER



ILLUSTRATIONS: LENKA STRBINOVA

As every enthusiast knows the garden just does not maintain itself and leaving it all to the end of the year only makes the work that much more onerous. Timely care not only lessens the workload but also revitalizes the estate. Each issue *Garden Confidential's* maintenance specialist **Ceri Evans** will provide timely reminders to keep you on track.

MARCH – APRIL

This is the time to prepare a perfect lawn: scarify, seed and top dress now the grass is growing noticeably or lay new turf for instant results. Lawns love a generous sprinkling of lime and it helps break down London clay. Feed the whole garden except for bulbs in flower, with a nitrogen-rich fertiliser for strong Spring growth. If you haven't already mulched, do so after a good rainfall to conserve soil moisture as a guard against mildew. The warmer weather means we are on pest patrol much earlier: vine weevil will be active and there will probably be aphids on the roses. Visit greengardener.co.uk for organic solutions.

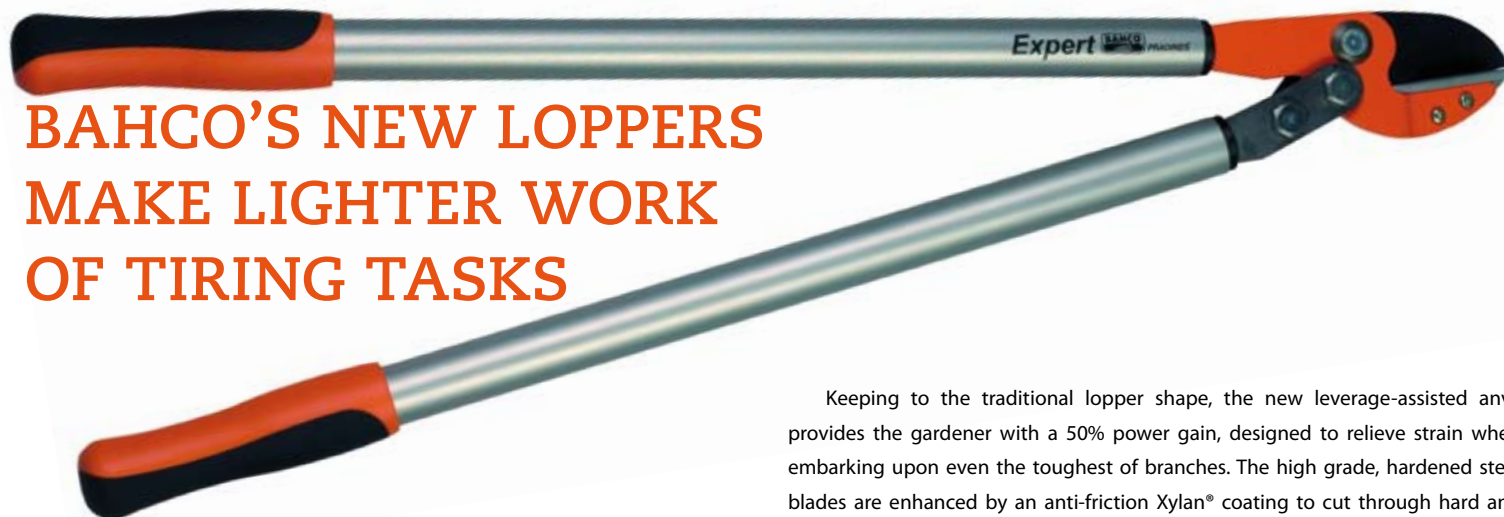
APRIL – MAY

If you have been feeding the birds through the Winter, please don't stop now it's nesting time. Plant sweet peas towards the end of April. Take action against the superweeds: ground elder, creeping buttercup and Japanese knotweed. Bend a stem into a small jar of glyphosate weed killer, the plant "drinks" the poison, spreads it to its friends and the colonies die without negative chemical impact on anything else. And it saves you from having to get every single last bit of root out by hand. Start keeping a few small jars from the recycling to use as beer traps next month.

MAY – JUNE

Feed all Spring-flowering bulbs as they finish, lift and divide larger clumps for more flowers next year. Clip box hedging on an overcast or rainy day. Plant Summer annuals as early in May as possible. Stake tall growing perennials. Plant pot grown alliums as you cannot have too many. If possible, encircle your hostas with beer traps to minimise slug damage.

Compiled by Ceri Evans B.Sc.(Hons), Organic Garden Maintenance, Environmental Garden Design & Landscaping, Enquiries: 07804 657 363



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"The nature of the task means that gardeners can become fatigued after a relatively short amount of time," says Bahco Managing Director, John Lovatt. "The new SuperLIGHT® range has been specially designed to enable the gardener to perform for longer, without causing any unnecessary stresses or strains.

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Confidential's 'MUST HAVES' for this Summer

As New Perennial and Prairie schemes become more popular we highlight some of our particular favourites that associate so well with this type of planting.



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Cultivation: Grow in deep, well-drained humus-rich soil in full sun



DIGITALIS FERRUGINEA

Tall stems of coppery yellow trumpets with brown veins rise from a neat rosette of dark green glossy leaves. Makes great punctuation mark when grown in a grass perennial border and combines well with this season's favourite grass Calamagrostis Karl Foerster.

Height: 160cm

Flowering season: July–August

Cultivation: Grow in almost any soil, except very wet or very dry



PERSICARIA

AMPLEXICAULIS ROSEA

Marvellous smoky pink flowers which combines well with Echinacea and grasses. Last long into the season.

Height: 120cm

Flowering season: July/September

Cultivation: Grow in any moist soil, in full sun or partial shade



LYTHRUM SALICARIA

BLUSH

Compact habit with long tight spires of rosy pink clustered flowers give strong colour accent.

Height: 80cm

Flowering season: July–August

Cultivation: Grow in any moist soil, in full sun



CIMICIFUGA SIMPLEX

ATROPURPUREA

Strong architectural detail in massed plantings. Stands well into Autumn. Deep burgundy foliage contrast with creamy white flowers. Imposing plants for moist deep soil in sun or shade.

Height: 120–180cm

Flowering season: July–September

Cultivation: Grow in shady sites with deep moist soil



COURTYARDS AND ROOF gardens are the talk of the day and all very fine in small urban plots, but for the large Edwardian/Victorian/inter-War period house that predominates in the north London area, a patio is what is required. Conservatories too have taken their toll of the patio – yet in these days of global warming, on a hot day or even better a warm night – there is nothing finer than dining *al fresco*.

There has been a disturbing trend of late just to add a few paving stones to the back of one's house and with table and chairs, that is apparently enough. And yet a patio by its very nature is an integral part of the house and needs as much thought and design as the living room.

After all it is a room – albeit an outdoors one. Perhaps there is a feeling that it is all too much hard work but patios need not be



PATIO PERFECT

Whatever happened to the patio? The elegant terrace adjoining the house, the open air room inviting you to sit down, admire the view and enjoy a meal under the stars.

daunting, and with a little forethought can be remarkably easy.

Patios need not be daunting

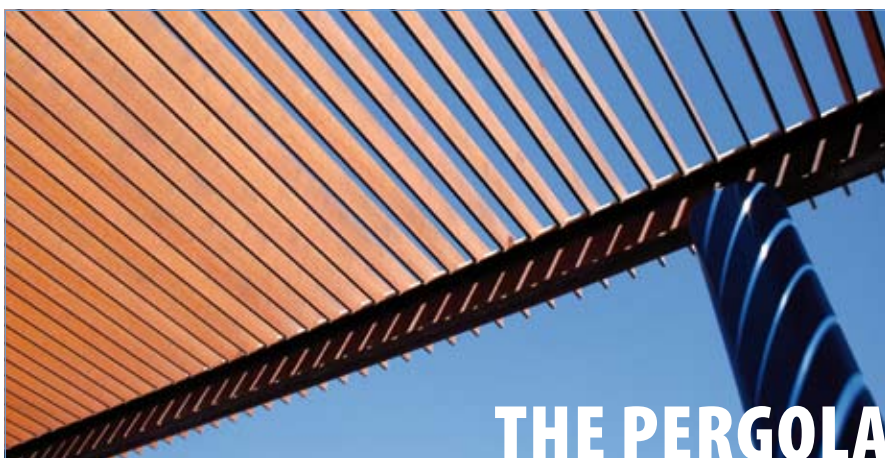
Just ask yourself the following questions and compile a wish list:

- How do I want to use my patio, predominantly to relax or to entertain?
- How many people do I need to seat?
- Do I want space for a barbecue and/or a heater?
- When will I mainly use it, during the day or the evening?
- Where shall I position it, adjoining my house or further down the garden in a sunnier position?
- What kind of look do I want, contemporary or more traditional perhaps, in keeping with the house?
- How much can I afford to spend?





GAP PHOTOS



THE PERGOLA

PERGOLAS TOO HAVE recently been overlooked in favour of the more versatile canvas/umbrella canopy which obviously can be moved or closed. However they are large and ungainly and especially when not in use (they are often too big to be put away) can be a bit of an eyesore.

Whereas a pergola in Winter or Summer is always a feature. In Winter, brick or timbered pillars add a framework for views over your garden. For contemporary alternatives, steel and aluminium make an equally attractive choice. In the Summer months, clad with climbing plants they add beauty and

perfume to your outdoor room. They also increase intimacy and privacy.

When considering a pergola remember that people do stand up! The height of the underside of the overhead beams should be approximately 2.1m to allow for overhanging plants. The degree of shade is affected by the spacing of the horizontal beam. The closer the beam the more shade created. If using plants the suggested spacing is 45–60cm.

Allow for planting beds by the upright beams – these need not be obtrusive but they need to be considered before the construction of the patio!

Confidential advice

1. Look at magazines and the pictures here to help formulate ideas of what you really want

When choosing style remember that the patio generally adjoins your house and should match in feel otherwise it will always be uncomfortable.

2. If you are a sun lover and using the patio during the day remember that extra space will be needed for a canopy (canvas or pergola)

The patio at the bottom of the garden situated to catch the evening sun is quickly neglected as it's always too much bother to take all the food and wine there. If entertaining, access to the kitchen is vital.

3. Call a local designer for an informal chat. Most designers will not charge for an initial visit and much time and effort will be saved on both sides with your wish list.

It is worthwhile paying for a formal plan as ultimately this will save time and money when it comes to construction.

4. Check out Page 20 on paving stones. The choice now is wonderful if a little overwhelming and it's well worth the time to go and look at stocks.

Having an idea of what you want will make it less easy for the builder to give you something that just suits them.

5. Call builders for quotations. It's always a good idea to get at least two quotations. Your designer will probably recommend someone and don't be afraid to use a well-known company.

Often a well-established firm will offer prices as good as the odd-jobber and will still be there if something goes wrong and you need to call them back.

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Garden Confidential asks Guy Pullen to advise on how to get the best from container planting

Verbena bonariensis, Verbena rigida, Salvia Purple Rain, Sidalcea Elsie Heugh, Phlox and Leucanthemum x superbum. Geese by Hode Pottery.

THERE IS NOTHING worse than an underdone planter. If you care to look, you'll find them in evidence all over the place, from next door's back garden to the entrances of smart hotels. There's one now, with three dusty pansies trying in vain to cover two square feet of mud and here's another with its lonely, weatherbeaten conifer doing its best to look smart in soggy, worn-out earth.

But it doesn't have to be this way; a glorious planter is yours to own if you want it. The first step on the road to the perfect patio planter is to buy enough material to fill the space. You

might choose one glorious shrub or you may prefer to go for a variety of annual plants. The choice is yours, but the pot should be full. You may desire a tasteful display in tonal blues or go for something with more fizz and drama, but again the view must be of flowers and foliage, not earth.

And just as the earth is not the main attraction, your planter should be a vessel for the horticultural highlight; the planting should spill over the edges and soften sides.

