



The Garden Design Co Ltd

www.gardendesignco.co.uk

2011/2012 Newsletter

Try as you might, it's difficult to avoid the doom and despair of Robert Peston over the last 12 months, but despite this we have not just survived but thrived in these economically challenging conditions. Our professionalism built up over some 20 years and reliance on recommendation and repeat business has seen us breaking all records. Investments in new plant, machinery and vehicles have been made, but most crucially we have invested in a growing pool of talented and really hard working individuals.

So to what end have these people toiled in what for the most part has been a splendid year to be working outdoors?

Turning the Clock back

Last years' newsletter finished with story of 'work in progress' namely a large contemporary meadow.



Everyone could have been forgiven for questioning what would happen next, after 350 grammes of seed was broadcast. Four months after sowing (not overlooking months of clearance and preparation), the result was truly outstanding.



A complete riot of colour provided by Californian poppies, cornflowers, english poppies, Shirley poppies and Yarrow were overwhelmed by hoverflies, bees and butterflies.

Nearly 3 months later, when conventional meadows are looking tired the garden still looked stunning.



A similar regime is being used on a large scale at the London Olympics, but when you see their plantings in August 2012, remember where you saw them first.

A Loyal Follower

Great efforts are made by us to stay in touch with our clients long after their garden has been created. Mike and Lynda originally had their Gerrards Cross Garden created by us 10 years ago, before buying a flat. With retirement and a window box to look at Mike realised he wanted to aspire to 'life in the country' and found himself with a classic cottage in the Cotswold complete with Aga.

I was delighted that he invited me to look at what turned out to be a cottage with Conifers.



Planting in October, we were blessed with glorious sunny days and rain after we left, but the benefits of planting in the warm Autumnal soil will be reaped next Spring when the plants will have a real head start over Spring planted material.

But before anything could happen, those conifers just had to go;



Then August was spent designing a classic cottage garden with Dephiniums, Wisteria and Penstemons, whilst aconites and snowdrops will start the flowering year off mid winter



Go Large in Amersham

After surviving the harsh winter of 2010/11, we welcomed in one of the kindest Springs on record, by starting work on a 6 acre estate on the highest point of the Chilterns just outside Amersham. Portland Bill is windy, but as we found out, so too is this part of the Chilterns, for little can be as damaging to newly planted material as incessantly drying winds, in a year of very low rainfall.

And replaced with...



The garden already featured 2 large ponds, as well as a woodland that had never been managed or thinned, a filled in swimming pool, an amorphous plantings of evergreens and shrubs, circa 1982, and several natural Springs erupting from chalk 150m below.

Curiously shaped Cupressus were removed...



Our belief in developing a long term relationship with garden and client served us well, for Jos' original concept drawings have developed and evolved over nearly 12 months, whilst we transformed the large estate.



The former swimming pool was transformed into a raised vegetable terrace.



The woodland was managed with fast growing ash and wild cherries, thinned to showcase specimen hardwoods. Inspired by ideas seen in action at Strilli Oppenheimers Garden at White Waltham, the felled timbers and brushwood were layered to create sinuous 'eco hedges'. Pollution and fuel was saved as chippers and bonfires were avoided.

Instead the slowly rotting wood provides a superb habitat for hedgehogs, slow worms and stag beetles with the eco hedge being topped up with wind fallen limbs over time.

Space was such that we were able to plant a grove of 50 Silver and River birch, which lead down to a stunning oak boardwalk, around and above the bog garden fed by the natural Springs. Working with nature, we will wait until after the winter frost has helped create a fine tilth before planting drifts of summer snowflakes, Irises and 2000 Snakeshead fritillaries.



A Trip to Tuscany

After designing and creating gardens for 20 years, our sources of plants are second to none. The very first garden that I created was for my last client whilst working as a solicitor. He had a Victorian Vicarage in Hampshire that he was dividing into two so during the Easter holidays and whilst still studying at Pershore we ‘crashed on his floor’ and transformed his garden.

Arriving at Hilliers wholesale nursery, I was stunned to be expected to take all the trees and plants in my VW Golf, as it was strictly a cash and carry. Somehow I appealed to Hilliers better nature, for they sympathetically looked upon us and agreed to deliver them!

Since then I have continued to use Hilliers as one of our preferred suppliers. Others are used with the vast majority of our stock being English grown, and indeed from the Thames Valley.

Nevertheless 20 years later Jo and I could not resist the offer of a trip to Tuscany to see Nurseries on a really grand scale.



The Scale of what greeted us was truly staggering. The main nursery (one of 1372 in the area) was spread over 700 hectares, employed 1200 people and consumed 35 million litres of water a day.



A willow ready for dispatch showed the scale of the operation; 25 forklifts were counted in this loading area alone.



I have to say the stock was of a superb quality, and the grounds spotlessly manicured for every forklift and tractor has a besom attached to keep the area so clean.



