

A contemporary vision

Leigh Clapp meets Donna Taplin and Stephen Paul Reilly of Greenes of Sussex Garden Design to learn more about their beautiful and functional designs that combine the traditional with the modern

GREENES of Sussex have been designing gardens since 1999 and I was pleased to see their first show garden at RHS Hampton Court 2011, The Stone Roses Garden, win a Silver-Gilt Award. Its blend of classic and contemporary elements in a courtyard space inspired me to find out more about the designers and their work.

Stephen Paul Reilly has had a distinguished career in the field, stretching back 18 years. After completing a BSc (Hons) in Landscape and Garden Design and an HND (Hons) in Landscape Construction, he has had long-standing collaborations with some of the stars of the gardening world, including Andy Sturgeon and Diarmuid Gavin, and has won many awards for his designs and plantings, including two gold and one silver gilt for three Chelsea Show Gardens. He has also run his own plant nursery and landscape construction company, worked on *Groundforce* and advised Sir Terence Conran.

Donna Taplin gained a BSc (Hons) in Landscape and Garden Design in 1997 and the following couple of years saw her training with the National Trust and Cambridge University Botanic Gardens as well as working as a garden designer and plantswoman, advising on schemes also for the likes of Alan Titchmarsh, Diarmuid Gavin and the Chelsea Flower Show. She is currently following a passion for growing vegetables, having studied Organic Kitchen Garden at West Dean, and is planning a series of lectures on design, planting and veg gardening to encourage people to bring them easily into their lives.

With such combined talent it is no wonder that Greenes has built a reputation for excellence; designing gardens in the South, London and abroad. They offer design, build and maintenance packages and can include lighting, irrigation and even sourcing furniture and other accessories. "Our design ethos at Greenes embodies our love of good proportion, function and the arts. We are known for the strong structure and sense of enclosure and safety in our gardens," comments Donna.

The pair cites inspiration from a range of luminaries, including writer Nan Fairbrother, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, plantsman Piet Oudolf and sculptor Henry Moore. "Our favourite gardens include Athelhampton in Dorset, Parc Citroen in Paris and West Dean here in Sussex. Random things can also influence us; crop circles, chaos theory, large public spaces excite us, postmodernism and light," adds Donna.

Their show garden at RHS Hampton Court allowed them to include the most representative elements of their style. "Beautiful, romantic planting within a strong framework dressed with the best materials and furniture, and of course a piece of sculpture," they explain. Attention to detail is also important in their home gardens and they enjoy designing all sizes – from tiny roof terraces and courtyards to large country gardens. "We work closely with our clients to enhance and realise the full potential of a garden, optimising the available space to landscape and build gardens that are stunning but practical," Stephen adds.

This expert duo have recently expanded their business with a second office at Wych Cross Garden Centre, splitting their time with three days a week there and the other two at their original Keymer office. One of the joys of living and working in Sussex is access to the countryside. "We absolutely love the magical landscape of the Downs and gorgeous Sussex villages. We are particularly fond of Wolstenbury Hill, lunch at The Ginger Fox and the prehistory of dinosaur remains in the chalk downland," Donna comments.

Get in touch

Greenes of Sussex
www.greenesofsussex.com
email: info@greenesofsussex.com
tel: 07876 795121

Donna and Stephen's tips for 2012

- Clear out any old brown conifers such as *leylandii* which are sucking the life out of your garden
- Open up long views, making the most of borrowed landscapes
- Ditch containers where possible to minimise watering
- Buy some seeds and try and grow them! Discover the satisfaction of growing some veg – even if it's just tomatoes in a hanging basket
- If you have the space, try and leave some natural habitats for insects and small creatures such as leaf piles and rotting wood



Clockwise from above: Deep, rich planting links to the golf course beyond this client's garden. Donna and Stephen enjoy creating attractive, functional gardens. Signature plants include agastache and ornamental grasses. Crabapples contrast with mauve asters. Romantic planting softens the modern water feature. Roses sourced from Wych Cross Rose Nursery combined with wafting grasses in the Stone Roses Garden. The Hampton Court Stone Roses Garden was a modern interpretation of a classic English garden.