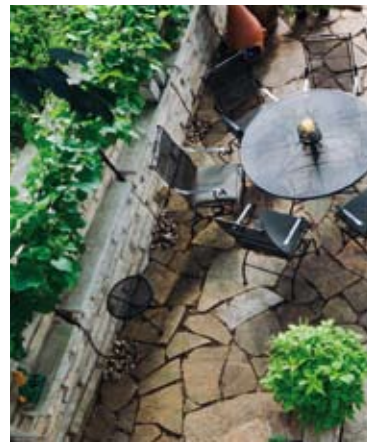
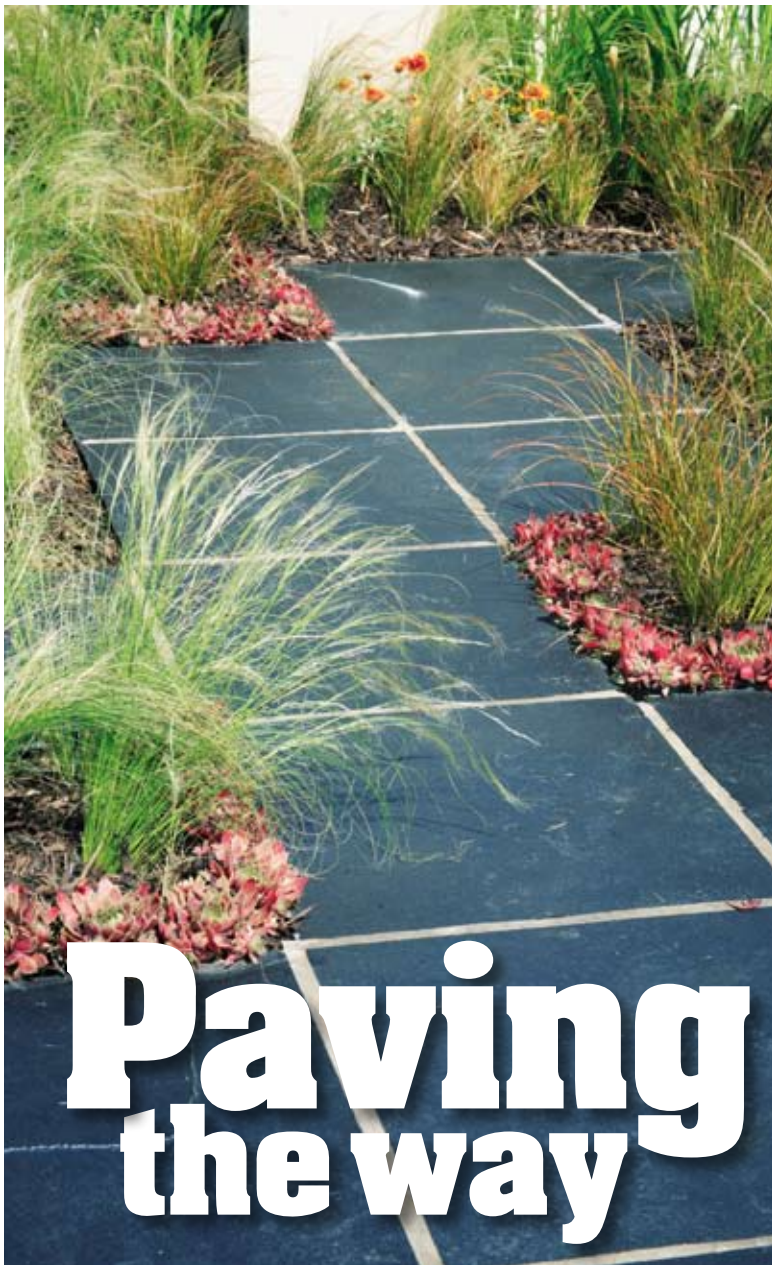
Of course, once you've created your magnificent display, you'll need to maintain

its splendour and that requires a modicum of your time.

Feed and water the plants regularly, as potted plants will never get enough nourishment from the sky. And when you're watering, take five minutes to pick over any dead heads or frayed leaves; little and often works best.

Finally, when you've teased the best from your plants and you have a couple of minutes to spare – don't forget to enjoy them! ■

Guy Pullen can be contacted at Clifton Nurseries on 020 7289 6851



Paving the way

With so many types to choose from, is it any wonder gardeners can't make up their minds about paving stones? *Garden Confidential* goes on a fact-finding mission.

WELCOME TO WHAT is now the exciting world of paving products. After years of virtually no choice between dull man-made aggregates, albeit cheap, and hugely expensive York stone, the market has finally got its act together. Sourcing their products from around the globe, manufacturers are now able to offer beautiful natural stone for a fraction of the cost of York stone. Even the aggregates now are so well put together that they too offer some lovely choices. Indeed it has rather gone from the sublime to the ridiculous and the selections are seemingly endless.

How do you choose?

Considering that the paving stone you choose often has to last as long as the choicest carpet and is equally important – it is extraordinary how hard it has been to view ranges. There is nothing more irritating or depressing over a period of 20 years than walking up to your

house on a stone that is wrong, unattractive or just plain boring.

There are no handy pattern books to flick through such as when one looks for carpets. And equally no room set aside in your favourite local department store in which to browse.

After years of no choice
the market has finally
got its act together
offering beautiful natural
slabs at a fraction of
the cost of York stone

To add insult to injury most suppliers are builders' merchants who are not particularly sympathetic to your design worries. There are catalogues available from the main suppliers

but they only offer a few of the most ordinary slabs.

And yet one has to persevere to get it right.

What should you look out for?

Suppliers are now beginning to construct small display areas to help with the process. This is useful as one paving stone can vary substantially from the next in the same range. This is particularly true of the imitation 'natural' stone where the 'weathered' shading varies from stone to stone and makes the colour hue quite different. And it is a question of trudging from one supplier to the next, as each has something slightly different to offer. Also, however hard, try to get a hold of an assistant. Each type of paving has different qualities – some are harder to lay than others, come in varying thickness as well as sizes and differ in their longevity. Make sure you ask the

Suppliers are now beginning to construct small display areas



relevant questions. And just as when selecting a carpet, it is vital to take a sample and bring it home before making the final choice.

As with home decoration, light and position plays a huge part. Ensure that the paving stone blends with all its surroundings. That it is not so bright that it screams "look at me!" and your beautiful plants are fighting for attention; equally not so dull that it will never justify its cost. And take note of weather conditions. The same stone will look totally different when wet compared to dry.

And finally always remember the design maxim – limit your number of materials to three. Bear in mind that if your house is red brick, that counts for one, so that your patio/path can only afford to use another two. An attractive way to delineate without using yet another material is to lay the brick on its side and use it as an edging stone. In this way you also achieve a continuity linking the house with the garden.



'Weathered' shading varies from stone to stone

Where do you go from here?

In our efforts to get it right we have come across a couple of useful suppliers. C.G. Edward in Cuffley Hill, Enfield, has in our opinion an excellent display area. They have made a great effort to show their wide range in situ and have about 25 different patio or path constructions. Naybur Bros. in Potters Bar and also in Enfield do not have quite the range of in situ displays but they are working on them. And they do have very helpful assistants who take the time to point out the pros and cons of all their stones. Marshalls in Crews Hill have also taken this on-board and are putting together a fine display of their range.

And finally one should never, when looking for inspiration, overlook Capel Manor. They have presently several new display gardens featuring Marshalls and Stonemarket stone products. Well worth a visit. ▶



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While investigating – Polaroid in hand – we shot a few that we really liked. But don't just rely on us...

ARCTIC GRANITE GLACIER

(Stonemarket)



A marvellous contemporary feel – minimal grouting required, but can look a little bland on its own

SANDSTONE YORK GREEN

(Global Stone)



Similar to York Stone with a lovely distinctive surface. Colour fluctuates so view a few samples

OCEAN GREEN SLATE

(Global Stone)



The colour sets off planting beautifully. Suits a more traditional garden

PURESTONE SANDSTONE CRAGSIDE

(Stone Flair)



Can be used indoors to create a flow from conservatory to garden, but varying thickness can cause problems in laying

Recommended viewing at:

Capel Manor College

Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield EN1 4RQ

08456 122122

C.G. Edward

104 Cuffley Hill, Goff's Oak, Herts EN7 5EY

01707 873166

Marshalls

Theobalds Park Road, Crews Hill, Enfield

EN2 9BD

08453 020110

Naybur Bros. Ltd.

The Ridgeway, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 5QS

01707 658444

SANDSTONE PATHWAY SETTS – AUTUMN BLEND

(Global Stone)



A contemporary cobble with subtle gradations of colour, most suited to a driveway...

TRUSLATE BLUE

(Stone Flair)



Wonderful colour, but check it out wet and dry

CONCEPT DRYSTONE SHADOW

(Stonemarket)



Unusual – works best combined with other textures in the range

TRAVERTINE MUSHROOM

(Stonemarket)



Attractive smooth surface – cool and stylish – but a little bit slippery.



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Perfect Bedding Partners

Harmony and contrast can make or break a relationship. Below we suggest some late Spring to early Summer partnerships made in heaven.

IMAGES: ANDREW LAWSON



▲ The dark violet of *Ajuga reptans* is lightened by the white *Convallaria majalis* 'Lily of the Valley'. Note that though both are invasive they are equally matched so that they never swamp the other's style.

▼ *Iris pallida* *Variegata* draw the eye down to the violet *Anemone blanda*. Note the relationship between horizontal and vertical.



▼ Violet bearded irises combine with *Allium aflatuense* *Purple Sensation*. Note the different flower shapes that complement each other.



▲ Purple *Salvia officinalis* underplanting *Queen of Night* black tulips and silver *Cynara cardunculus*. Note that the purple *Salvia* starts off silver and turns purple harmonising with all.

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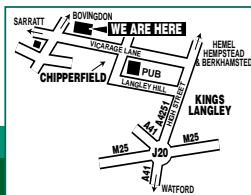
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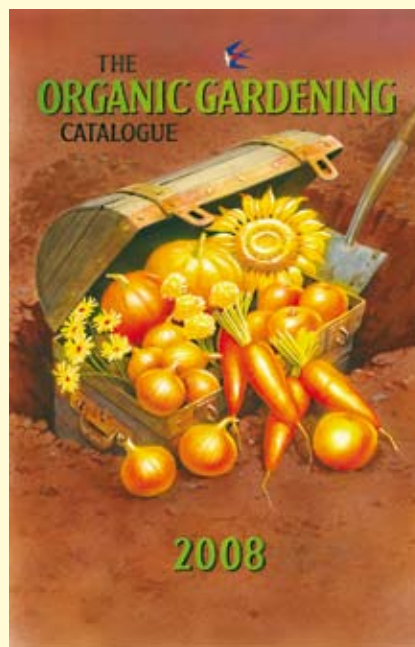
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SPRING SCENE STEALER



WORDS: SARAH RAVEN IMAGES: JONATHAN BUCKLEY

TULIPS ARE MY favourite Spring bulbs. There is nothing to beat them for scent, colour and scale. They are the confident, self-possessed dominators of the Spring garden and I aim to plant as many of them as I can every Autumn.

What I want from my tulips is a two month show starting in the middle of March and continuing until the Alliums can pick up the garden drama in May. It's easy to get a huge tulip bonanza from the middle of April for three or four weeks, but extending their flowering season is more demanding. Achieving a reliable succession, with a new variety coming into flower as another fades, over these many weeks has taken some refining, but I'm getting there.

To achieve this, you need to plant a few varieties from an early, a mid and a late season group. For the earlies, the Fosteriana lot are

good, reliable stalwarts, big-flowered, tall-stemmed tulips like *Purissima* and its sport, *Flaming Purissima*. This is a beautiful new variety, cream, feathered pink and green. *Orange Emperor* will also do its stuff early in the season and I plant all or some of these Fosterianas in pots, to give me bold blocks of colour in the

It's easy to get a huge
tulip bonanza for three or
four weeks, but extending
their flowering season
is more demanding

oast garden or on my greenstage balcony for March and early April.

Many of the species tulips such as *Tulipa bakeri* and *Tulipa clusiana* also perform good

and early in the year, and there's *Princess Irene*, another lovely early orange, with flowers in the colours of an Autumn sunset, orange-streaked with crimson and red. This tulip is also perfect for pots, with handsome silvery leaves and stout, compact growth. One word of warning, any old pot you plant up needs to be scrubbed and sterilised with Jeyes fluid before the compost and tulips go in. I didn't do this last year and all my containers of tulips were infected with blight from a few spores that had been deposited there the previous year.

The next group to move on to are the Triumph tulips and these will give you the earliest of the deep reds. I love *Jan Reus* which flowers by the middle of April, closely followed by *Queen of Night* and the delicate deep purple *Recreado*. This is the best purple tulip for its fineness of flower and lovely wash of purple ►

◀ colouring down the first part of its stem. There is also a new one in this group, *Havran*, a spectacular deep crimson with a smoky wash on the outer petals and right down the stem.

Bang in the middle of Spring, there's also one early Parrot tulip *Rococo* coming into bloom. This has five or six different colours in each crinkled flower and I love it interspersed with my first Spring lettuces or a drift of *Erysimum Blood Red*. Its earliness in the garden can also be manipulated inside and this is one of the most successful tulips for forcing in the house for magnificent table centres. Plant a handful of bulbs into pots in October. Keep them moist, somewhere light, but under cover and these will flower reliably by the middle of March.



Parrot tulip *Rococo* interspersed with Spring lettuces

Next in the garden comes the Lily-flowered group, including the sweetly-scented *Ballerina*. This stands tall and beautiful, with pointy-tipped petals and slim, elegant, haughty looking flowers. This can be jumbled up and flowers at the same time as *Black Hero* (Double Late) a tall, stately new variety, which looks just like a peony flowering in mid-Spring and other Lily-flowered tulips, *Burgundy* and *Mariette* in rich magenta pink.

