

# Factsheet

## Hampton Court Palace Gardens and Estate

- The gardens of Hampton Court Palace comprise 60 acres of formal gardens and 750 acres of royal parkland, tended by a team of 38 gardeners and specialists.
- 200,000 flowering bulbs are planted in total throughout the formal gardens each year.
- 140,000 plants are grown in the nurseries each year.
- There are around 8,000 trees in the gardens and estate.
- The Palace houses the National Collection of *heliotropus arborescens*.
- At 580 metres, the Broad Walk herbaceous border is the longest in Britain and in summer is filled with phlox, delphiniums and dahlias sedums among others.
- We recycle 95% of our green waste!

## The South Gardens

### The Privy Garden

- By the mid-sixteenth century there were Privy (private) Gardens at all the main royal palaces to provide the Sovereign with security and privacy away from the affairs of State.
- The first Privy Garden at Hampton Court Palace was laid out between 1530 and 1538 for King Henry VIII. The garden covered an area of just over 61m x 91m and was split into two areas. One of these contained brass sundials and numerous statues of heraldic beasts on poles. The other contained a bowling alley, a magnificent domed banqueting house and the Water Gallery which provided a landing stage from the Thames.
- The German, Thomas Platter, who was shown the Privy Garden towards the end of Elizabeth I's reign in 1599, described his impressions of the topiary: 'There were all manner of shapes, men and women, centaurs, sirens, serving maids with baskets, French lilies and delicate crenellations...trimmed and arranged picture-wise that their equal would be difficult to find.'
- Between 1599 and 1659 the layout of the garden was changed from the

# Historic Royal Palaces HAMPTON COURT PALACE

elaborate heraldic Tudor garden to four grass plats containing fine statuary.

- In 1689 William and Mary began to rebuild Henry VIII's royal lodgings in the more fashionable Baroque style of the continental courts. Raised terraces were built around the parterre of the Privy Garden and the plain grass plats were cut into forms known as gazon coupé - intricate patterns cut into the turf with a background of sand or gravel.
- By 1700 the rebuilding of the King's and Queen's Apartments was complete. The Tudor water gallery was demolished and the Privy Garden was lengthened to its present size, covering an area of three acres. A wrought iron screen designed by Jean Tijou was constructed at the south end and clipped yews were placed on the east and west terraces. The gazon coupé was laid out to a more sophisticated broderie design and pyramidal yews and clipped round-headed hollies were incorporated.
- The elaborate parterre of William III's time survived with minor alterations until the mid-eighteenth century. The changing fashion, however, turned against the controlled formality of the Baroque garden and William's garden became less formal. The yews and hollies were retained but were no longer clipped into shape and the statuary was removed.
- By the mid-nineteenth century, William and Mary's broderie had completely disappeared under the spreading canopy of trees, providing an informal and shady haven for visitors, rather than a private retreat for a king.
- Much of the original layout of the Privy Garden was revealed through a combination of archaeological and historical research during the 1995 restoration, which returned William III's garden to its 1702 state. Historical accuracy governed the design of the garden, from the elaborate broderie to the very flowers and shrubs which once grew there. The Privy garden contains 33,000 box plants, topiary and Queen Mary's Bower that survives from an earlier Privy Garden by William III and Mary II.
- The Privy Garden was re-opened to the public on 6th July 1995 by HRH the Prince of Wales, after four years of detailed research and restoration.

## **The Tender Exotics Collection**

- When William III and Mary II became joint monarchs in 1689, they brought to the English Court a passion for collecting and for displaying collections - from

porcelain and rare birds to tender exotic plants. Queen Mary II in particular loved plants from all over world and exotics from the Mediterranean, Virginia, Mauritius and the New World, were brought to Britain by the Dutch East India Company and displayed at Hampton Court Palace.

