

FEAST YOUR EYES

DINE OUTSIDE IN A MARCUS BARNETT GARDEN AT SCOTT'S, LONDON'S TOP SPOT FOR FISH (SCOTT'S-RESTAURANT.COM)

WHAT STICKLERS

OVER ITS 22 METRES THE STEEL RILL WAS FOUND TO BE JUST 1.5MM OUT – HOW ANNOYING FOR CROCUS

evokes a childhood spent in the Essex countryside. By **Stephen Lacey**



The gentle sound of water, falling over the infinity edge of the rill, can also be heard from the sitting area, which is backed by a second wall-relief and furnished with angular modern seating by Kettal of Spain. The gravel here gives textural contrast to the smooth slabs of grey Italian Basaltite stone, which forms the garden's two main cross paths. Variation in texture also comes from the hedges, with the sharply clipped, fresh green hornbeam – "a fantastic leaf and colour, and a great foil for the dark osmanthus" – repeated within the garden and set

against feathery cubes of yew and loose runs of rosemary. Further contrast comes from the diminutive Irish moss (*Sagina subulata*) that fills the raised beds under the osmanthus trees with its mossy hummocks of light green. This plant enjoys good drainage. The garden also has beds of green perennials. Drifts of *Deschampsia* grasses blend with hazy fennel, *Cenolophium demudatum* (a white-flowered umbellifer similar to cow parsley), and the more robust, rounded wood spurge, *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*.



Modern times (from left to right): designer Marcus Barnett during construction; the garden planting team Harriet Parsons and Rachel Garrod; outdoor furniture by Kettal in front of the textured concrete wall



Each monochrome block, crisply edged in steel as part of the garden's grid, contains between six and nine varieties of perennial. "This is to give an interesting selection of colour tones as well as shapes," says Marcus. "Where plants are repeated in other areas of the garden they are in different mixes for further variety, and there is an assortment of heights. Each colour is delivered in equal volume throughout, and they play against each other in varied combinations. I haven't gone for different habitats – all the plants will take average soil and light conditions."

The cast of red perennials includes pincushion-flowered *astrantia*, saucer-shaped *geum*, the sumptuous blood-red peony 'Buckeye Belle', and *Dianthus cruentus*, which has elegant heads of bright red flowers on slender stems. The yellows feature phloxes, limy *Euphorbia palustris*, daisy-flowered *Doronicum x excelsum* 'Harpur Crewe', and stunning Itoh peonies, the result of crosses between tree and herbaceous peonies.

Catmint, geranium and bugle are among the blues, together with deep violet-blue *Iris bulleyana*. And the whites include *Hesperis matronalis alba*, *Polemonium reptans* 'White Pearl', white foxgloves and the handsome *Thalictrum* 'Splendide

White', which has aquilegia-like foliage and produces clouds of pure white flowers from tall wiry stems.

As Marcus recognises, this highly stylised planting is a bold undertaking. "It very much goes against current trends. Almost every garden at Chelsea these days features naturalistic drift planting."

But monochrome planting was savoured and practised by some of the greatest artist gardeners of the late 19th and early 20th century – Gertrude Jekyll, Lawrence Johnston of Hidcote and Vita Sackville-West of Sissinghurst among them.

"I am very excited about the idea of revisiting it. Chelsea is all about taking risks. And I want to try to do something new by setting the strong colours against each other to make a dynamic pattern, rather than – as you see at Hidcote and Sissinghurst – keeping the colours apart with lawns and hedges. Perhaps it will prompt visitors to experiment with monochrome patterns, too. But mostly I hope they will like it," he says.

✦ Garden built by crocus.co.uk; water features by Andrew Ewing; concrete feature walls by Graphic Relief. Plants grown by crocus.co.uk and Orchard Dene Nurseries. Stone from AllGreen Group; steel by DJE Fabrication and Engineering; lighting by John Cullen.

THE PLAN

Blocks of bold colour contained within a modern grid



Blues

Anchusa azurea
'Loddon Royalist'
Aquilegia vulgaris
Catananche caerulea
Iris bulleyana
Myosotis sylvatica
Polemonium yezoense
'Bressingham Purple'
Viola cornuta

Yellows

Achillea filipendulina
'Cloth of Gold'
Alchemilla erythropoda

Allium moly
Doronicum x excelsum
'Harpur Crewe'
Euphorbia oblongata
Paeonia 'Bartzella'
Verbascum
'Gainsborough'

Reds

Achillea millefolium
'Red Velvet'
Dianthus cruentus
Geum 'Mrs J Bradshaw'
Heuchera
'Red Spangles'

Impenata cylindrica
'Rubra'
Papaver commutatum
'Ladybird'
Tulipa 'Red Hat'

Whites

Acanthus mollis
(Latifolius Group)
'Rue Ledan'
Delphinium
(Belladonna Group)
'Casa Blanca'
Iris sibirica 'White Swirl'
Myosotis sylvatica

Thalictrum 'Splendide White'
Tulipa 'Spring Green' and 'Clearwater'

Trees

Osmanthus x burkwoodii

Hedges

Carpinus betulus
Taxus baccata

✦ NB: Final plant choices are subject to change.

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