Tulipa Antraciet is the perfect tulip for Spring pots and lasts well, carrying the colour baton into May

Tulipa Antraciet – another Double Late – comes into bloom now, and is the perfect tulip for your mid-Spring pots. Just as the *Fosterianas* drop their petals, these flowers unfurl and last well, carrying the colour baton well into May. The texture of this tulip is as rich and sultry as the colour. For a splash of contrast, surround it with a *Euphorbia* like the drum-stick, Spring-flowering, *Euphorbia characias* John Tomlinson. This was one of my favourite combinations here this Spring.



Tulipa Antraciet in a terracotta pot surrounded by *Euphorbia*

The lovely green-splashed *Viridifloras* are one of the latest to flower and these seem to be the longest lasting group in my garden, coming up in corners where they've been left undisturbed now for over a decade. Then, finally, comes the procession of flamboyant Parrots. *Rococo* has done its stuff and gone over, but the yellow, slashed red, *Flaming Parrot* and the huge-flowered, opulent, highly scented Parrot tulip, *Orange Favourite* are the last of all. These cling onto their petals to just coincide with my favourite *Allium Purple Sensation* flowering from the middle of May.

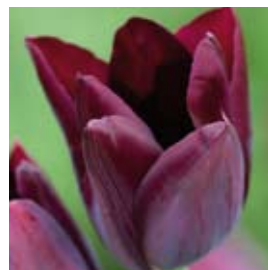
SARAH'S SIX OF THE BEST

(in flowering period order)



FLAMING PURISSIMA

Petal shape: Single, huge flowers
Flower colour: White with feathering of red
Flower size: Height 12cm; width 10cm
Overall height: 70cm
Petal texture: Matt
Weather resistance & garden durability: OK
Reappearance after several years: Untested
Season: *Fosteriana*, so very early



HAVRAN

Petal shape: Elegant, slim, pointy tip
Flower colour: Crimson-black with silvery bloom and silvery leaves
Flower size: Height 7cm; width 5cm
Overall height: 50cm
Petal texture: Matt
Weather resistance & garden durability: Good
Reappearance after several years: Untested
Season: Mid-Triumph Group



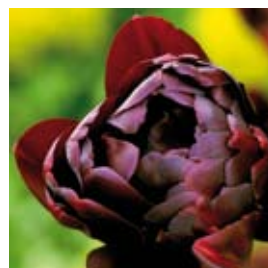
ANTRACIET

Petal shape: Fully double
Flower colour: Magenta-crimson
Flower size: Height 6cm; width 10cm
Overall height: 50cm
Petal texture: Satin
Weather resistance & garden durability: Good
Reappearance after several years: Untested
Season: Mid-Triumph Group



BALLERINA

Petal shape: Single flowers with elegant, tall slim, pointy petals
Flower colour: Orange
Flower size: Height 8cm; width 7cm
Overall height: 70cm
Petal texture: Matt
Weather resistance & garden durability: Excellent
Reappearance after several years: Good
Season: Lily-flowered group, so mid-season



BLACK HERO

Petal shape: Double, but fewer petals than classic Peony-flowered types
Flower colour: Crimson-black
Flower size: Height 6cm; width 8cm
Overall height: 70cm
Petal texture: Fantastic silk satin
Weather resistance & garden durability: Excellent
Reappearance after several years: Very good
Season: Mid- to Late-Double Peony-flowered Group



GREEN WAVE

Petal shape: Single, frilly and huge
Flower colour: Green-white, green and pink
Flower size: Height 12cm; width 10cm
Overall height: 70cm
Petal texture: Matt
Weather resistance & garden durability: Excellent – very long flowering
Reappearance after several years: Moderate
Season: Parrot, so late season



SARAH'S TIPS FOR TULIPS AS CUT FLOWERS

Tulips are some of the best ever flowers for arranging. I love them in a mixed bunch with Euphorbia and wallflowers and they look marvellous just as a great vase of tulips on their own.

How to make your display last longer

IF YOU BUY or pick tulips and leave them out of water for a few hours, they will be very floppy by the time you come to arrange them – not elegant, swan-neck floppy, but bent double like a croquet hoop. If you put them in water as they

are, they set in their floppy position, with the stems dangling over the edge of the vase, and there's nothing you can do to straighten them.

To avoid this, bunch ten or twenty stems together and wind string from the stem end to the flowers, making a straight ramrod with all the flowers supporting each other. Put the whole lot in water, and the stems will set straight. With heavy-headed Parrot tulips,

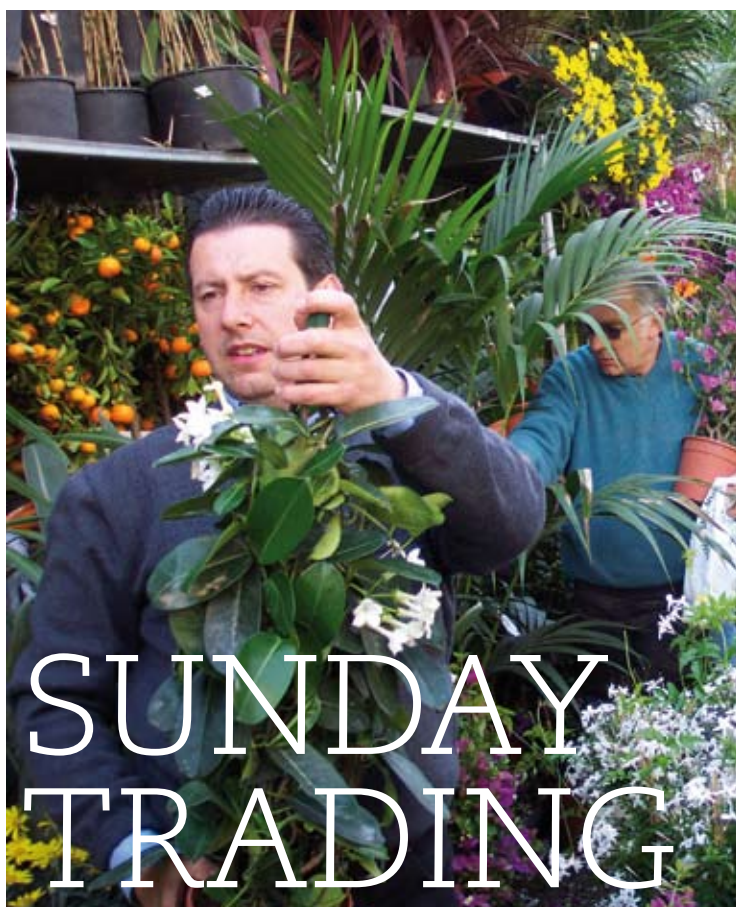
you may also need a cone of paper to set the flowers bolt upright. Tie it in place, keeping the paper above water level, so that it doesn't get damp and brown the flowers.

An alternative system which has the same effect is to secure chicken-wire over the top of a tall, narrow bucket. Fill it right to the brim with water and drop your tulips into the wire slots. Their flowers will be held perfectly flat on top of the wire mesh and stems will be in deep water.

Take care with tulips in particular that the stem is kept straight in the full bucket of water, if they slip and curve at the bottom, this shape is exactly how they will set. Use a narrow bucket and keep them confined.

Tulips continue to grow after you've cut them; they have a 'growth plate' just below the flower. Pierce it with a thick darning needle – poke it right through the stem 2.5cm below the flower and then remove it – to prevent new growth. I like the way tulips twist in a slightly chaotic fashion as they continue to grow, but with Parrot and Darwin Hybrid tulips, the new growth can't hold the weight of the flower and they bend right over. For these varieties, it's worth piercing before arranging. ■





COLUMBIA ROAD IS home to London's principal flower market, making it the brightest and sweetest smelling place to be in the capital on a Sunday morning.

There's been a market on this historic street in the heart of the East End for nearly 150 years. Originally it was a food market, but since 1927 it has specialised in plants and flowers.

Despite the name, it's more than a flower market. As well as a great variety of cut blooms, there are plants (bedding, patio and indoor), shrubs, trees, bulbs and herbs available from 52 stalls packed into 300 yards of this narrow Shoreditch side street.

For the first time visitor to this colourful patchwork of stalls, there is a sense of having discovered a real gardening gem, and that certainly is the case. Columbia Flower Market has long been in the secret address books of many interior designers as well as both professional and keen amateur gardeners looking for high quality blooms and plants.

Most of the traders are from Essex where they either run nurseries or florists. As a result many of the plants and flowers are grown locally. But as well as produce from the UK,

there are also exotic flowers, plants and trees from all over the world including rare species.

For the interior gardener, there are easy to grow pot orchids in about a hundred different varieties of shapes and colours.



As well as the variety, the other obvious attraction is the prices which are significantly lower than on the high street. This being a market some haggling is expected and the general rule is that the more you buy, the cheaper it gets. Regular punters will usually turn up in the morning with plenty of empty

carrier bags to fill up.

The market is open from 8am but real bargain hunters should arrive when it's winding down.

Trading has to end at 2pm and the later it gets, the cheaper it becomes. Traders prefer to cut prices than load up unsold stock to take home.

While the market traders are only allowed to sell plants and flowers, the surrounding shops specialise in gardening necessities and accessories – everything from pots, troughs and baskets to fertilizers and soils.

Trade is so brisk on a Sunday morning – the only day the market is open – that many of the pricier rarities are sold out before noon.

It's easy to work up an appetite and there are plenty of attractive cafes, pubs and food stalls for a pit stop.

A word of warning for drivers, there are parking restrictions around the market area on Sundays. Either use a pay and display machine, or you can use the school car park in Gosset Street at a cost of £3 per day. ■

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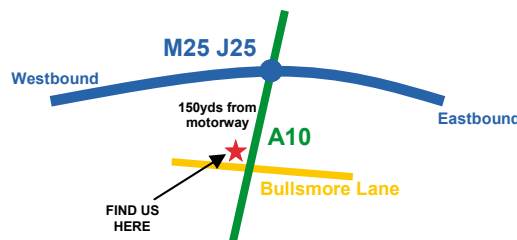
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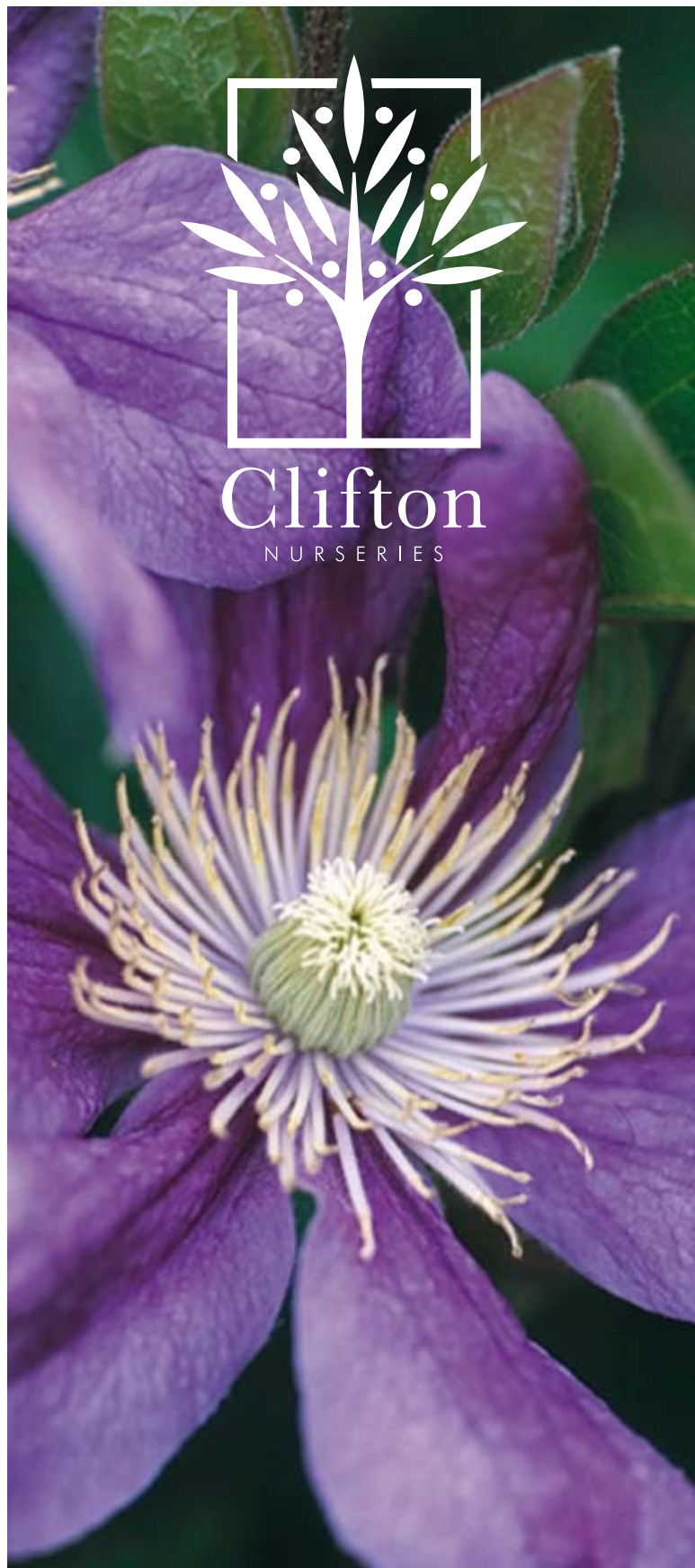
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Many new kinds of tulip bulbs are now at their best. A visit to one or more Spring flower shows will help you choose new varieties for planting in the late Summer. For our issue devoted to tulips we invite you to visit the following gardens which in our opinion show them off the best.



