

# GARDEN NEWS

## COLOUR SCHEMES

ANDREA BRUNSENDORF, HEAD GARDENER

It was a chance inquiry during the lunch hour which made me ponder on how colours and their associations mean different things to different people.

A passer-by asked me if the combination of the yellow tulip ‘Westpoint’ and the blue of forget-me-nots along the War of the Roses border was in honour of Sweden or of Ikea. Neither, I thought, they were just a perfect combination to mark the arrival of spring with vibrant, shimmering colour and fragrance, but thanked him for his observation and appreciation. I turned back to my tasks in the High Border, taking out other tulips which have given us such a vivacious display, and as I envisaged the electric blue of *Salvia* ‘Indigo Spire’ beside the flaming rose ‘Florence May Morse’ which would replace them, I wondered which national flag or corporate logo they might resemble. Perhaps, though, the plants themselves might inspire a passing president or CEO in the throes of re-branding themselves.

My thoughts don’t usually veer to such flights of fancy as I set out the plants which will fill that border with colour through the summer. I concentrate on mixing as full a palette as possible through the deep beds, excited by the thought of the poppy ‘Lauren’s Grape’, only just introduced into English gardens from America, punctuating the blue-purples of *Dahlia* ‘Magenta Star’ and the lively reds of the dahlias ‘Bishop of Llandalf’ and ‘Dovegrove’. I take care to weave in the multi-shades of orange which no summer can be without – the exuberance of *Tithonia* ‘Torch’, the more muted ‘David Howard’ dahlia – together with a range of orange Cosmos, including some varieties I discovered on one of my visits to RHS Garden Wisley. Nearly all of these have come from our own nursery, many propagated from seed in our smart new greenhouse, and others nursed through the winter in our cold frames.

The colour orange has enlightened many corners of the garden since the winter, especially in the containers around the pond, where the tulip ‘General De Wet’ has shimmered in that shady spot, a vibrant variety which the Dutch named in celebration of their

famed commander during the Boer War, though I do wonder how he might have reacted to being superseded by the fiery red *Begonia bertini* ‘Skaugum’ from Japan which will flourish there in high summer.

I wonder, too, whether an appreciative passer-by will know that when the garish primary colours of *Zinnia elegans* ‘Benary’s Giant Mix’ replace the Swedish/Ikea colours that they bear echoes of my origins. These were first bred in 1843 by a seedsman in my home town of Erfurt, a descendant of the people Martin Luther described as ‘the gardeners of the Holy Roman Empire’, the people who provided the world with woad, the first to give the world a proper representation of blue. Luther would have spoken those words about the time that the first embankment was built to protect the settlement of the Inner Temple from the tides of the Thames, a structure which led to the creation of this great garden and its centuries of providing ever-changing tapestries of colour to enlighten the lives of all who pass through it.

All the garden’s history can be found in the Inn’s recently published guide *The Great Garden* by Hilary Hale, not just its shape and contents, but details of those who have managed and cared for this precious space. If you’ve not yet had a chance to read it, hurry to the Treasury Office to get your own copy while stocks last!

