

Time to Polish the Silver

Barry Grain, head gardener at Cholmondeley Castle considers a re-vamp for the Silver Jubilee garden



The start of a new growing season is always an exciting time for me. A change in the air means a spring in the step, and is the perfect time to consider the re-vamp of a bed or border. The silver garden has been a feature of the castle terraces at Cholmondeley since 1977 when it was first planted to mark Queen Elizabeth's silver jubilee. Indeed the location for such a concept is perfect with our Cheshire sand, coupled with the south facing aspect, protection from low Yew hedges and a lower elevation than the main terrace surrounding it. The new garden was planted with traditional favourites such as Santolina, Lavandula, Artemisia and Brachyglottis to name a few. But also with other interesting selections such as Exochorda x macrantha 'The Bride', Potentilla fruticosa and Rosa rubrifolia.



However after many years the planting is looking tired and unsure of itself, and as plants have been 'lost' over the years and replaced with other choices the planting has lost its rhythm.

And so time for change as of this spring with the some of the hardier plants going in late march with the tender subjects being planted a few weeks later on. We decided to keep the silver theme but adopt a much more exciting plant list and style whilst trying to add some extra fragrances to this area. Some of our better plants are being lifted and re-sited in different positions.



Mounds of silver foliage created by Santolina chamaecyparissus, Artemisia 'Lambrook Silver' Lavandula 'Hidcote' are punctuated by the upright panicles of Salvia aethiopis and Salvia argentea and the long flowering Lychnis coronaria 'Alba'. The arching stems of Atriplex halimus add to the relaxed feel whilst Helianthemum 'Wisley White' and Rhodiola rosea cascade the upper to lower beds. Rosmarinus 'Miss Jessops Upright' mark the entrance points and will add scents as people brush past them. At the base of the woolly leaved Buddleja crispa sit Olearia x scilloniensis a small shrub which flowers for an extraordinary length of time, and other curiosities can be found in the form of Leptospermum 'Silver Sheen', Chilotrichum diffusum and Prostanthera cuneata. This is the first of many exciting projects at Cholmondeley over the coming years. In the meanwhile I hope that this spring is kind to one and all, and that one and all enjoy their gardens

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