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e info@pashleymanorgardens.com **w** pashleymanorgardens.com

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THE MANOR HOUSE, CHENIES

A stunning show of tulips displayed in the enchanting gardens. Visitors may visit the C15 Manor House, rumour has it that it is haunted by Henry VIII! **Famous Plant & Garden Fair Sunday 20th July 10–5 p.m.** Delicious home made teas.

Chenies, Near Amersham, Buckinghamshire WD3 6ER

Tel: **01494 762888**

e macleodmatthews@btinternet.com **w** cheniesmanorhouse.co.uk

Wednesdays, Thursdays & Bank Holiday Mondays 2–5 p.m. from April to October

Facilities: The Garden Room for home made teas



CHISWICK HOUSE KITCHEN GARDEN

Open day on Sunday 27th April, 10–5 p.m. Chiswick House Kitchen Garden is a 17th century walled kitchen garden, this will be the first opening of the year, and it is only open three times in 2008. Several tulip varieties, including rare original 17th century Lac van Rijn.

Burlington Lane, Chiswick, London W4 2RP

Tel: **020 8995 0508** Fax: 020 7973 3443

e info@kitchengarden.org.uk **w** kitchengarden.org.uk

Seasonal opening times – check website for details

Facilities: Café



THE REGENT'S PARK

The Regent's Park, 166 hectares (410 acres), also includes stunning rose gardens with more than 30,000 roses of 400 varieties. The Wild in the Parks (WITP) team have been busy this year with the design and construction of a wildlife-friendly community garden.

Inner Circle, Regents Park, London, NW1 4NR

Tel: **020 7486 7905** Fax: 020 7224 1895

e regents@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk **w** royalparks.org.uk/parks/regents_park

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GREEN VISION

A unique vision of green potential
has taken over the site of
Borehamwood's old electricity
substation. Chrissie Maclachlan
meets Mark Wheeler of the Folia
nursery and plant showroom,
formally opening this April



Previous page: View from Folia's 'green roof' terrace over the 'tree section' of the transformed, nine-acre nursery site
 This page (top): 'before and after' images show the extent of Mark's vision: erstwhile industrial wasteland is now a fertile plant showroom, imaginatively using existing site features – these old concrete supports will carry a wind turbine
 Left: working with nurseries in Italy, Germany, Belgium and the U.K., Mark sources a remarkable range of shrubs, perennials and trees

WORDS: **CHRISSIE MACLACHLAN** IMAGES: **STEVE BROWN**

'WE'RE HERE FOR people who want to create something *special*. If you have a discerning need for an impressive garden, a creative vision you want to realise, we're the people to come and see.' Certainly few people are better qualified to talk about realising a creative vision than Folia's Director Mark Wheeler. In just two years, he's transformed the concrete wasteland of Borehamwood's disused electricity substation into a stunning plant showroom and nursery.

This is a destination site for anyone seeking horticultural inspiration: nine verdant acres of trees, silvery olives rubbing leaves with native yew and hornbeam; exotic topiary in funky, modern containers; myriad styles of hedging, shrubs and colourful perennials.

From just word of mouth recommendation, Folia's client list has burgeoned – architects, major developers, designers and private individuals (some internationally famous, about whom Mark is admirably discreet) – all

'It's all about sustainability. We recycle all the water; we're fitting solar panels and a wind turbine'

drawn by Mark's unique plant know-how and horticultural vision.

Vision has shaped Mark's career. It's taken

him from his garden shed, equipped with a laptop and a Land Rover trailer, to running a Chelsea medal-winning business renowned across Europe for unrivalled plant expertise. I know men are meant to find sheds inspirational but still – it's remarkable. 'Sheds are amazing things,' Mark grins. 'I just set it all up, got an Internet connection and laptop and bought and sold plants. I'd drive to Belgium in my old Land Rover, sleeping in the back, pick up the plants and deliver them. Simple as that.'

Of course it wasn't that simple. It took hard graft and guts to survive – 'literally without a penny' – as the business grew. Not to mention horticultural expertise, honed through long, hands-on experience: 'I got my college



Eclectic contemporary topiary is one of Folia's prime specialities

qualifications, but all my plant knowledge came from working in nurseries.' After rising to Commercial Director and increasing his last employer's business tenfold, Mark decided to take to his shed and do it himself.

Folia's stunning showroom is the culmination of that vision. It took Mark years to find the ideal site and his accountant and bank manager could be forgiven for not sharing his enthusiasm. 'They couldn't grasp

what I was going to turn this into; well, even my wife says my imagination is bizarre! It was a complete pig's ear; a building site, graffiti everywhere... I don't want to blow my own trumpet, but one thing I can do is see beyond what's there, to see the potential.'

The bank manager and accountant are now happy men. In two years, Mark has turned his 'pig's ear' into a silk purse with, at its heart, a greater 'green' aim than that of simple

planting. 'It's all about sustainability. Nothing is wasted. We recycle all the water; we're fitting solar panels and a wind turbine. We've used as much existing material as possible and all the timbers are from Latvia, the only country in Europe that's got sustainable forestry in big quantities. It's truly about enhancing the environment.'

'England's always been a melting pot of horticulture, with a great history of plant-hunting'

And ever-increasing numbers of clients are now seeking Mark's help in enhancing their own environments. Sourcing superb specimens is his speciality; that very afternoon he was heading for Belgium, tracking down a rare *Davidia involucrata* (Pocket-handkerchief tree) for a prestigious private client building an arboretum. His searches take him all over Europe: 'That's the buzz! England's always been a melting pot of horticulture, with a great history of plant-hunting; because of the Gulf Stream, we can grow a bigger range of plant varieties here than anywhere else in Europe. And now people like Diarmuid Gavin have brought funkiness and fun to modern garden design – he deserves a medal!'

'It's specifically for individuals to come in and see the whole effect, when they're after something special they won't find in their usual nursery'

With the showroom's formal opening, Mark's looking forward to welcoming even more clients. 'It's specifically for individuals to come in and see the whole effect, when they're after something special they won't find in their usual nursery.' And, though Folia does not handle planting or design – 'we're not a Jack of all trades; we're a master of one!' – Mark can 'put together the whole supply and design team, recommending designers and landscapers who'll give a good price. More and more people are using us that way.'

They're also using Folia to keep tabs on the latest environmental initiatives, such as ►



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‘Ken Livingstone’s quite right in saying people should have green roofs. If more of us did, flooding would slow down’

Coming from an agricultural background – his family are farmers – Folia’s Director Mark Wheeler is passionate about ‘the whole issue of horticulture and the environment, from what we grow and eat to the chemicals used’

Below: the creation of the nursery has been a two-year labour of love and vision. The graffiti-spattered substation ‘bunker’ is now Folia’s light and airy head office, its sturdy concrete construction making the perfect base for a state-of-the-art experimental ‘green roof’ garden. This is one of Mark’s most important ‘eco-initiatives’: architects and developers regularly visit for inspiration and advice on ‘green’ building design. Fitted with solar panels, the ‘green roof’ demonstrates the uses of various irrigation systems, while experimental plantings of everything from small trees to herbs and perennials, using different soil/substrate blends, allows Mark to monitor plants’ responses to this environment



◀ the innovative ‘green roof’ Mark’s cultivating atop his office. Picturesque it undoubtedly is, but it has a serious purpose: ‘Ken Livingstone’s quite right in saying people should have green roofs. If more of us did, flooding would slow down.’ It’s a fascinating blend of structural practicality and planting wisdom: demonstration sub-soil and ‘pop up’ irrigation

systems, an experimental mix of lightweight, recycled substrate and topsoil, with plantings from sedum and buxus to fennel and globe artichokes: ‘It’s complete experimentation; monitoring what will grow. We’re getting an architect a week just coming to see this roof; it’s a big new area, with climate change and flooding.’

I suspect that, with Folia’s official opening, it’ll be the clients who are doing the flooding – through the door. Where better to go, if you want to plant an idea, than to the man with the uniquely green vision? ■

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She started at The Chelsea Flower Show in 2000 and has gone on to sell and exhibit her work all over the world. She says that it is “the best job she could possibly think of”. Her usually one-off, bespoke garden ornaments and sculptures start at around £3,000. They often juxtapose gas fire jets with water and bold mirror polished rectangles and linear shapes – almost always incorporating kinetic elements – and are perfect for reflecting light in unexpected ways.

Born in Paris, Alison grew up on the East coast of America and came to England to study architecture at the Architectural Association in London and never went back although she finds herself travelling back to the U.S. a lot for clients now.

She started with her own garden in West Sussex 20 years ago where she created a paradise out of nothing. The house was totally derelict and her now garden a pig farm. She started by putting in a one acre lake and went on to create formal rose gardens, topiary, herbaceous, and informal woodland gardens.

Both gardens created for Chelsea were carefully reconstructed there as well. In the midst of this very English setting stand her ultra modern sculptures which have the most amazing wow factor in this bucolic paradise. ■

Allison's work can be viewed at www.allisonarmour.us and she can be contacted at allison@allisonarmour.us or on 01293 871575



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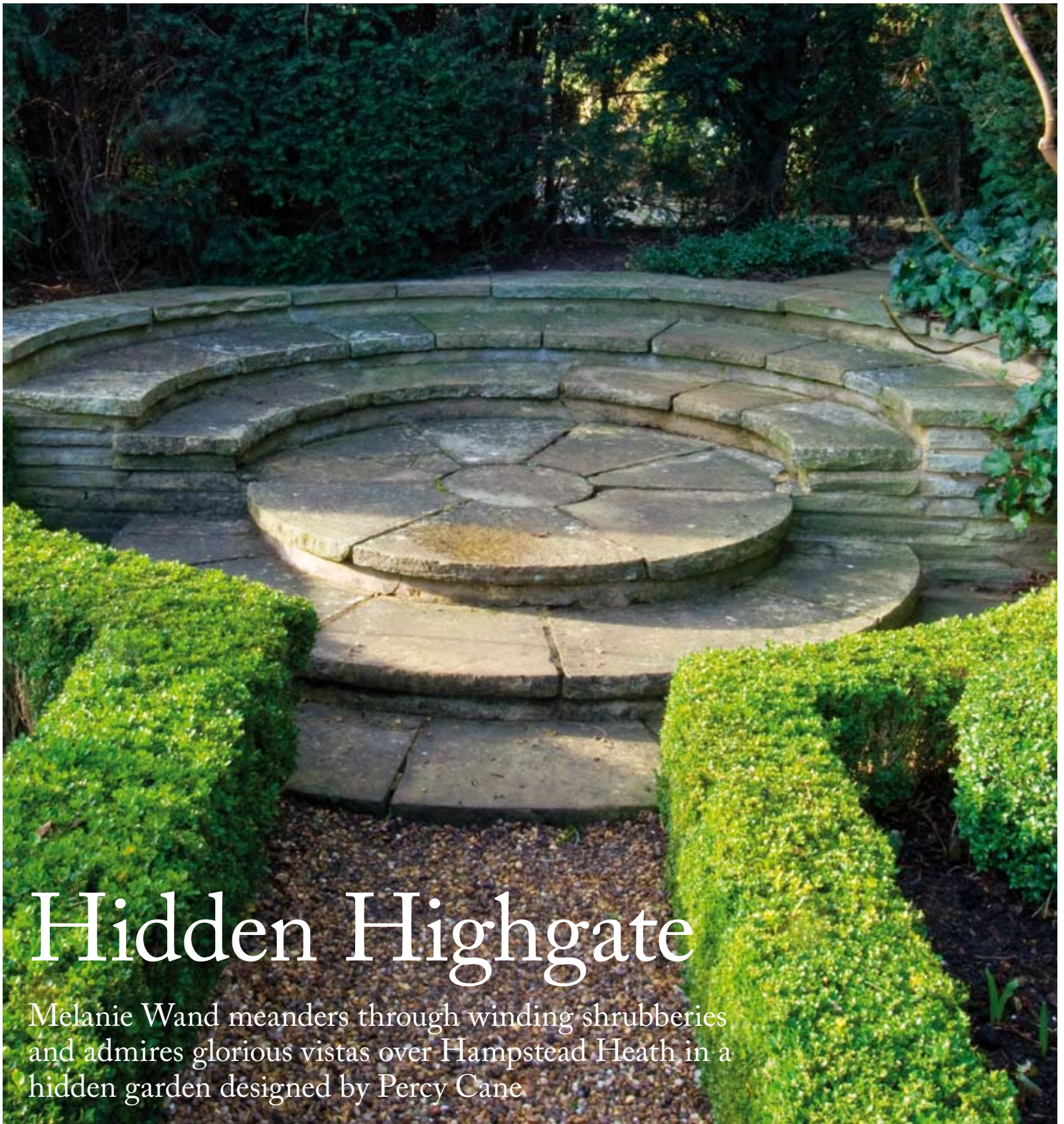
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Hidden Highgate

Melanie Wand meanders through winding shrubberies and admires glorious vistas over Hampstead Heath in a hidden garden designed by Percy Cane

WORDS: [MELANIE WAND](#) IMAGES: [SIM CANETTY-CLARKE](#)

THE QUINTESSENTIAL ENGLISH GARDEN

WHEN THINKING OF the English garden of the last century one immediately calls to mind the great formal Victorian gardens of Paxton, Nesfield and Barry, the Italianate-influenced Edwardian Harold Peto, or the more naturalistic gardens of Robinson and Jekyll. Yet it is the inter-War gardens that have come

to exemplify the English style – long stretches of land laid to lawn, winding paths, flowering shrubberies, glades and terraces. This style embraced a particular English way of life, and one designer, Percy Cane, came to personify this type of design.

