

Notebook

WHAT'S ON

To submit an event for inclusion in Cuttings, email details (including a contact telephone number and/or relevant website), in the format displayed here, to gardening@telegraph.co.uk or write to Gardening Listings, The Daily Telegraph, 111 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0DT.

Nov 10

Welsh Herbal Heritage and the Physicians of Myddfai, 10.30am-4.30pm, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire. Workshop about herbal remedies. £35, including materials (01558 667150; gardenofwales.org.uk).

Nov 10

Fungus Foray, 1pm, Thorp Perrow Arboretum, Bedale, North Yorks. Learn what is edible and what is not. Adults £8.10, children £5 (01677 425323; thorpperrow.com).

Nov 12

Selly Park Garden Club, 7.30pm-9.30pm, King Edward's Sports Pavilion, Birmingham, West Mids. A talk on recreation of Hanbury Hall Gardens by Neil Cook, head gardener of Hanbury Hall. £3, including refreshments (0121 472 1988).

Cuttings

A Library landscape, by George

The Tudors brought power struggles and houses. The Victorians did infrastructure. But the Georgians brought style: a classically imbued elegance that is still idealised today. As the 300th anniversary of the beginning of the Georgian period approaches, a new exhibition at the British Library celebrates the period, covering everything from fashion to cooking, with displays and a series of talks.

Domestic spaces lay at the heart of the Georgian vision, and it was during the 18th century that our national obsession with gardens began. Landscape designer Todd Longstaffe-Gowan has created a Georgian garden in the British Library's piazza that will remain in place for five months. (It is close to the Euston Road entrance and free to view.) The installation, entitled *Georgeobelisk*, is loosely based on the architect and playwright Sir John Vanbrugh's unexecuted entrance gate to the forecourt at Castle Howard in Yorkshire.

"It's the first time the British Library has ever done anything like this in the piazza," says Longstaffe-Gowan. "The space is quite difficult to work with. The brief was to make a garden of some sort, but given the timescale, and that it's in place from November to March, you don't have too many options to make something living.

"I went for something more ephemeral and wondrous. It is towering and mad and fun; a gimcrack, a sham, but in that 18th-century way."

At the centre of the installation is a 6m (20ft) tripod, with a bust of George I at the top. The three pillars of the tripod stand for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th King Georges. Inside is a vaulted ceiling, from which is suspended a



Whimsical: Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's garden evokes Georgian style

life-size cherub to represent Prince George, the future George VII. Surrounding the central edifice are plants in pots and even some plastic sheep. Everything is clad in artificial box; other materials are plywood and AstroTurf – hardly 18th century staples.

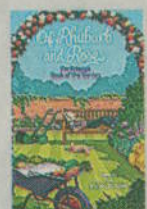
"I don't think it matters what the materials are," says Longstaffe-Gowan. "My background is history and geography. I wanted to evoke the spirit behind the thing: the whimsical caprice that was so popular in the late 18th and early 19th century. They were forever building temples and putting chandeliers up outside to make Arcadian scenes."

Reader book offer

Since the Thirties, the *Telegraph* has been a home for the nation's greatest gardening writing: from Fred Whitsey to Roy Lancaster, Vita Sackville-West to Germaine Greer. A new anthology, *Rhubarb and Roses*, brings together the best. Everything is here: from Constance Spry's recipe for potpourri to the story of the 77-year-old man who slept in a fortified shed to guard his prize tomatoes and geraniums and shot an intruder with a 12-bore. The

perfect gift for gardeners of every stripe, or anyone interested in the brilliant, eccentric characters who populate British gardening history.

● *Of Rhubarb and Roses: The Telegraph Book of the Garden*, edited by Tim Richardson (Aurum, £25), is available to order from Telegraph Books (0844 871 1514) at £20 + £1.35 p&p.



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appears to unfold, as a unified whole. As this is just the beginning of my new life here, I don't want to do anything too drastic, but rather try out some daring and experimental ideas that will open, rather than limit, any future options.

As well as sowing annuals, I will also be planting perennials to create similar naturalistic but more long-term effects that have year-round interest. I will be careful to choose theme species that flower for a long period, and which are not fussy about their growing conditions, so they can be planted in generous drifts in both sun and light shade.

Through Monet's eyes

So much for the immediate impact of flowers; a mature garden may also need some more fundamental restructuring. For this, it's important to look at the garden afresh and there are a handful of tricks that I use to see a space as if for the first time.

A simple tip is to squint, so that the detail is lost but the colour, tone and forms in a garden are revealed as a pictorial composition. This helps to view the garden as an arrangement of shapes that need organising into a successful composition rather than as a collection of plants. Tone and colour unify landscapes just as they do paintings. Think of the fuzzy riots of colour and form in Monet's expressive final paintings, made when his vision was severely affected by cataracts.

Another artful ruse that helps you to look analytically is to photograph an area of planting and then to print it out in black and white. Without the distraction of colour you can see the arrangement of plant forms and analyse the different patterns and shapes. If the composition looks confusing, with no unity and no clear repetition or contrast, it may be that there are too many different types of plants.

In these situations, try to simplify the planting composition by introducing a theme plant with a clearly defined structural form. Look at the tall, statuesque silhouette of *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' or the strong vertical accents of *Verbascum* species. A lower evergreen fountain of *Stipa arundinacea* or plants with horizontal flower forms, such as achillea, sedum or members of the carrot (*Apiaceae* or *Umbelliferae*), family will strike a dramatic compositional counterpoint.

Even without being photographed, mature borders often appear gloomy and unbalanced, with little contrast between light and dark. This signals it is



Inspiration: Sarah Price worked on the Olympic Park, above, in east London, where bold drifts of colour worked a quick transformation; shrub pruning (far right) can also reinvigorate a mature garden

Quick fixes with annuals

- Take inspiration from drifts of wildflowers; cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), native bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) or red poppies. Broadcast seed in bold swathes – generous drifts look fantastic even in small spaces.
- Choose the right mix for your conditions. Woodland edge mixes, with red campion (*Silene dioica*), foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) and sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), look fantastic in semi-shaded areas. The vibrant colours of California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) and *Coreopsis tinctoria* suit sun-drenched situations, among vegetables in a potager or close to a warm, south-facing wall.
- Pick out a theme plant that is dominant within the mix and plant this elsewhere in the garden. This reinforces visual connections, heightening the sense of flow. For instance, bishops flower (*Ammi majus*), a lacy white umbel, is often used in annual mixes and looks beautiful threaded through informal perennials or old-fashioned shrub roses.

● Sow annuals in gaps among perennials. But don't swamp newly planted perennials with annual seeds as these tend to grow more vigorously. Always follow the sowing density recommendations on the packet; see below for suppliers.

Seed suppliers

- Pictorial Meadows offers a range of innovative combinations, many inspired by the plantings in the Olympic Park (0114 267 7635; pictorialmeadows.co.uk).
- Emorsgate Seeds developed its wildflower and grass mixtures over 30 years and groups mixes by habitat type (01553 829028; wildseed.co.uk).
- Landlife, the conservation charity, has an online wildflower shop which supplies mixes for different soil types as well as an annual and perennial mix called Gardener's Double Delight, full of corncockle, corn chamomile, poppy, ox-eye daisy and lady's bedstraw (0151 737 1819; wildflower.org.uk).