

# GARDEN NEWS

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## THERE IS MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

**W**hilst I am writing this, we are in the final stages of planting the spring and early summer bedding in the High Border. Every year we feel a bit rushed because Father Christmas is calling us to lay down our trowels to rest for a fortnight, leaving the (well-prepared) garden to its own devices.

The design of the High Border is based on the principle of succession planting, with pockets of seasonal displays linking the permanent anchors of deciduous and evergreen shrubs, grasses, roses and perennials, all with the aim of providing a year-long display of colour, shape and texture. As well as caring for these permanent inhabitants throughout the year, there are two major periods of re-organisation. In November and December, spring bulbs and bedding are planted after the border has had its autumn clearance and, when those plants have finished flowering in June, their places are taken by summer annuals and tender species. The combination of this late spring planting alongside the perennials and anchors means that the border can hold a riotous display of colour from March to the first frosts at the end of December.

We made really good use of the mild autumn weather with its warm soil by dividing and replanting most perennial clumps and by re-designing some sections of the border. We are looking forward to seeing if these changes will be an improvement when they start to flourish in the spring. In addition, we are very excited about our spring bedding design, based and built on our successful seasonal planting from spring 2014, when we introduced the



widely unknown *Hesperis steveniana*. It is an early flowering sweet rocket that I found in a Belgium seed catalogue two years ago, which we raise as biennial in our nursery through spring and summer before planting it out in late autumn. We have combined this rocket with commonly-used *Hesperis matronalis* and should therefore have a sweet evening scent lingering from early April to June, produced by the masses of purple flowers.

To accompany the sweet rockets, we have planted honesty 'Munsted Purple' (a dark flowering selection of the purple honesty that originates from Gertrude Jekyll's garden in Sussex), magenta Sweet Williams and two types of Foxgloves, one of which is our own garden strain of *Digitalis purpurea* and the other is *D. purpurea* 'Camelot Lavender', which is a completely new introduction to the garden. The latter is an early flowering variety and aims to harmonise with *Tulipa* 'Blue Aimable', the most beautiful late flowering tulip in long-lasting shades of mauve.

You may have noticed that our under-planting to the tulips and alliums has slightly moved away from the much loved seas of forget-me-nots and wallflowers of previous years. This year our spring display with its purple-mauve colour scheme will be peaking in late April to May. But don't worry, your early spring colour fix will be from the masses of crocuses in our newly developed meadow, tree circles filled with daffodils and a 70 metre drift of viola and bellis along the War of the Roses border.

Anyway, whatever the winter will hold for us, we already know that we are starting our gardening year with a trend; coincidentally purple is the chosen trend colour for 2015, established by a recent survey of BBC Gardeners' Question Time.

