

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan relocates public entrance to free up views of palace and reconnect it with Kensington Gardens

Redesigned landscape removes clutter to restore views at Kensington Palace

By Jez Abbott

A £12m redesign has helped to transform the gardens at Kensington Palace and make the imposing red-brick building look and feel more open and welcoming.

A key change by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Landscape Design was to swing the public entrance from the north to the east palace front. This freed up views of a facade that were previously obscured by forbidding railings and overbearing trees and shrubs.

"We removed great swathes of clutter including benches, dustbins, security railings, trees and shrubberies to the north-east and south-east of the palace," said a practice spokesman.

"The aim was to create a



Kensington Palace: more than 60 trees were felled to clear views of walks and terraces with yew trees

more coherent, dignified setting and reconnect the palace to the neighbouring park, thus restoring Kensington Palace to its place at the heart of Kensington Gardens.

"The 4ha royal garden builds on and complements

the bold unaffected Englishness of Charles Bridgeman's early 18th century landscape. There is, however, a contemporary response to the palace, the park and the needs of a modern audience."

A new east garden involved

shifting 7,000cu m of soil to form a ramp between the new palace entrance and a raised broad walk. More than 60 mature trees were felled to clear views of new gravelled walks and grass terraces studded with yew.

Designer's view



TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN, FOUNDER, TODD

LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN LANDSCAPE DESIGN

"Our landscape scheme has been informed by a detailed analysis of the long and complex history of the development of the palace and its setting. It does not, however, represent an historical recreation of an earlier phase."

The changes were supported by the Historic Royal Palaces, English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces Access Group and the Royal Parks. Longstaffe-Gowan worked on the project with John Simpson Architects.

Chemical plug against tree regrowth ready to go on sale

A product used to control unwanted regrowth of trees has been successfully trialled in the UK and will be made available this year.

The Ecoplug contains 300mg of granular glyphosate enclosed in a sealed plug, which is hammered into holes drilled in the stump.



Ecoplug: controls tree regrowth

The product was trialled in the UK over the past two years and achieved 95 per cent success, compared to 65 per cent for conventional spray treatments.

Ecoplug chief executive Asa Merving said: "The product has been sold in Sweden for 20 years so we know it

works well, but we needed to be sure it would work in the UK as well. Elder and rhododendron are not a problem in Sweden as they are in the UK. The reason the result was not 100 per cent was because we discovered that elder requires a higher dose."

The contract for UK

distribution was signed with Monsanto in November 2011. "It is looking promising," said Merving. "In the UK you are allowed to spray, but if it is too windy or rainy, or too sunny, you can't. You can use Ecoplug in all weathers. It is a great product for a market like the UK."

Doctors urged to use health reforms to prescribe gardening treatment

Doctors should prescribe gardening to people experiencing depression and other forms of ill health, the president of the Royal College of Physicians has said.

Sir Richard Thompson, who is a patron of gardening therapy charity Thrive, said the Government's health

reforms will allow GPs to use more innovative treatment approaches. Under the reforms, clinical groups will commission services, giving them more choice to prescribe treatments such as horticulture, which Thompson said could be more beneficial than drugs.

"I have, for some time, thought that doctors should prescribe a course of gardening for people who come to them with depression or stroke," he said.

"The new commissioning structures about to be introduced might allow more innovative treatment

approaches to be put in place, including the opportunity to try gardening rather than prescribe expensive drugs."

He added that Thrive and other organisations had produced evidence that being outdoors in a natural environment was good for people. "Drug therapy can be

really expensive, but gardening costs little and anyone can do it," he said.

"Gardening burns off calories, makes joints supple and is fantastic exercise. As a physical activity, gardening has been shown to be helpful in the treatment of anxiety, depression and dementia."