Small wonder they supply from Russia, across Europe to Spain and Portugal. As well as being inspired with great ideas for the future, an article of plants bought by us arrived on site the next month, to help create a shortcut to a mature look.



Seeing us in the flesh

We were delighted at the prospect of 2 of our largest creations being open to the public on 12th June 2011 in North Stoke. We have been involved in the 5 acre gardens at Brook House over the last 10 years and during this time they have been beautifully maintained and indeed loved by the owners and their gardener, Ken. Nevertheless we provided some extra help a few days before the open day and were delighted with the result.



Meanwhile we devised an information leaflet for the visitors explaining the design principals behind the neighbours 12 acre garden which had been designed by Dan Pearson 4 years previously with the water meadows now looking stunning, 3 years after we first started work on their restoration.



Small wonder we eagerly anticipated the throngs of visitors. Sadly though torrential rain soaked the few who came; the first rain we had had for many months. Maybe next year.....

Work in Progress.

Most our projects are of a long term nature so that relationships are developed with both client and garden. At the same time, work is planned to fit in with the natural seasons. Nature can influence in other ways for in Caversham a customer bought 2 acres of scrub adjacent to their front garden, partially to stop someone else building on the plot.

Having said that there was already someone living there, for a badger's set was discovered. Being protected, when planning permission was later granted for a large wildlife pond, we had to finish construction before the badgers returned to have their cubs in the Spring.



The neglected area was thick with brambles and hawthorn. Once cleared a huge area was revealed, which then created the perfect space for the wildlife pond.



With landfill so expensive, the 200 cubic metres of excavated material was retained on site to create bunds which will be later sown with wild flowers and planted with silver birch.

Meanwhile an avenue of white flowering cherries, underplanted by wild poppies, yarrow and hedge bedstraw will be planted leading up to the house in time for the clients wedding in April.



New for 2012

As well as seeing a completely revamped web site launched in 2012, we will also be launching a unique e shop. With The Garden Design Company Ltd having developed an enviable reputation for professionalism and reliability as well as a passion for horticulture, we thought it about time to build upon this.

2012 will hence see the launch of a unique tree list service. From an illustrated list of our top trees you will be able to create your own list of trees that you may wish to buy for yourself, for friends and even as 1 client is already doing, as a wedding gift list. The web site will provide customers and their friends with an easy and reliable way to order and plant trees from their wish list, using our 20 years of experience of sourcing and planting.

So look out for information on this new service coming soon.

A 3T Magnolia grandiflora, successfully planted in 2011.



Carpinus 'Frans Fontaine' and Thuja pliccata thriving 10 years after planting.

And Finally

Whilst work has been made easier with new plant and machinery being bought in 2011, nothing would have been possible without the hard work of a growing and dedicated team of workers. Des and Jim '2,' joined us this year with a combined experience of some 50 years, whilst former head gardener Martin heads up the planting team. Jane Thomas has now taken responsibility for sourcing and ordering plants for the our projects. This has helped plant buying to become much more efficient and addresses the challenges of sourcing the likes of 1500 hellebores for one bed alone, for one of the larger projects that we undertook in 2011.

Pete joined us nearly a year ago after spending two years studying at Burchetts Green and one year in a nursery. Meanwhile George joined us in the Autumn, and is another who is both willing and keen. Jim '1' has been promoted to foreman and has been a great and very personable 'right hand man'.



'George and Des getting stuck in'

Sally continues to keep the bank account in the black and the bills paid, whilst Jo turns ideas into stunning designs, with 3 new projects in the pipeline already for 2012. Meanwhile designer, Helen Sales has been a superb asset with her brilliant CAD and design skills, such that we are able to tackle the most technical issues. Likewise a big thanks to Paul Pollard and his team who helped us out in 2011 when we were close to being overwhelmed

Thanks also to our irrigation expert Paul Grannel, our electrician Mark Chennels, who is an unusual beast, for he is both a sparky who turns up when he says he will and who does not mind working out doors.

All are part of a big jigsaw, so thanks to them and all the people who keep recommending us and our loyal band of suppliers.

Networking still further.

It's been a privilege and a pleasure working with a variety of skilled craftsmen and women over the years. Currently we are working with Marnie Moyle, a local legend who works with green oak to make the most stunning outdoor furniture.



Marnie is working on another creation of the most epic proportions for us, whilst Ed Brooks specialises in creations from his own smallholding of sweetchestnut, making the most exquisite gates and furniture.



All part of the picture that makes us so unique.

The Effect of Google

Googling produces some interesting enquiries for our web site is an ever present showcase of our work. Indeed a completely revamped web site will be launched in 2012, featuring 5 previously unseen gardens. The power of Google led to designer Jo Alderson Philips and us working on a 30 acre estate with an 8 acre lake for a resident of Moscow, albeit the project was in Berkshire. He kindly sent snow by the dumper load as we worked on laying several hundred square metres of granite through the freezing winter of 2010/11.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE
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