

Royal Ascot week will have a horticultural flavour this year, when the new garden at Windsor Castle (below), commissioned by the Royal Household, is officially completed. Tom Stuart-Smith, the landscape architect whose picturesque scheme for Castle Hill won the invited design competition initiated in late 1999, felt that the garden, through which visitors to the castle will walk, needed to be open, romantic and not over imposing: 'the castle is such an impressive structure that a formal garden would be inappropriate.' The gar-

den is also the site for a bandstand: bands of the Household Division have long played at Windsor, and the public will now be able to listen to them in the new garden setting.

The garden site of about two acres was a car park for castle staff; reduced staff parking on Castle Hill will be screened by large, loose box hedges. 'The last thing this site wants is heavy blocks of cherry laurel,' says Tom, 'but I have included a strong backbone of evergreens: *Viburnum tinus*, *Osmanthus delavayi*, bay and Portuguese laurel.' Large trees were needed to marry the

scale of the garden to that of the castle: Tom chose holm oaks and 'one of the most beautiful cork oaks I have ever seen, that will be sheltered by the castle walls.' Rambling rose 'Seagull' will eventually cascade down the castle walls and one of the castle's many towers. There is a slight bias towards planting for spring, when the Queen is mainly in residence at Windsor. Scented philadelphus and lilacs will be in bloom for Ascot week and Tom has selected magnolias such as *Magnolia kobus* and *M. x loebneri* 'Merrill' to cope with the shallow alkaline soil on this chalky outcrop.



JUBILEE SALUTE

To mark the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, landscape architect TOM STUART-SMITH has been commissioned to create a new garden at Windsor Castle

'My primary aim,' he says, 'is to improve the setting. The garden must look as wonderful from the castle apartments as for those making the journey to St George's Gate (below left) at the castle entrance. Part of the brief was for the garden to be colourful, so I have included unusual large-scale herbaceous perennials such as *Aralia racemosa*, *Helianthus salicifolius* and white willowherb, planted in big groups. Flowers are tricky on this scale but to keep the planting interesting in the short term I have put in lots of woodland-edge plants that will suit the north-facing site – carpets of

hellebores, pulmonarias and day lilies.'

For Tom, contributing to 'one of the most historic landscapes in Britain' has been enormously exciting. Records of royal gardens stretch back to the reign of Henry III, who, in 1240, fenced off part of the deer park to create Windsor's first recorded garden. This Jubilee Garden is the first major horticultural undertaking commissioned for Windsor since 1820 and captures, according to the director of the Royal Collection, Sir Hugh Roberts, 'the essence of the castle's romanticism and of Windsor's famous landscape' □

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Windsor Castle is open
year-round. For details,
call 01753-869898,
or visit www.royal.gov.uk

