

GARDEN NEWS

AN APPETITE FOR SPRING



ANDREA BRUNSENDORF, HEAD GARDENER

This is one of my favourite seasons in the Garden – not because it is wet, muddy and cold, but because it is time for reflection, dreaming and gambling. Reflection as I think about what has or has not worked over the past year. Dreaming of how the changes I am making will look. Gambling that some tender plants will survive whatever a Central London winter throws at us. But most of all I love looking forward to the spring.

What I am sure of is that along the ‘War of the Roses’ border there will be another spectacular display of tulips, again underplanted with forget-me-nots, but instead of the unforgettable show of the ‘China Pink’ we used last year, you will see a dazzling display of orange and red with ‘Ballerina’ and ‘Red Shine’.

What I am not so sure about is what success we may have with the number of crocus bulbs we have planted. We are in fact conducting a trial, as the ubiquitous London pigeon considers a yellow crocus an epicurean delight – worse, he will even chomp his way through the yellow stamens of a blue or purple crocus – so we have put in a great variety to discover which can withstand such an appetite,

and we will then choose the best pigeon-resistant ones to populate the banks of the Garden in the future. Another trial we are running is with several different types of miniature daffodil, set under various trees, with the intention that the best-performing of them will then be planted along the Broadwalk. Whichever varieties prove to be the strongest, you will have the cheering sight of the beautiful, delicate cups and trumpets to lighten the bleak winter months.

We are also in the midst of preparing the High Border for another colourful season after its triumph this summer. Vibrant tulips and alliums will be the heralds, followed by the combinations which satisfied me this year together with new varieties, new combinations, new colours. After all, if you don’t try to ring the changes you will never know what might have been.

These are the thoughts and challenges which make the wet and cold days seem far from miserable, and fill me with expectation and excitement for the coming year in the Inner Temple Garden.



FIT FOR AN EMPEROR

HILARY HALE, GARDEN VOLUNTEER

There has been an increase lately in the number of men visiting the gardeners’ yard, proving the truth of the saying that ‘every man needs a shed’, as they pause to admire the handsome new tractor shed. It is a satisfying reaction to a project which has involved much expertise and professionalism to bring to fruition.

When it was agreed that a new and larger home was needed for the various pieces of garden machinery, our architect, Henry Thompson, and our surveyor, Rod Cunliffe, deploying patience, industry and diplomacy, saw the project through the lengthy planning process, triumphantly gaining approval for the first new building to be erected in the Inner Temple for several decades. Soon afterwards the contractors arrived. A couple of well-placed blows saw the old shed bite the dust and then it rained. And it went on raining. For some days the only activity was the pacing

of architect, surveyor and contractor sending angry glances at the relentless covering of grey cloud. The gardeners wheeled their barrows round the site, wondering if a swimming pool had been ordered rather than a shed.

Eventually the skies cleared and, under the steady control of Paul Simmonds, the Inn’s Works Supervisor, foundations were finished, walls erected and the cedar roof completed, its crowning glory. It makes one smile, the corners of one’s mouth turning up to echo the shape of its eaves. It hints of the east, of the skyline of the Forbidden City. A Chinese functionary might have been tempted to add a lion, or perhaps Pegasus, at each corner, but such embellishment would detract from its nature. It is a shed, plain and simple, and one to satisfy the yearnings of every man, even an emperor.