Cane specialised in creating gardens for

the large but not vast domain. In recent years as these gardens have disappeared giving way to housing estates, hospitals and schools, few examples of his work remain. And yet the sheer joy – if one should be so lucky as to come across one – is palpable. Just such a garden is the White House in Highgate. ►

◀ THE WHITE HOUSE

THE WHITE HOUSE is a gorgeous Regency villa circa 1840 situated in a private road behind Hampstead Heath. The house was bought by Sir Clifford Curzon, renowned pianist and composer, in the late 1930s. There are no surviving records stating when he invited Percy Cane to come and redesign the gardens or indeed when Percy Cane commenced. However it is most likely that at some point in the '40s Curzon must have been introduced to Cane who was well connected in society. He had by then gained a substantial reputation in the north London area having worked at South Grove (the ex-Fame Academy location) and at Anna Pavlova's Hill Garden. Or perhaps it was through music – Cane loved music and said that it often helped him to solve a design problem 'Wagner's Ring for a severe design, or, if I want sheer beauty, some Mozart'!

Flights of steps appeared – a poignant reminder of Percy Cane

However what is known for certain is that he did design the garden. Percy Cane often produced illustrations for his clients, and Ronald Webber's book on Cane includes two of his drawings of the White House garden.

Among the many issues surrounding the maintaining of an historic garden is the question how best to preserve them when the owners move on. Fortunately for garden



historians Sir Clifford Curzon retained ownership of the White House until he died in 1982 and maintained the garden beautifully. This work is being carried on by the present proprietors. Consequently, although there have been some changes – the herbaceous planting has naturally evolved or had to be replaced – much of the structure of the garden still remains.

On entering the garden one is immediately struck – this is a Percy Cane garden. The characteristic hallmarks of Cane's work are all here. All is in proportion. All is connected. The pale paved formal terrace, on to which the house opens, makes way for the wide stretch

of lawn. This is flanked by Cane's shrubberies filled with meticulously arranged trees and the Summer-flowering shrubs that he so admired. To the right rises a winding path taking one up and then down to the sunken terrace complete with his familiar trademark, the semi-circular bench terminating the vista. A low flight of steps leads down to a mellow summer house; herbaceous walks take one round the garden leading through glades, offering occasional tantalising vistas centring on the house or over the Heath. Then round to a striking series of paved



PERCY CANE

1881–1976



THE SEMINAL ENGLISH landscape and garden designer with an almost unrivalled portfolio is now yet barely acknowledged in the garden world. However just a glance at his illustrious clients will tell you how well he was

regarded in his day: King George V, the Duke of Bedford, the Elmhursts of Dartington Hall, the President of Greece and Emperor Haile Selassie were just some of his most notable clients.

Little of his work has remained but there are several notable exceptions in North London. Sadly not all are available for the public to visit but two are: The Hill Garden, Golders Green designed for Anna Pavlova; and our featured house, The White House, Highgate.

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- 👉 Long flights of stairs
- 👉 Elegant paving
- 👉 Winding paths through harmonious glades



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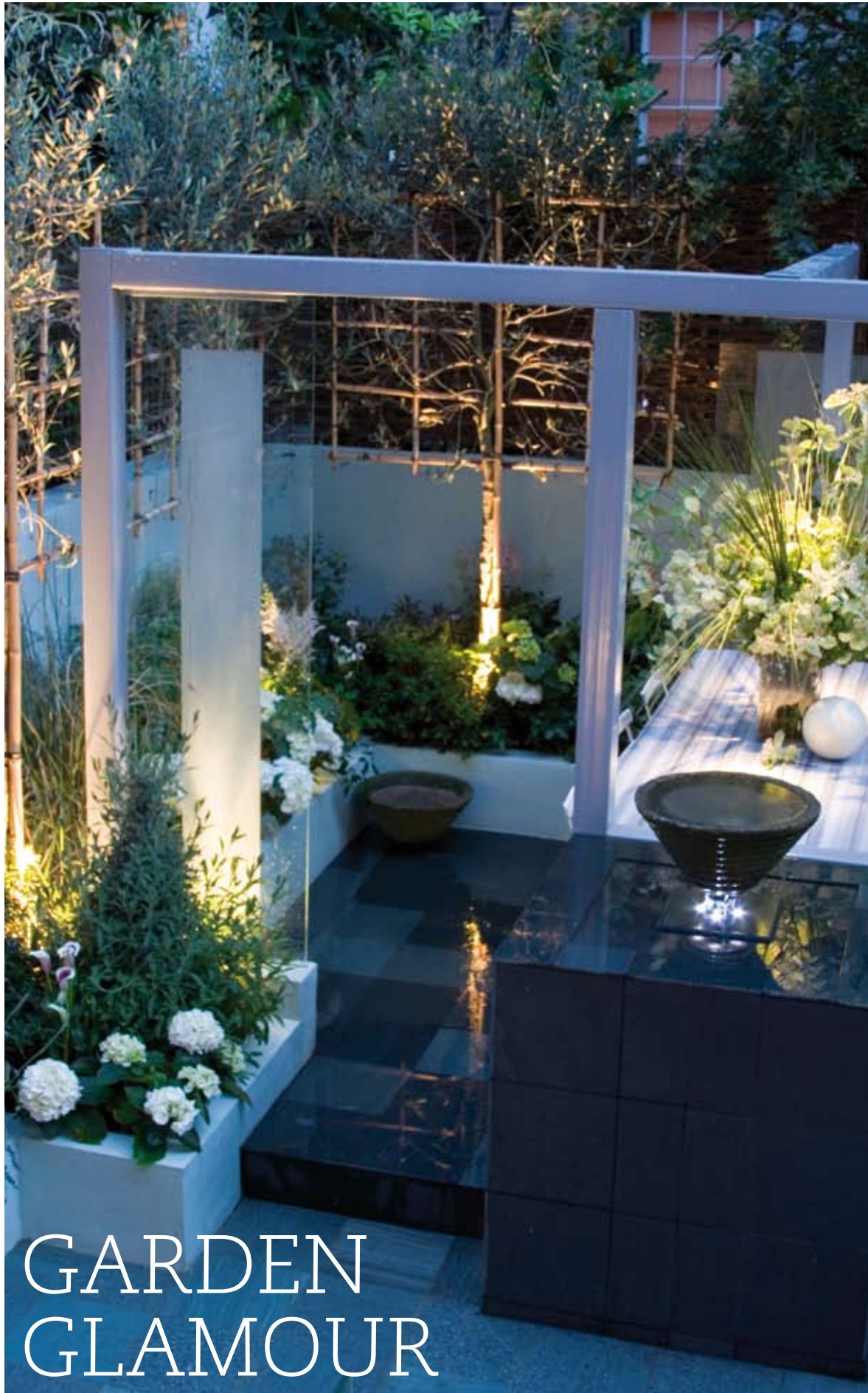
The White House Garden, 2 Millfield Place N6 will be open to the public during the day on **Sunday 11th May** (2 p.m – 6 p.m.) and in the evening on **Wednesday 18th June** (5.30 p.m. – 9 p.m.)

terraces culminating in another flight of wide sweeping steps leading back up to the house.

Percy Cane was always meticulous in choosing quality materials and good workmen, therefore unless bulldozed, Cane's gardens are long-lasting and the White House bears testimony to this. 'The noble vistas, the far reaching terraces, the wandering glades, the broad borders of Mr. Cane's creation can have no place in the gardens of tomorrow,' according to the RHS Journal 1956 – yet here they are at The White House in all their glory. ■

Cane thought that large gardens should consist of separate divisions "each different... having its own distinctive character but together making an harmonious whole"





GARDEN GLAMOUR

Left: a large open air room created out of a small London back garden. The colours are changed seasonally to complement the lakeland green slate with white rendered walls

Opposite (from top): yew hedging with 'floating' slate seats surround the granite ball water feature on hardwood decking*;

* All our decking is Forest Stewardship Council registered



TV gardener Antony Henn and his dedicated team have been creating stunning yet practical gardens since 1994. Prior to this Antony helped to develop *The Dutch Nursery* garden centre – founded by his father in 1958 – with his brothers and sister.

ANTONY HENN'S OFFICE is still based at the garden centre which he finds works brilliantly, as his clients can be treated to coffee and lunch while discussing their projects at the newly refurbished café restaurant. Many plants he uses for his projects are bought in conjunction with his brothers, as they stock many rare and unusual plants, trees and shrubs.

Antony and his brother Alex can be heard on BBC 3 Counties radio giving their 'controversial' tips and advice every other Saturday morning. Their arguing and disagreeing live on air has become cult listening!

Antony's last television series *Roots And Shoots* can still be seen on UKTV where he visits many of the fabulous gardens of the West Country.

Working on gardening shows over the past ten years has given Antony a wealth of knowledge that he now uses to his advantage while designing and creating gardens.

The average contract size that *gardensforlife* undertake is about £50,000 but last year there were two 3–4 acre gardens that were in excess of £200,000 each! 'If you imagine that these properties are worth around four to five million pounds each, then the garden cost is about 5% of the total, which is about right and they will certainly get their money back' says Antony.

SMALL GARDENS

Many very prestigious new homes are being shoe-horned into small parcels of land and so the gardens are often too small for the size of the house. This presents an exiting challenge for a designer as maximising every square metre is paramount.

Creating a feeling of space, yet finding room for 'secret' areas is what *gardensforlife* often has to achieve. A tall order in a garden

It's incredible what can be done with a small space and in some ways is more rewarding than some larger projects

that maybe only measures ten by six metres! 'These pressures are what makes our job so satisfying' says Antony.

Choosing the right plant for the right place is the job of planting designer Eloise Walduck. Her training in design and planting has produced gardens that will develop and thrive for years to come not just for the short term.

It's incredible what can be done with a small space and in some ways is more

rewarding than some larger projects.

Covering fences and walls with plants and disguising ugly views of neighbours' windows are priorities when dealing with small gardens. Most people crave privacy and a place to sit and relax without being seen by a nosey neighbour. Instant hedges and specimen trees and shrubs can achieve this if the budget allows and saves five years of waiting.



The client requested a Gaudi-influenced design for this tiny garden. It has become a great chill-out area and is only five metres square!

Home Counties (work in progress)



Home Counties (before)



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This large north London garden was designed, built, and is meticulously maintained by *gardensforlife*

◀ LARGE GARDENS

Many of our new clients have become slightly reluctant owners of large gardens. It's what many people have always dreamed of, but in reality it can be quite daunting.

Similar requirements to owners of smaller plots usually apply – they need a place to sit in the sun, somewhere for the kids to play, storage, perhaps a water feature or pond (in some cases a lake!), low maintenance (unlikely in large gardens), access around the site, and colour and interest all year.

Even with a vast estate the most usable and landscaped areas are usually around the house, with the design becoming more informal and natural the further from the house you go. This principle applies to most gardens even on a much smaller scale.

