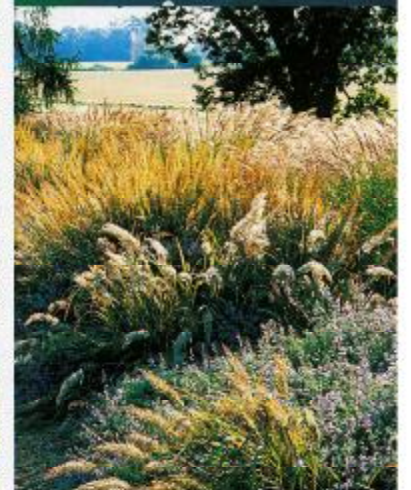




DESIGN GUIDE

Hailed by those who have seen it as one of the best modern gardens of the 21st century, Broughton Grange is the work of award winning designer Tom Stuart-Smith. Here, he describes how he set about planning a 'quite outlandish' contemporary garden in the middle of the English countryside

ABOVE, FROM LEFT A mass of amaranthus forms part of the vibrant planting in the middle terrace; Tom with a tray of young achilleas in March 2001 when the garden was first being planted; the garden is divided into a series of three terraces, and the large water tank is the bold focal point of the middle terrace.





BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

From an empty field to a garden bursting with colour and vitality, Broughton Grange's bold design somehow manages to meld with its rural surroundings

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW LAWSON WORDS TOM STUART-SMITH

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that five years ago the walled garden at Broughton Grange was just an idea. In its place was a slightly scruffy and empty paddock, blessed with lovely views over the Oxfordshire countryside but nothing much else. Now it is brimful of flowers, fruit and vegetables, and seems to have been there for decades.

You come across the garden rather by surprise, almost as though a huge Tardis had landed in the next door field. And yet, even though there is something rather outlandish about the whole conception, it has rapidly become part of the landscape. It is approximately square, 60m by 60m (200ft by 200ft), with high walls on the north and west but open to the landscape on the south and east. It is unconnected to any other building and lies some 200m (220yd) from the house, an attractive 19th century stone building, comfortably embedded in a fold of hills.

The ground falls nearly 4m (13ft) across the length of the garden and was levelled into three even south facing terraces. These share some common features, but each has a very distinct character. The upper terrace is the warmest part of the garden and a large greenhouse nestles in the angle of the two high walls. The surrounding area is planted with a tapestry of Mediterranean flowers and grasses, punctuated by sentinel Irish yews and bisected by a stone-lined rill, which carries water from the upper terrace into a large tank in the centre of the garden. As with the whole of the garden, there is almost fierce contrast between the hard, clean lines of construction and the flowing exuberance of the planting.

The middle terrace, focusing on the water tank and the adjacent stone terrace, is the heart of the garden. The planting here has a more damp meadow character, interwoven with a random scattering of beech topiary which are the only woody plants on the main part of the terrace.

DESIGNER PROFILE

Tom Stuart-Smith read Zoology at Cambridge and then studied Landscape Design at Manchester University. He worked as a landscape architect until setting up his own practice in 1998, winning a Gold Medal at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in his first year. He went on to win golds in 2000 and 2001, and in 2003 was also awarded the prestigious 'best in show'. His private commissions include a new garden at Windsor Castle, proposals for the Earl and Countess of March at Goodwood and the redesign of the Italian Garden at Trentham in Staffordshire. He is currently designing the Laurent-Perrier garden for Chelsea 2005.

The lowest terrace is dominated by a large, and apparently abstract, parterre of low box hedges. The head gardener at Broughton Grange, plants this up every year with 5,000 tulips in spring, followed by almost countless ornamental vegetables and annual flowers for a constantly changing effect.

Although the garden has a strong formal structure, it was conceived entirely in relation to the surrounding landscape and the views to distant clumps, hills, valleys and vistas. At one end of the scale, I used species in the surrounding hedges and fields to make up the components of the structural planting in the garden. At the other end of the scale, the microscopic cellular structure of leaves from mature beech, ash and oak trees in the hedgerow, magnified several thousand times, forms the pattern of the parterre on the bottom terrace. The old informs the new and the landscape comes into the garden.