- Mary II selected an area in the South Gardens, the warmest part of the gardens and formally Henry VIII's pond yard, to set out her collection. A specialist Dutch carpenter, Heindrik Floris, built three glass houses or 'stove houses', believed to be amongst the earliest forms of greenhouse used in England. The fish ponds were landscaped, drained and terraced in order to display the exotics during the summer months.
- Mary's collection comprised 2000 different species and was so vast that she employed her own botanist, Dr Leonard Plukenet, to look after them. Dr Plukenet detailed, catalogued and maintained the exotics. At this point, the collection was one of the largest private collections of tender exotic plants in the world. It contained 1000 orange trees – a symbol of the House of Orange dynasty, to which William III belonged.
- Upon Mary II's death in 1694, William III removed the glass houses and ordered Christopher Wren to construct the Lower Orangery in 1701-2. It was used later to house an art collection, Andrea Mantegna's Triumphs of Caesar, which can still be seen here today.
- Following William III's death in 1702, the collection was maintained throughout the reigns of Queen Anne and the Georgian monarchs. By the time of George III in 1760, the collection of exotics was deemed unfashionable. Remnants of the collection survived however and there is evidence of orange trees being displayed at Hampton Court Palace into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The collection died out during the First World War, as the war effort and lack of manpower meant relevant care and attention was not available.
- The re-introduction of tender exotics was inspired by the restoration of the Privy Garden in 1995. Exotics would have been a key element of this particular layout and, since 1987, the Gardens and Estate team, have collected exotic plants through partnerships, both with local nurseries and British and European suppliers.
- Visitors to Hampton Court Palace between June and September can now see the exotics, which include orange trees from the citrus collection, along with

aloes, agaves and lantarnas, displayed in the Privy Garden as they would have been in the early 18th century.

## **The Great Vine**

- More than 230 years old and over 36.5 metres long, the Great Vine at Hampton Court Palace is the oldest and largest known vine in the world. It was believed to have been planted by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown around 1768, during his time as Surveyor to George III's Gardens and Waters.
- The oldest plant in the garden is the Great Vine. It started as a small cutting from the Black Hamburg vine at Valentine's Park in Essex (which no longer survives).
- The Great Vine was first planted in a glasshouse built to house Queen Mary's collection of exotics from the tropics. Its roots were planted outside and its branches trained inside the glasshouse, which measured 18 metres by 4 metres. By the 1790s the vine was thriving so much that the glasshouse had to be lengthened by a further 3.5 metres.
- The current aluminium vine house was built in 1969, and incorporated the wrought-iron Victorian supports. The re-building was unique as it was the first time a glasshouse was built around a plant. Both the frame that supports the Vine and the viewing gallery (still used by the general public) come from an earlier 19th-century wooden vine house.
- In 1800 the girth of the trunk was 330 millimetres. In 1887 it was already 4 foot around the base; it is now 12 foot around the base and the longest rod is 120'.
- The vine was first shown to the public in the 1840s when Queen Victoria opened the gardens to the public.
- The vine usually blossoms in early May with small and fragrant flowers.
- The crop is usually harvested in September and it takes the Vine Keeper around three weeks to remove all the grapes. It produces a crop of between 500 and 700 bunches of grapes (between 220-320 kilograms). The largest recorded crop of grapes from the vine were 1,800 bunches in 1798 and 2,245 bunches in 1807.
- The grapes, which are black and sweet, have always been used by the Royal household as dessert grapes, grown specifically for the table. In 1930, however, George V started sending the grapes to hospitals and, within five

years, they were being sold to visitors to the Palace. Today the full crop of black eating grapes is sold to visitors in the Palace shops in late summer or early autumn.

- In 1933 the grapes were 6 shillings per pound. A shilling of this went towards the baskets in which they were sold and these were specially made by soldiers blinded in the First World War.

## **The Pond Gardens**

- These sunken gardens were used for holding freshwater fish prior to cooking in Henry VIII's kitchens.
- The ponds were filled, landscaped and terraced in William III's era and used to display Queen Mary II's collection of exotics.

## **The North Gardens**

### **The Wilderness**

- The term 'wilderness' refers to a place to wander, rather than an uncultivated area of garden. William III would have walked through the wilderness at Hampton Court Palace with his devoted wife Mary II. It would have comprised 18ft high hornbeam hedges, with interstices planted with elm.
- The Wilderness was the English version of a French 'bosquet'. The high hedges, secluded benches and winding paths made it a place where members of the royal Court could go for privacy and where gentlemen in particular could entertain ladies in private.
- Today, there are over 1 million bulbs planted in the Wilderness alone.
- Sir Christopher Wren drew plans for William III and Mary II, for a Grand North Approach to their new Baroque palace. The proposed scheme would have joined Bushy Park with Hampton Court Palace and visitors would have approached the palace through the long avenue in Bushy Park and past the Diana Basin to the Lion Gates. The scheme remained unfinished by the time of William III's death in 1702 but Diana's basin was later completed by Queen Anne.
- The need to cut costs following William III's death meant that Queen Anne was unable to complete the rest of the plans. This would have meant demolishing the remaining Tudor Palace and re-designing the Wilderness to extend the

avenue from Bushy Park, creating a new approach to the Palace that was intended to rival that of Versailles.