All things are achievable as long as the budget allows. If money is an issue then savings can be made as far as materials are concerned. Real, reclaimed York stone is one of the most expensive materials you can buy. There are many substitutes for this, for instance Indian sandstone or manufactured 'Faux' York stone. Both are acceptable but for historic buildings, for instance, I would always try to steer the client toward the genuine article. In some cases real York stone looks too 'heavy' and a substitute can look even better – it all depends on the design of the garden and the style of the property. Modern, contemporary homes can sit awkwardly with more traditional gardens, so we try to add a contemporary twist by introducing modern sculpture or features to link with the house design. Rendered retaining walls and equal size slabs generally work

well with chic, contemporary buildings. With a blank canvas you can really go to town and create a totally new garden style.

This is often easier than trying to work around existing borders and outdated garden buildings. The main problem when building a new garden from a building site is the soil structure has either been so compacted by heavy machinery that the life has been squeezed out of it, or there is simply no decent topsoil at all.

The first job usually undertaken by the contractors once the costs have been agreed is the drainage. Without sufficient provision for drainage the plants will never thrive as they may sit in water for many weeks in the winter which kills more plants than a drought. The



A typical example of naturalistic planting using perennials and grasses – great for wildlife

introduction of good quality topsoil is crucial for the plants to thrive. It must have the correct proportion of loam, sand and organic matter to allow healthy plants to grow. No matter how large the garden, terraces along the house need be no more than 4-5 metres wide. Borders much wider than 2-3 metres can become difficult to weed and maintain unless the client has a team of full time gardeners.

Most of the rest is usually lawn. Even grass areas can be designed to be less work. After a certain point the lawn can become more meadowy. This is mown only once a month or less and looks superb if mown paths are cut through it and mown circles are created amongst the long grass for kids to use as dens or adults to have picnics in summer. Leaving areas of longer grass is also great for wildlife and if only cut twice a year can be a wonderful habitat for all manner of animals and wild flowers.

Hedges are really useful to divide areas and create privacy, especially yew and beech. They provide a strong backdrop to help flowers stand out and protect them from winds. Hedges also help to highlight statues and focal points that might otherwise just melt into the background. Even the dreaded *Leylandii* makes a superb thick hedge if maintained properly. Once left to romp away it's almost impossible to get them tight and dense again. A better choice for a conifer hedge is *Thuja plicata* 'Atrovirens'.

In shade and to soften traffic noise then choose Laurel, it's brilliant if you want fast growing no nonsense screening.

gardensforlife not only designs and builds beautiful gardens it has a team of maintenance gardeners who are skilled at looking after sizable properties. Feeding the soil with organic compost every year is imperative to achieve good growth and healthy plants. Plants that are happy do not often suffer from pests and diseases, so spraying with chemicals is simply not necessary! Encouraging wildlife is also beneficial to plants as they feed on harmful pests. What an uplifting sight it is to see all manner of birds feeding on your bird feeders and frogs and newts flourishing in your pond!

And you thought it was your garden! ■

For a consultation, design, landscape or maintenance enquiries please call 01707 663541; preferably e-mail antonyhenn@gardensforlife.com and view our new web site at www.gardensforlife.com



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Themed gardens include the Historical Gardens, an Italianate maze, a Japanese Garden and Kim Wilde's Jungle Gym Garden to name just a few. Plus the National Gardening Centre with specially designed gardens

including Sunflower Street – seven front and back gardens designed by former students – are sure to inspire everyone. New for 2008 are the 'Growing Together in Faith' and 'A Touch of France' gardens – both Chelsea Flower Show medal winners.

Don't forget to visit the animal corner with Kune-Kune pigs, goats, poultry and rabbits and you may even see Capel Manor's famous Clydesdale heavy horses working and exercising around the grounds.

There's much to see at Capel Manor. You'll find a visit to the Terrace Restaurant, serving an enticing range of hot and cold food, is the perfect place to refresh (or feel free to bring your own picnic).

Capel Manor also has a full and varied programme of shows and events that run throughout the year. The show season starts with the Spring Show on Friday 11th – Sunday 13th April and this year focuses on a greener lifestyle. The Heavy Horse Show takes place on Sunday 1st June and the Classic and Vintage Car Show on Sunday 7th September – to name just a few.

For more information on the gardens and to find out about events planned for 2008, visit the website or telephone for a Gardens or Shows & Events leaflet. The website also indicates how to become a Friend of Capel Manor, allowing unlimited access to the gardens and organised trips to other gardens and places of interest. ■



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Main picture: Ornamental Fountain within the grounds at Capel.

Left: The Maze.



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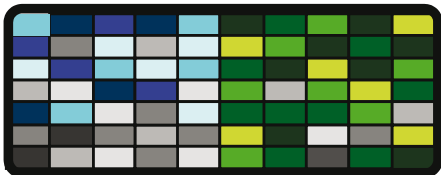
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NATIVE BRITISH WILDFLOWERS can be planted in a garden to attract beautiful butterflies and bees. Since the 1970's 72% of the 57 species of British butterfly have declined in abundance and distribution. This is due to a number of factors including loss of habitat, changes in land use and the intensification of farming. Similar trends have been recorded for Britain's

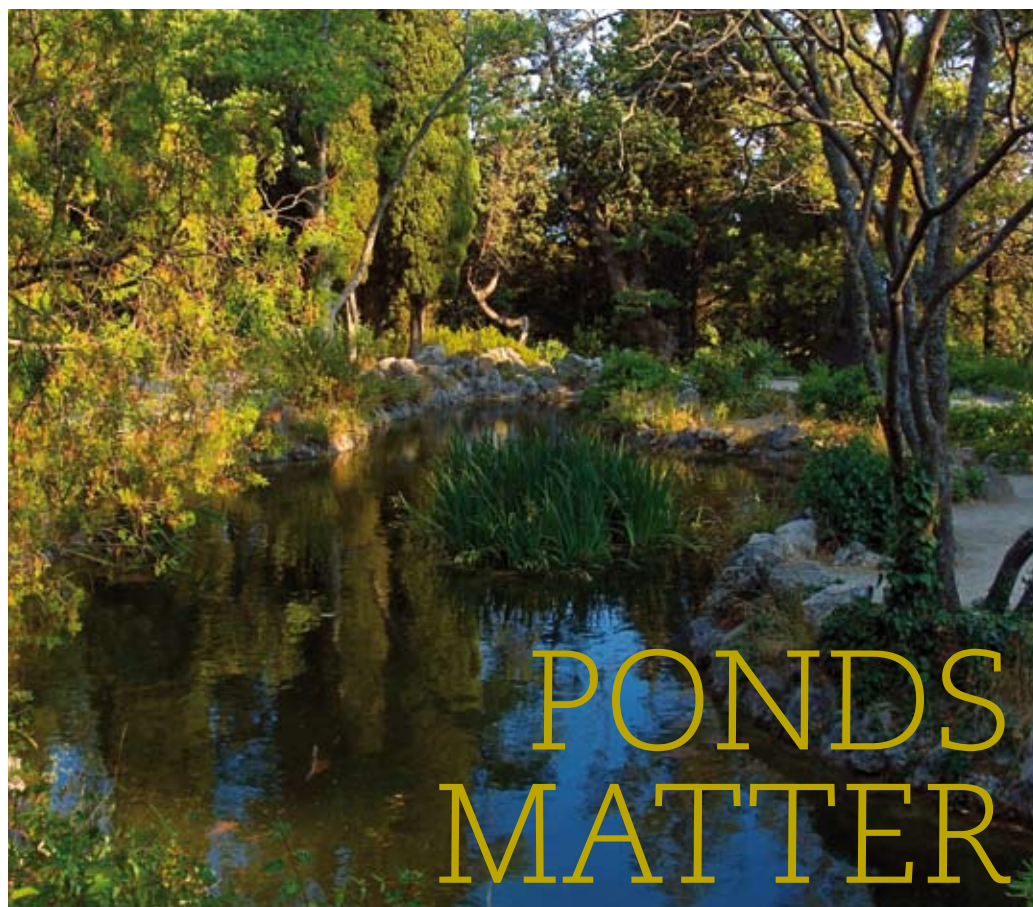


Common Blue butterfly on Ragged Robin

bumblebees. By planting nectar-rich plants that will flower early in the season e.g. *Primula veris* 'Cowslip', right through to the Autumn, e.g. *Pulicaria dysenterica* 'Fleabane', we can provide food for these fascinating insects. Larval food plants like *Lotus corniculatus* 'Bird's Foot Trefoil' will also encourage them to breed. Plant these plants in full light in a border or in a large pot. Cowslips can be planted into a lawn and will flower before the lawn gets too long in the Spring.

High Nectar Wildflowers:

- * *Pulicaria dysenterica* 'Common Fleabane'
- * *Centaurea scabiosa* 'Greater Knapweed'
- * *Chrysanthemum segetum* 'Corn Marigold'
- * *Origanum vulgare* 'Wild Marjoram'
- * *Echium vulgare* 'Viper's Bugloss'
- * *Dipsacus fullonum* 'Teasel'
- * *Lotus corniculatus* 'Bird's Foot Trefoil'
- * *Knautia arvensis* 'Field Scabious'
- * *Leucanthemum vulgare* 'Ox-eye Daisy'
- * *Primula veris* 'Cowslip'
- * *Galium verum* 'Lady's Bedstraw'



Seventy per cent of aquatic habitat in the countryside has disappeared in the past century due to the intensification of agriculture and changes in land use. As a result, garden ponds should become an essential feature in your garden. *Damian Young explains...*

PONDS ATTRACT FROGS, newts and toads, which in turn eat slugs and other garden pests. Birds will use the ponds for bathing and drinking, as will small mammals such as hedgehogs.

Making a pond is quite simple but it will involve quite a bit of preparation and some hard work.

First choose a spot in your garden that is level so the water doesn't run out. It should be in a sunny position in order to attract the greatest variety of wildlife.

Ideally, you want to position your pond away from trees to avoid extra maintenance time spent clearing fallen leaves that could choke the pond.

Build it near longer grass or a border to give the animals that come to drink and bathe in it some cover. You may want to consider positioning it near a wood pile or

rockery for extra cover for hibernating newts and amphibians. Alternatively, just put some loose stones and wood around the edges of the pond.

A pond starts life as a hole in the ground and it can be dug by either hand or machine, depending on how big you want it to be. There are companies who specialise in pond construction.

Even the smallest pond will entice some wildlife

Your wildlife pond can be any size or shape. Even the smallest pond will entice some wildlife. But it should be at least 60cm deep so it doesn't get frozen solid and aquatic creatures can escape Winter ice.

Make sure it has a sloping edge so that animals can get in and out easily. It's also a good idea to have shelved sections to create different depths to suit different plants and wildlife.

◀ Shallow areas are essential for establishing marginal plants that float around the edges of the pond, like *Iris pseudacorus* 'Yellow Flag Iris' and *Lythrum salicaria* 'Purple Loosestrife'. Deeper areas suit *Nymphaea alba* 'White Water-lily', *Ranunculus lingua* 'Greater Spearwort' and *Nymphoides peltata* 'Fringed water-lily'.

It's best to line your pond with a long lasting flexible Butyl liner as these have a life-span of around 20 years, but ready-cast fibreglass or plastic liners will work as well.

Butyl liners have the advantage of being easy to fit. You just need to dig a hole the size and shape of the required pond. The hole should firstly be lined with fine sand or old carpet to protect the liner. The liner can then be put into the hole and slowly filled with

Always try to use native British species and avoid vigorous pondweeds such as Canadian waterweed

water to allow it to take up the contours of the pond. (Tip: it's always a good idea to buy more liner than you think you will need because it is much easier to cut excess off than try to add bits. The same method can be used with pre-cast ponds).

Let your pond fill with rainwater if possible. If you need to use tap water, let it stand for a few days so that additives such as chlorine evaporate.

Plant a mixture of oxygenating, floating,



Common Frog

- You will need to clear out some of the vegetation from time to time to keep your pond in good order. Do this in early Autumn to minimise disruption to wildlife.
- If your pond gets covered in blanket weed clear it out by hand rather than using chemicals. Leave the cleared week on the edge so that any creatures caught up in it can crawl back into the water.
- Prevent your pond from icing over completely in Winter by floating a tennis ball on the surface. Remove it to leave an air hole in ice that does form. Avoid breaking the ice as the reverberations can disturb pond life.
- Note that great crested newts are rare in Britain and are protected. It's illegal to catch, possess or handle them without a licence, or to disturb their habitat.

emergent and marginal plants to get a good variety of wildlife to keep your pond in balance. Always try to use native British species and avoid vigorous pondweeds such as Canadian waterweed as these can be very invasive and choke waterways. Native oxygenating pondweeds like *Potamogeton crispus* 'Curled Pondweed' and *Ceratophyllum demersum*

It's better not to introduce any fish, as these will eat much of the aquatic life you are trying to attract

'Hornwort' are much less aggressive. Marginal plants will provide dragonfly and damselfly larvae with a means of getting out of the pond to emerge as adults.

