

LAYER *upon* LAYER

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan describes his role in the gentle refurbishment of an historic Cotswold manor-house garden, and the re-creation of the productive walled garden

PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW LAWSON**



In the original eighteenth-century walled garden, surrounded by the kitchen, gardener's cottage, wood store, old kennels and stables court, a productive new garden has been created; more than half of it has been given over to flower beds to ensure a supply of cut flowers for the manor house. The beds are edged with lavender, chervil, hyssop, *Dianthus carthusianorum*, santolina and violets, while a towering eighteenth-century yew hedge forms a backdrop



Although creating a garden from scratch can be exhilarating, I have always derived significantly more pleasure from building on the legacies of others. To add another layer to an existing composition demands a respect of and an understanding for earlier efforts that have helped shape a garden; moreover, it encourages you to explore or contemplate the motives that have formed a particular landscape – what makes it special, curious or distinctive.

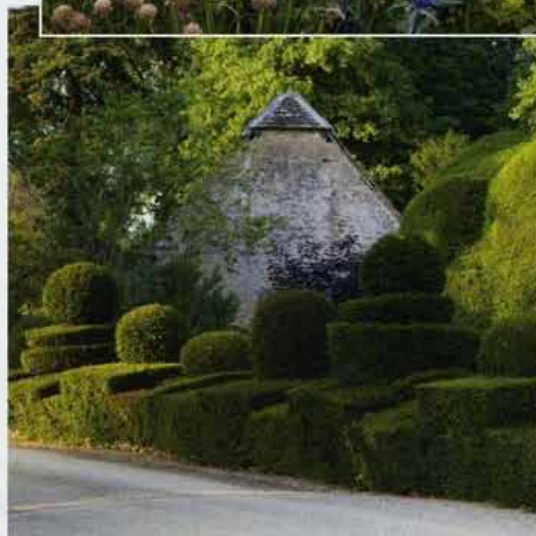
The opportunity to re-present the already handsome, mature and well-appointed historic gardens of a Cotswold manor house was, therefore, a welcome challenge. Records suggest that there have been extensive gardens at this rambling mid-seventeenth-century pile since at least the early eighteenth century, and relics of the early pleasure grounds survive in the form of

gargantuan yew hedging, stately trees, walls, paths and outbuildings.

Our aim is to reinstate the former coherence of the park and gardens, and to put in place a flush of modest improvements: to reopen historic views, replant parkland trees, rebuild collapsing stone ha-has and replant flower beds. For instance, the broad and picturesquely crumbling south-facing gravel terrace has been repaired and bejewelled with a generous sprinkling of sun-loving plants, including rock roses, erigerons, sedums, euphorbias, centranthus, ajuga, catmints and stachys; and elsewhere, a row of overgrown yews lining an old terrace walk has been lopped to open views to the neighbouring park fields.

The most exciting aspect of our work thus far has been the reinstatement of a large productive garden in the old walled garden beside the house. It is rare that an eighteenth-century walled kitchen

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT The former coherence of the park and gardens of this substantial Grade II*-listed manor house, begun in 1658, have been reinstated. In the walled garden, *Alchemilla mollis* mingles with *Eryngium bourgatii* 'Picos Amethyst', *Eryngium x zabelii* 'Jos Eijking', courgettes and chives. Overgrown and sculpted yew and box line an old terrace walk. Bright orange *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra', aconites and blue delphiniums stand tall amid asters on the edge of a gravel path



garden survives immediately adjacent to an English country house: such utilitarian conceits were, from the late eighteenth century onwards, generally banished from the ground beside the kitchens they served to some far-flung corner of their estates, to make way for ornamental flower gardens and shrubberies, and to conceal the productive divisions of the gardens from residents and guests alike.

The new plan of the old walled garden is simple and practical. Roughly half the beds are laid out in a traditional rectilinear manner, and the remainder are amorphously shaped. Their configuration and layout reflect the desire lines that criss-cross the one-acre ground and connect the disparate buildings that surround it, including the kitchen, the old kennels, the gardener's cottage, the wood store and the stable court. It was the owners' wish that the

garden should be given over to the cultivation of fruit, vegetables and flowers. Over one half of the garden has been thrown into flower beds to ensure that there is a continuous supply of cut flowers for the house.

At the centre of the new garden we placed a substantial stone finial that once crowned the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey. All the beds are raised and retained by ragged Cotswold-stone edging, and large paddle stones have been placed sporadically in the broad gravel paths. The beds are edged with low hedges of lavender, chervil, hyssop, dianthus, violet and santolina. A towering, sculpted eighteenth-century yew hedge forms an inky backdrop to the new composition; small yew sentinels have been dotted around the new garden, and will in time be shaved to resemble etiolated drippings from the mother hedge.

Wall fruit is being trained up the warm south- and east-facing walls in fans, palmettes verriers, espaliers and cordons; and a Judas tree has been placed in the lee of the Henry VII finial to form a vibrant spring foil to the tawny hue of the stone.

A garden is only as good as its gardener: here, the rolling acres are tended by Matthew Fry. Matt, who hails from the neighbourhood, only recently turned his hand to gardening, but in this short time he has proved himself an able master. He has, moreover, been astonishingly receptive to the many changes to the gardens, and is steeling himself for our next and imminent round of improvements, which are bound to keep him on his already nimble toes □

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THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE One of the objectives in restoring the walled garden was to make it productive, so as well as flower beds, it also has vegetable plots growing runner beans, carrots, courgettes and pumpkins. In front of a new wall outside the kitchen grows a profusion of rock roses, catmint, euphorbias and erigeron. In the centre of the garden stands a stone finial that once crowned the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey; it is surrounded by a lush planting of dill, rosemary, heleniums and gaura