Broughton Grange, Wytham Lane, Broughton, Oxfordshire OX15 5DS. Tel: +44 (0)1295 256562. Open for The National Gardens Scheme: 8 May, 26 June, 11 Sept, 10am-5pm. Tom Stuart-Smith Design, 43 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5RS. Tel: +44 (0)20 7253 2100.

How it's done at Broughton Grange

THE UPPER MEDITERRANEAN TERRACE

Mediterranean plants in great swathes are the hallmarks of the warmest part of the garden. Turn to page 66.

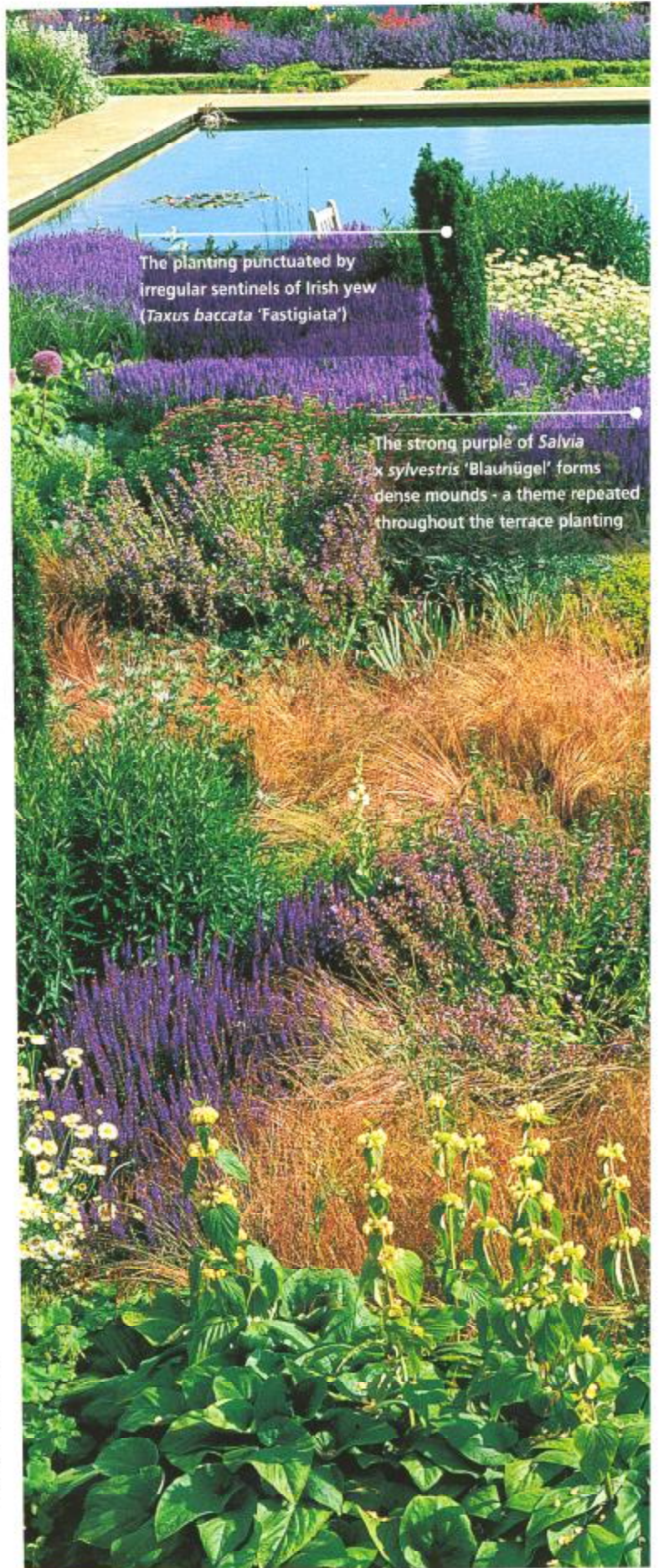
THE MIDDLE & LOWER PATERRE TERRACES

Find out how the middle and lower terraces were planned on page 68 - each with their own character. ▶