If you want a good wildlife pond it is also better not to introduce any fish, as these will eat much of the aquatic life you are trying to attract. Fish eat frogspawn and tadpoles so it is advisable to keep your pond free of them.

To speed up the colonisation process, borrow some plants or mud from the bottom of a friend's pond. This will be full of life and kick-start your pond ecosystem. ■

If you have small children in the house you should think very carefully about where to put a pond. Children can drown in a few inches of water so perhaps you should consider not having one if it can't be fenced off.



SOW A CORNFIELD ANNUAL PATCH

ONCE COMMON IN arable fields across the country, cornfield annuals such as Papver rheas 'Corn Poppy', *Centaurea cyanus* 'Cornflower', *Chrysanthemum segetum* 'Corn Marigold', *Agrostemma githago* 'Corncockle' and *Anthemis arvensis* 'Corn Chamomile', have become increasingly rare. Better seed cleaning techniques, the increased use of selective herbicides and agricultural intensification have seen plants like Corncockle forced to the brink of extinction. These beautiful plants are easy to grow and form a stunning display in a sunny garden border. In turn they will also attract a wide spectrum of insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies.

For a good, colourful display, sow a mix of seeds at a rate of 5g per square metre into a clean, well-raked level bed. Annuals prefer a rich soil, so if in doubt add some fertiliser. Poorer soils will result in stunted plants. The key to establishing these plants is to surface sow the seeds and keep them well watered during dry spells. When they have finished flowering in the Autumn, collect the dry seeds and repeat the process. You can sow in the Autumn or the Spring. Spring sown cornfield annuals will flower within 12 to 14 weeks.

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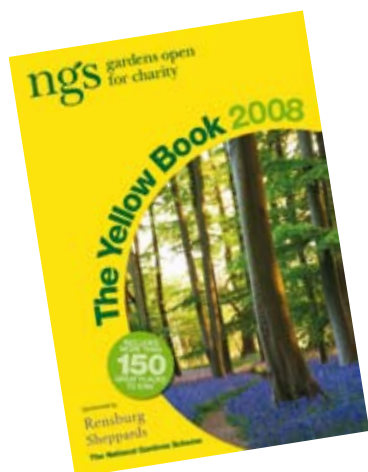


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Every year around 3,600 beautiful gardens to visit are listed in the NGS Yellow Book – most are private and only open for a day although there are a few which offer wider access to the public.

BRIMMING WITH INFORMATION on gardens all over the country it is sometimes a little difficult to work out where and when. With this in mind *Garden Confidential* approached the NGS who have kindly agreed to list the gardens open in our north London area over April, May and June.

With admission normally free to children aged 16 years and under, and charges for adults ranging from £2.00 to £5.00 the garden openings are excellent value for money. Tea, home-made cakes and plants are also often on sale. Around 80% of the money raised in the gardens goes to charity.

N1 Malvern Terrace Gardens

Group of unique 1830s London terrace houses built on the site of Thomas Oldfield's dairy and cricket field. Cottage-style gardens in cobbled cul-de-sac. Music and plant stall.

Sunday 27 April (2:00–5:30).



37 Alwyne Road

Clipped box, holly and yew keep things in order – pots reclaim space for colour. Hidden formal garden; old-fashioned roses along the river. Shelter if it rains. Plants for sale are carefully chosen for all seasons.

Sunday 1 June (2:00–6:00).



8 College Cross, Islington Gardens

Walled town garden, 70' x 20' with over 400 different plants including many unusual shrubs and herbaceous plants; varied collections of hostas and hardy geraniums; walls covered with climbers. Plant list available.

Sunday 1 June (2:00–6:00).



13 College Cross, Islington Gardens

Black slate bench and cantilevered glass balustrade provide contemporary design interest in this peaceful green oasis. Paved areas for dining surrounded by architectural plants are enlivened by white flowers. Good examples of plants that work in London shade for all-year interest. Winner of the London Garden Society award for best small back garden 2007.

Sunday 1 June (2:00–6:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment.



36 Thornhill Square, Islington Gardens

Old roses, hardy geraniums, clematis and alliums give a country garden atmosphere in curved beds in this 120' long garden. Bonsai collection displayed on the patio. Many unusual plants propagated for sale.

Sunday 1 June (2:00–6:00).



N6 2 Millfield Place

1½-acre Spring and Summer garden with camellias, rhododendrons, many flowering shrubs and unusual plants. Spring bulbs, herbaceous borders, small orchard, spacious lawns.

Sunday 11 May (2:00–6:00). Evening

Opening £3.50 with wine on Wednesday 18 June (5:30–9:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment.



7 The Grove, Highgate Village

Half an acre designed for maximum all-year interest with its variety of conifers and other trees, ground cover, water garden, vistas, 19 paths, surprises.

Sundays 6 April & 8 June (2:00–5:30). Visitors also welcome by appointment.



3 The Park

Large garden with pond and frogs, fruit trees and eclectic planting. Interesting plants for sale. Treasure hunt for children.

Sunday 20 April (2:00–5:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment at any time.



Southwood Lodge, 33 Kingsley Place

Secret garden hidden behind C18 house (not open), laid out last century on steeply sloping site, now densely planted with wide variety of shrubs, climbers and perennials. Ponds, waterfall, frogs and newts. Many unusual plants are grown and propagated for sale. Toffee hunt for children.

Sunday 4 May (2:00–5:30). Visitors also welcome by appointment April to July.



N7

1a Hungerford Road

Unique eco-house with walled, lush front garden planted in modern-exotic style. Floriferous 'green roof' resembling scree slope. Front garden densely planted with palms, acacia, ginger lilies, brugmansias, bananas, euphorbias and yuccas. The 'green roof' is planted with agaves, aloes, cacti, bromeliads, alpines, sedums, mesembryanthemums, bulbs, grasses and aromatic herbs – access via ladder only to part of roof (for safety reasons, can be seen from below). Garden and roof each 50' x 18'.

Sunday 8 June (12:00–6:00). Also open 62 Hungerford Road & 90 St George's Avenue.



N10

5 St. Regis Close, Alexandra Park Road

Unique artists' garden renowned for colourful architectural features created on-site, including Baroque temple, pagodas, turquoise raku-tiled mirrored oriental enclosure concealing plant nursery. American Gothic garden shed alongside compost heap enclosure with medieval pretensions. Open ceramics studio. Featured on ITV News to publicise the 80th birthday of the NGS with Charlie Dimmock.

Sundays 27 April; 29 June; 27 July (2:00–7:00).

Visitors also welcome by appointment.



27 Wood Vale

¾-acre garden, 300' long, abounding with surprises. Herbaceous borders, shrubbery, pond and a new feature every year. Once inside you would think you were in the countryside. Seating for over 90 people, with shady areas and delicious home-made teas. Saturday & Sunday 28–29 June (1:30–6:00).



N16

15 Norcott Road

Largish (for Hackney) walled back garden developed by present owners over 28 years, with pond, long-established fruit trees, abundantly planted with a great variety of herbaceous plants, especially perennial geraniums and campanulas, day lilies, flag and other irises. This year opening 3 weeks later for a more blousy look.

Sunday 8 June (2:00–6:00).



NW1

The Holme, Inner Circle, Regent's Park

Four acre garden filled with interesting and unusual plants. Sweeping lakeside lawns intersected by islands of herbaceous beds. Extensive rock garden with waterfall, stream and pool. Formal flower garden with unusual annual and half hardy plants, sunken lawn, fountain pool and arbour. Teas available in the nearby Rose Garden.

Saturdays & Sundays 26–27 April; 26–27 July (2:30–5:30).



Regent's College Garden, Regent's Park

Occupying 11 acres in the heart of Regent's Park, the grounds beyond the college buildings comprise the 'Secret Garden' (formerly the Botany Garden), sub-tropical rockery with 'folly building', thought to be an old ice house, Moroccan tea garden, extensive lawns and borders full of unusual plantings.

Saturday 17 May (12:00–5:00).



NW3

Fenton House, Hampstead Grove

Timeless 1½-acre walled garden, laid out on three levels, containing imaginative plantings concealed by yew hedges. The herbaceous borders give year-round interest. Sunken rose garden provides a sheltered hollow of scent and colour. The formal lawn area contrasts with the rustic charm of the kitchen garden and orchard. Vine house. In Spring, good borders and underplanted orchard.

For NGS: Evening Openings £3.50, children £1.50, wine, Thursday 15 May; 5 June (6:30–8:30).



NW8 116 Hamilton Terrace

Lush front garden full of dramatic foliage with a water feature and tree ferns. Large back garden of different levels. Wide variety of perennials and flowering shrubs and subtropical plants, succulents, acers, ferns, hebes, climbers, roses, fuchsias and hostas. Prizewinner Hampstead Horticultural Society.

Sunday 22 June (2:00–6:00). Evening Opening £4, children free, wine, Sunday 20 July (5:00–9:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment.

**AL5 20 Park Avenue South, Harpenden**

Topiary animals and quirky features enhance a profusion of small trees, grasses and perennials. Tulips, gold and brown leaved shrubs, primulas and pulmonarias delight in Spring. Year-round interest from perennials, colourful vegetables in small raised beds, experimental, drought-combating, gravel gardens. Pond and bog garden. Greenhouse, conservatory, aviary. Many seats.

Sunday 27 April & Sunday 29 June (2:00–5:00).

**EN4 207 East Barnet Road, New Barnet**

Delightful example of minute courtyard garden 25' x 30'. High fences are covered with clematis, honeysuckle and passion flowers. Roses and vines scramble over an arch above a seat. Small pond with goldfish and water plants.

Sunday 22 June (2:00–5:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment.

**HP2 Ragged Hall, Gaddesden Row**

Garden of 1½ acres. Lovely Spring garden. Mixed borders. Some unusual plants. Pond garden and cutting garden. Potager with vegetables and flowers. Tulips in May.

Sunday 4 May (2:00–5:30).

**HP4 Ashridge, Berkhamsted**

The gardens at Ashridge cover 190 acres and form part of the Grade II* registered landscape of Ashridge Park. Based on designs by Humphry Repton in 1813 and modified by Jeffry Wyattville, the gardens are made up of a number of small gardens, as well as a large lawn area leading to avenues of trees affording views out to the old parkland. House not open.

Sunday 15 June (2:00–6:00).

**Patchwork, 22 Hall Park Gate, Berkhamsted**

Quarter-acre garden with lots of year-round colour, interest and perfume. Sloping site with background of colourful trees, rockeries, two small ponds, patios, shrubs and trees, Spring bulbs, herbaceous border, roses, bedding, fuchsias, sweet peas, dahlias, patio pots, tubs galore and hanging baskets.

Sunday 4 May (2:00–5:00). Visitors also welcome by appointment from March to October.

**SG2 Benington Lordship, nr Stevenage**

Seven-acre garden including historic buildings, kitchen garden, lakes, roses. Spectacular herbaceous borders, unspoilt panoramic views. Benington Floral Festival.

Sunday 29 June (12:00–6:00).

**SG4 St Paul's Walden Bury, Hitchin**

60 acres of formal woodland garden, laid out in 1730. Grade 1 listed. Long rides lined with clipped beech hedges lead to temples, statues, lake, ponds, and outdoor theatre. Wild flower areas. Childhood home of the late Queen Mother. Featured in *Daily Telegraph*.

Sunday 27 April & Sunday 18 May (2:00–7:00). For NGS: Sunday 6 April.

**SG9 Furneaux Pelham Hall, Furneaux Pelham Gardens**

Lovely C16 hall (not open), once lived in by Lord Monteagle of Guy Fawkes fame. Walled herbaceous garden; lake with ornamental waterfowl, islands and bridges. Peaceful water and bog gardens. Vegetable garden and greenhouses.

Sunday 8 June (2:00–6:00).

**The Old Vicarage, Furneaux Pelham Gardens**

An interesting vicarage garden containing ancient sycamores, yews and later specimen trees; shrub and herbaceous borders; water feature and woodland walk.

Opens in conjunction with Furneaux Pelham Hall on Sunday 8 June (2:00–6:00).

**Pelham House, Brent Pelham**

3½-acre informal garden on alkaline clay started by present owner in 1986. Plenty of interest to the plantsman. Wide variety of trees and shrubs especially birches and oaks. Bulb frames, raised beds with alpines and acid-loving plants and small formal area with ponds. Many daffodils and tulips.

Sunday 30 March & Sunday 4 May (2:00–5:00).

Visitors also welcome by appointment.

**SG11 Bromley Hall, Standon, Ware**

Mature 4½-acre garden surrounding C16 farmhouse (not open). It is both an architectural and a plantsman's garden with an immaculate kitchen garden. Good use has been made of walls and hedges to shelter borders. Mown paths through rough grass reveal glimpses of countryside beyond. Petanque court.

Sunday 1 June (2:00–5:30). Visitors also welcome by appointment for groups of 10+.

