

Notes on the Garden: The Yellow Border

In the height of summer, the profusion of carmine pink flowers from Rosa 'American Pillar' frames the arched gateway into the Carolean Garden. This garden, enclosed within 17th century walls is composed of a number of elements, of which we will focus just on the Yellow Border here.

The border runs along the north wall which has heating flues built within, the 'bulge' of which can be seen in the wall behind. A brick two storey gazebo at the end of this border was built some time in the 1660s-1670s. The flue runs horizontally along the wall, and the little fireplace for heating can still be seen today. Cultivating tender fruit was a way of emphasising status in the 17th and 18th centuries, and this heating system would have helped to protect the fruit trees that once grew here, which may have included peaches.

This border is a real show stopper from late spring onwards, and is an excellent example of Packwood's 'mingled style.' This is a style that has its roots in the Victorian era, with the famous garden designer and author JC Loudon describing it best in his 1822 *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*:

The object here is to display a gay assemblage of colours during the season of flowers, without much regard to variety of form...employ such plants as produce large heads, or masses of flowers; ... plant an equal number of every colour, and... a variety in regard to time of flowering...

This 'mingled style' of planting has been adapted to create a more contemporary version. We still plant in small groups, or use single plants repeatedly. The visual impact is still emphasised by the contrasts in flower colour and the rhythm created by the way the plants are arranged. However, plants are not repeated at too regular an interval as this could look monotonous, and we don't focus on using only historically correct plants.

This allows us to have a more flexible approach to choosing which plants we want to add, although old favourites such as *Helenium*, *Sidalcea* and *Solidago* still flourish and provide important structure, creating a towering effect. Although we don't rely on bedding plants for most of the year, planting tulips, Imperial fritillaries and wallflowers ensures variety in the display and something to delight visitors from earlier in the season – even if the fritillaries do have an unpleasant stink!

Looking after this style of planting is hugely labour intensive, and requires a great deal of horticultural skill from the garden team at Packwood. Not only do we have to lift, divide and replant each year, there is also the important task of supporting the plants through 'pea sticking,' and making sure we have a constant supply of back up plants available in our nursery. Yet, when the golden light of a glorious summer day falls on this border, I think you'll agree that all that hard work was definitely worth it!

By Robyn Booth