FACING PAGE, TOP ROW FROM LEFT *Erysimum* 'Bowles' Mauve'; the beech tunnel; a glasshouse by Alitex sits in the north west corner of the garden. **SECOND ROW** The rill bisects the upper terrace; *Iris sibirica* planted by the cascade; the patio seating area. **THIRD ROW** Pleached limes underplanted with lavender; *Digitalis grandiflora* on the upper terrace; the tank is home to many koi carp and one large sturgeon. **BOTTOM ROW** Irish yews punctuate the upper terrace; 'boxes' of pleached limes mark the junction of the paths; grasses and nepeta along the edge of the lower terrace. **THIS PAGE, TOP** A gate designed by architect Ptolemy Dean.

MEDITERRANEAN TERRACE

- + The south facing upper terrace is the warmest part of the garden and has been planted with Mediterranean plants, including *Achillea* 'Coronation Gold', *Phlomis russelliana*, salvias in large drifts and *Stipa gigantea*.
- + Some shrubs have been included in the planting, but they are always interspersed with perennials and are placed off to one side so that the views over the garden and out into the rolling countryside are kept open.
- + Only two materials are used on the horizontal surfaces - gravel and stone - both of a similar colour. The bold, simple effect in the construction contrasts with the complexity of the planting.
- + Key plants are repeated and planted in diagonal drifts so that the eye is always moving from the garden out into the landscape. The effect is like a very large Persian carpet.
- + A number of plants are used that retain some character over the winter including the phlomis, *Euphorbia nicaeensis*, *Stachys byzantina* and various grasses.



The planting punctuated by irregular sentinels of Irish yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata')

The strong purple of *Salvia x sylvestris* 'Blauhügel' forms dense mounds - a theme repeated throughout the terrace planting

ILLUSTRATION NEIL GOWER



The rill effectively cuts the upper terrace in two. It is 45cm deep and lined with York stone to give a crisp, clean line. It ends in a waterfall that tumbles into the tank on the terrace below

At the height of summer, all structure seems to disappear and the planting on the top terrace appears to form a continuum with the terrace below and the landscape beyond

Phlomis russeliana, grasses and silvery stachys planted in drifts look stunning in summer, and continue to look good through winter