**SG13 Jenningsbury, Hertford Heath**

Approximately three acres of wild flower meadow designed by Julie Toll. Moat, ponds and borders created to attract wildlife. About one acre formal, mixed planting

surrounds C17 farmhouse (not open).

Sunday 11 May (2:00–5:30).

**WD3 Great Sarratt Hall, Sarratt, Rickmansworth**

Four acres of herbaceous and mixed shrub borders; pond, moisture-loving plants and trees; walled kitchen garden; rhododendrons, magnolias, camellias; new planting of specialist conifers and rare trees.

Sunday 25 May (2:00–6:00).

**WDS The Abbots House, 10 High Street, Abbots Langley**

1¾-acre garden with interesting trees, shrubs, mixed borders, sunken garden, pond, wild flower meadow, conservatory. Exotic garden. A garden of 'rooms' with different styles and moods. Many half-hardy plants. Plants propagated from the garden.

Sunday 11 May & Sunday 24 August (2:00–5:00).

Visitors also welcome by appointment.

**The Barn, Serge Hill Gardens**

Two contrasting areas, enclosed courtyard, and above ground tanks of water, more open area laid out within a formal framework comprising a range of herbaceous perennials and shrubs tolerant of generally dry conditions. Area of naturalistic planting, five-acre wild flower meadow. (Opens as part of a group – Serge Hill Gardens)

Sunday 15 June (2:00–5:00).

**Serge Hill, Serge Hill Gardens**

Regency house (not open) in parkland setting with fine kitchen garden of half an acre, large greenhouse with vegetables. Range of unusual wall plants, mixed border, 100 yards long.

Sunday 15 June (2:00–5:00).

**Cockhamsted, Braughing**

Lovely country garden surrounded by open fields. Two acres of informal planting. Alliums, grasses, tree paeonies, early roses. Island surrounded by C14 moat. Remote and romantic with extensive views.

Sunday 18 May (2:00–6:00).

**WD6 St. Mary's Croft, Fortune Lane, Elstree**

One-acre designer/plantswoman's garden. Grass, shrub and perennial plantings, wild flower meadow, large wildlife pond, bog garden, herbs, rock garden, delightful Spring woodland, summerhouse. National collection of Akebias flowering in April. Wide range of unusual plants for sale, most propagated from garden.

Sunday 13 April & Sunday 11 May (2:00–6:00).

Visitors also welcome by appointment.

**SYMBOLS EXPLAINED**

- NEW** Garden opening this year for the first time or reopening after a long break or under new ownership.
- ◆ Denotes a garden that is open to the public on a regular basis. Gardens which carry this symbol contribute to the NGS either by opening on a specific day or days and/or by giving a guaranteed contribution to the Scheme.



Wheelchair access to at least the main features of the garden. Often disabled parking is available close by, or in the owner's driveway.



No dogs except guide dogs. Where dogs are allowed they must be on leads.



Plants usually for sale, often propagated by the garden owners. If proceeds go elsewhere, this is shown at the garden opening.

NCCPG Garden that holds a NCCPG National Plant Collection.



Gardens that offer accommodation. For a detailed listing see The Yellow Book.



Refreshments are available, normally at a charge. Wine is often available at Evening Openings. If proceeds go elsewhere, this is shown at the garden opening.



Gardens showing this symbol welcome visitors by prior arrangement.

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GARDEN CONFIDENTIAL

Folia (Europe) and Garden Confidential magazine have pleasure inviting you to their joint launch party on:

Wednesday 2nd April 2008 from 12 noon to 5pm

Please join us for a glass of wine.

Folia (Europe)

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CONFIDENTIAL POTAGER THE POTATO

NO DINNER IS really complete without a potato and today everyone from the local greengrocer to the large supermarkets are displaying wonderful selections.

Choosing the right pot for the dish is extremely important. If it's for a soup it must be floury like a **King Edward**; for a salad, nice and firm with colour as well as flavour like the **Pink Fir**; for mashing choose a **Duke of York** for a change; and for roasting, where the oil must permeate without degrading the texture, try the **Romano**.

As a general maxim **waxy potatoes** are translucent and feel moist. Good at staying firm and keeping their shape, they make for excellent salad potatoes. Good examples are **Charlotte** and **Maris Peer**.

Floury potatoes are brighter in appearance with a drier feel and so make better fluffy potatoes and mash. Good examples are **Estima** and **Maris Piper**.

Why not try growing your own?

If you have a fair-sized garden, you might consider growing your own. There are around 80 varieties grown in the U.K. and divide into three distinct potato seasons: the **1st Early** planted from January–March, the **2nd Early** planted late March and the **Main Crop** planted at the end of April. We recommend the latter two to avoid the problems of frost.

2nd Early varieties in late March crop during the Summer months. **Main Crop** varieties are harvested in September.

Tip for the smaller garden

Try reusing your old compost bag. Turn it inside out and punch a few holes in it for drainage. Then fill with a mixture of garden soil and compost about 70 centimetres deep and pop your potatoes in.

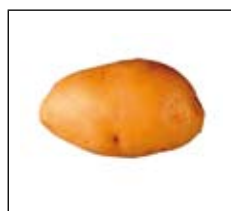
Know Your Spuds



Main Crop DESIRÉE
Firm slightly waxy texture. Oval shape, red skin, light yellow flesh. Excellent for Roast and Potato Dauphinoise



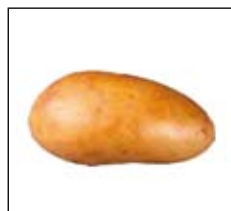
2nd Early MARFONA
Smooth waxy texture. Light yellow skin, light yellow flesh. Excellent for Jacket Potatoes



1st Early (susceptible to blight) DUKE OF YORK
Firm texture. Oval shape, cream skin, light yellow flesh. Excellent for mashed potato



Main Crop ROMANO
Soft, dry texture. Short oval shape, red skin, cream flesh. Excellent for potato wedges



1st Early BELLE DE FONTENAY
Firm texture. Long oval shape, cream skin, light yellow flesh. Excellent for salads



Main Crop SANTÉ
Firm texture. Oval shape, cream skin, light yellow flesh. Excellent for chips

With thanks to the British Potato Council
www.potato.org.uk



CHILLED POTATO AND AVOCADO SOUP

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
Cooking Time: 20 minutes
Serves: 4
Suitable for vegetarians

In celebration of the United Nations' International Year of the Potato 2008, the British Potato Council has cooked up some internationally inspired potato recipes from South America, the home of the potato. Potatoes and avocados are a classic Peruvian combination. This soup is a delicious chilled twist on the traditional potato and avocado soup served all across South America.

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped
½ tsp chilli flakes
2 potatoes, approx 450g, peeled and diced
1 litre vegetable stock
2 ripe avocados
170ml carton soured cream
To garnish, chopped coriander

Method

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan and fry the onion for 5–6 minutes over a gentle heat. Add the chillies and fry for 2–3 minutes. Add the potatoes and stock. Bring to the boil and simmer, covered for 10 minutes until tender. Reserve and dice 8 pieces of potato for garnish. Using a hand held blender or food processor, blend the soup until smooth. Allow to cool. Add the avocado and soured cream and blend again, season to taste. Chill before serving, garnish with diced potato and chopped coriander.

For more great recipe ideas with potatoes visit britishpotatoes.co.uk

YOUR LETTERS

GARDEN

CONFIDENTIAL

The Essential Companion to Gardening in North London

Dear Reader,

Every season brings its own fair share of joys and problems in the garden. Share your pleasures and despairs with us and the most interesting letter, as chosen by our editor, will **win a Mountfield lawnmower**. There will also be two runners-up prizes of secateurs as featured in 'Tools of the Trade' on page 11.

Garden Confidential would like to thank Andrew Gunn of Chipperfield Garden Machinery for kindly donating the 1st prize.

The best letter and the two runners up letters will be reproduced in our Summer issue, which is due out mid-June.

Please address your letter and any photos to The Editor, *Garden Confidential*, 187a Lanark Road, Maida Vale, London W9 1NX or e-mail us at letters@gardenconfidential.co.uk

Unfortunately *Garden Confidential* cannot return letters or photos unless expressly requested and accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope and we will not take any responsibility for damage or loss of any item.

Functional, informative, inspirational, *Confidential*.

Melanie

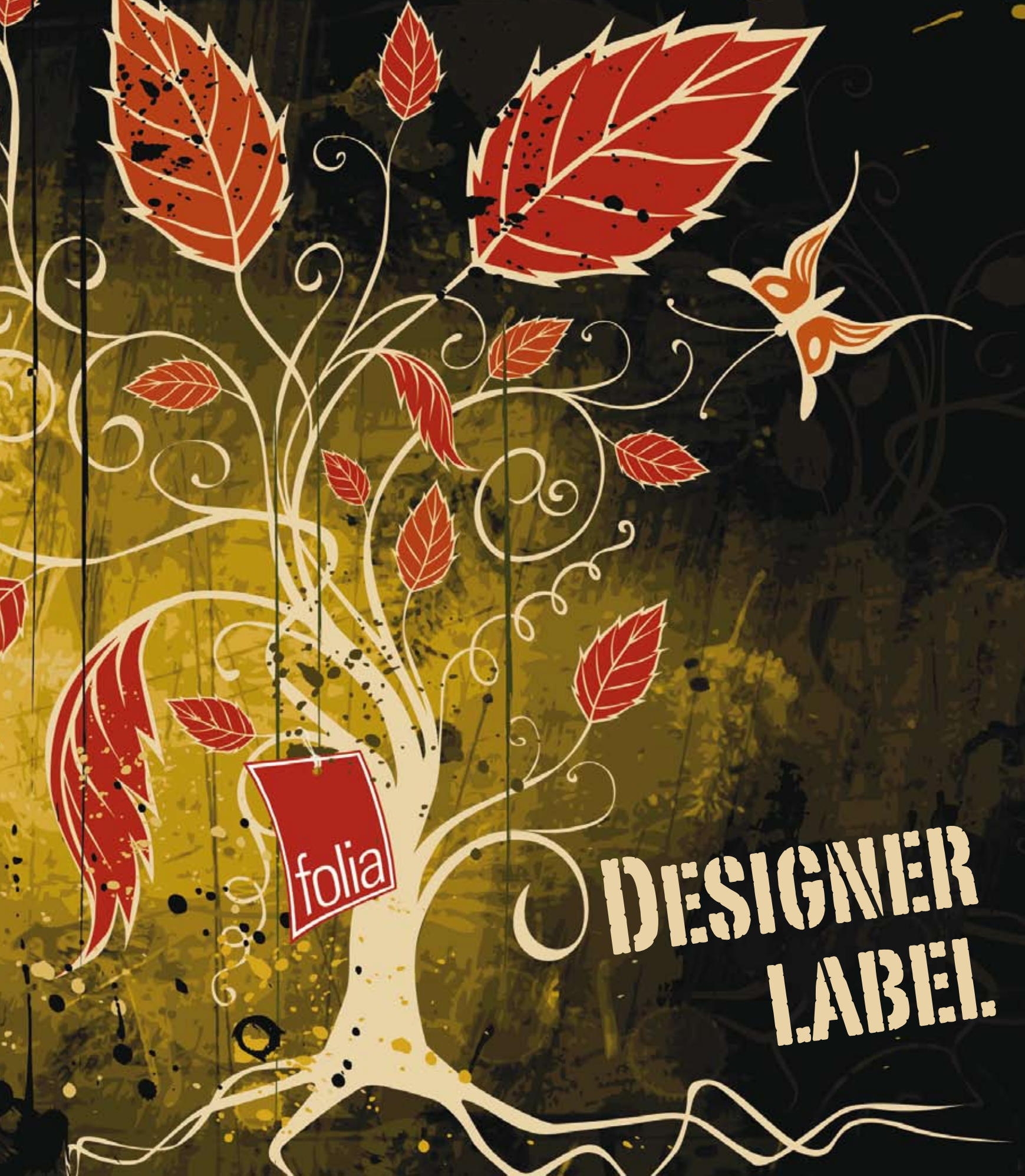
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WRITE TO US AND WIN

The writer of the letter that most sets us talking will win either the S421HP Petrol or Princess 14 Electric Mountfield mower from Chipperfield Garden Machinery

RULES: Only one letter per household. Letters must be received by 1st May 2008 and winners will be notified by phone, post or e-mail by 14th May. The 1st prize of either the S421HP Petrol or Princess 14 Electric Mountfield mower will need to be collected from Chipperfield Garden Machinery, Langley Road, Chipperfield, Hertfordshire, WD4 9EG. Telephone 01923 269377. Entrants must be 18 years or over. The prizes are not open to employees of *Garden Confidential*, Chipperfield Garden Machinery or their families and agents. No cash alternative is available. The judges' decision is final; no correspondence will be entered into.





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