## The Maze

- There were at least two mazes originally planted in the Wilderness garden of which the current maze is the only survivor.
- Hampton Court Palace's world-famous maze is the most visited attraction in the gardens. It was originally planted in hornbeam in 1690 for King William III, probably by Royal gardeners London and Wise.
- The maze is trapezoidal in shape, covers an area of one third of an acre and consists of 1/2 miles of paths. It takes an average 20 minutes to reach the centre.
- The maze was planted as part of the Wilderness. It is the first hedge planted maze in Great Britain and now the only part remaining of the original Wilderness area.
- Hedge mazes flourished in Britain up to the eighteenth century, until Lancelot 'Capability' Brown introduced natural landscaping and, in order to achieve his sweeping views, destroyed many formal garden features. Ironically, as Royal Gardener for twenty years, he lived alongside the maze at Hampton Court, but was expressly ordered not to interfere with it.
- Around 330,000 people go in and, eventually, out of the maze every year.
- One of Jerome K Jerome's Three Men in a Boat declared the maze very simple... 'it's absurd to call it a maze, only to become completely lost.'
- In 2005 internationally renowned sound artists Greyworld were commissioned to create a permanent art installation for Hampton Court's maze. They created an artwork entitled *Trace*, which drew on the idea of the palace's historic maze as a place of furtive conversation and flirtation. This gentle soundwork was designed to affect the visitors' experience of their journey through the labyrinth, enticing them along the green corridors, tempted by tantalising sounds – a fragment of music, a snatch of laughter, the seductive rustle of fine silks and the whispers of an illicit conversation – that disappear around the winding paths. Visitors who manage to find the centre of the maze can sit and relax on touch-sensitive benches that emit subtle sounds, enabling ambient contemplation of their journey into the maze as well as an opportunity to devise

a strategy out of it! With over a thousand self-generating sounds incorporated into the maze, visitors never experience the work in the same way twice.

## The East Gardens

- This area was parkland when Henry VIII was on the throne.
- It was landscaped under the Stuart monarchs and evolved into the Great Fountain Garden under William III: a 13-fountain parterre, framed by avenues of trees.
- The only remaining fountain today is the East Front Fountain, which once formed the centerpiece of William III's East Front landscape design. The fountain was refurbished in 2002 to provide an alternative display and complement to the Golden Jubilee Fountain in Home Park.
- Queen Anne disliked William's layout and replaced the neat box hedges with clipped yew trees, statues and wide lawns.

## Home Park

- Home Park covers an area of 750 acres and has remained unspoilt since it was first opened to the public in 1894. It has a rich and varied eco-system and provides a habitat for wildlife, including 300 fallow deer (descended from Henry VIII's original herd), 30-40 Ring-necked Parakeets and horses.
- The park houses a private golf course and is also the venue for the annual RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show - the largest show of its kind in the world.
- The oldest tree on the Hampton Court Palace estate is the medieval English oak in Home Park, which is said to be over 1,000 years old.
- The historic Long Water Avenue of lime trees was planted in the 1660's by King Charles II as a gift to his new bride, Catherine of Braganza. 544 lime trees (*Tilia Europaea Koningslinde*) originally flanked the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile Long Water Canal. A major conservation and restoration project to reinstate the historic vista of the Long Water Avenue was completed in May 2004 when HRH The Prince of Wales planted the last of 544 new lime trees that once again flank the central canal as Charles II would have known it.
- The Golden Jubilee Fountain, created at the end of the historic Long Water

Canal, was inaugurated in November 2002 by HM The Queen. It consists of five jets rising out of the eastern most end of the canal, the largest of which is 30 metres in height.