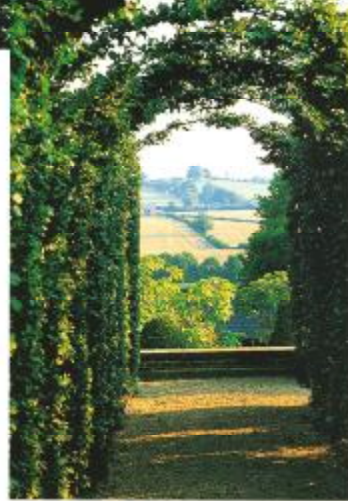
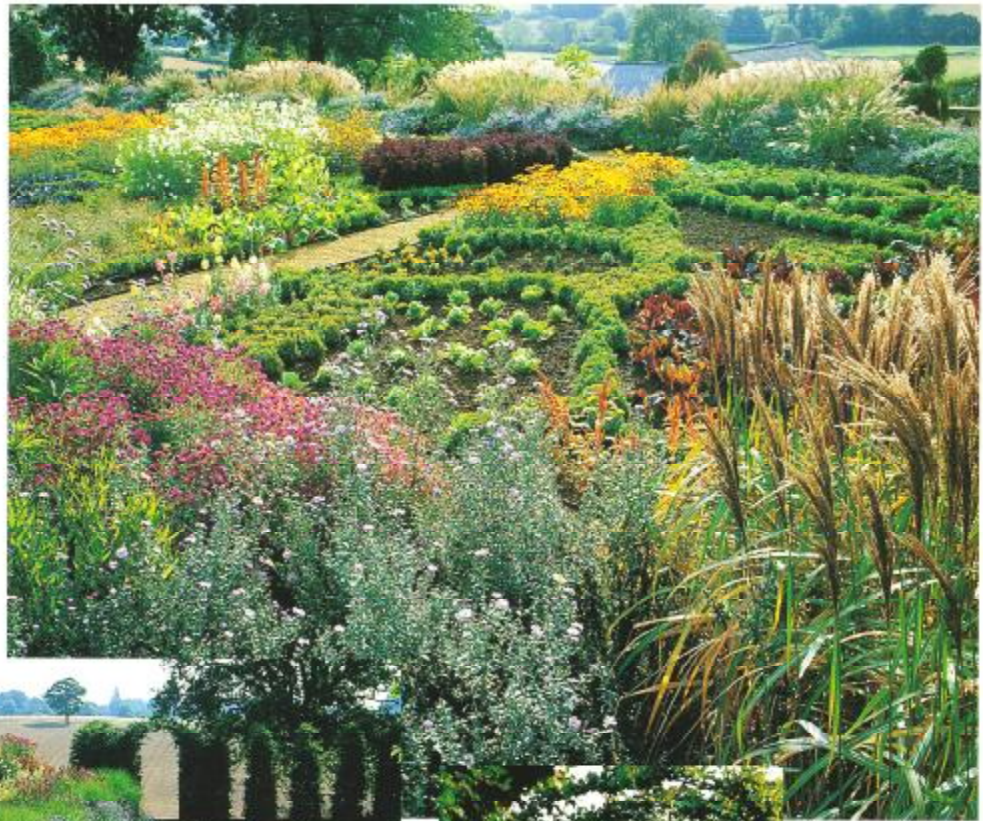
The water tank creates a calming open space in the centre of the garden. The water is deep enough to suit waterlilies and fish.

ALTHOUGH THE GARDEN HAS A STRONG FORMAL STRUCTURE, IT WAS CONCEIVED IN RELATION TO THE SURROUNDING HILLS AND VISTAS



The colouring of the planting on the middle terrace is deliberately subtle, with beech topiary adding interesting shape.

PARTERRE TERRACE



MIDDLE TERRACE Dominated by the central stone tank, the middle terrace is given over to damp meadow planting, including persicarias, veronicastrums, phloxes and tall grasses, such as cultivars of *Miscanthus sinensis* and *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'. The planting is dominated by grasses and is less colourful than the upper terrace. There is a more dramatic contrast between the enclosure of the planting and the open area around the tank, which has the effect of making an empty space in the middle of the garden. The planting is interwoven with beech topiary, which has a strangely anthropomorphic presence and seems to populate the garden in the absence of anything more animate. It also occupies a middle ground between the naturalism of the planting and the constructed framework of the garden.

The water in the tank is 90cm (3ft) deep, ideal for water lilies and deep enough that it stays cool for the fish (koi and sturgeon). The stepping stones are both functional and decorative - they are built on a series of hollow pillars to bring them just above the water surface.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT York stone steps lead down to the lower terrace; planting in the parterre changes annually; *Eryngium bourgatii*; a glimpse through the beech tunnel; the parterre of low box hedges interplanted with vegetables. At the foot of the walls lie repeated mounds of silver *Artemisia ludoviciana* 'Valerie Finnis'.

LOWER OR PARTERRE TERRACE This area is very different in character from the two higher terraces. It consists of an apparently abstract parterre of low box hedges, which is in fact a pattern derived from the microscopic leaf structure of the main native trees growing around the garden. Leaves from oak, ash and beech trees within 50m (160ft) of the garden were magnified under a microscope and then translated onto the ground so that the pattern of cell walls became the pattern of the parterre and creates an abstract link between the garden and the landscape. It has a less rigid effect than a parterre inspired by historical references. The low box hedges are clipped once a year into a rounded hummocky profile.

The trees forming the beech tunnels on the east side of the upper and lower terraces were planted at a mature size. The plants are trained onto a simple framework of hollow steel tubes, which can be removed when the trees have reached full size. I used a distant clump of trees as a reference point and aligned the tunnels with that. The trees are cut once a year.