



## *Weathering the storm*

Visitors to The Walled Garden in March will have noticed some groundworks taking place on the nursery while our irrigation system was upgraded. This, coinciding with the effects that strong gales inevitably can cause on a tree nursery, may have inconvenienced some customers. We would like to thank our customers for their patience during this period.

Other work that has been carried out on the nursery over the past several months has included the construction of two more container units to help increase our production of container-grown trees and shrubs. Over the past year we have handled more sales to private individuals than ever before, so these new container units will help to support the increased demand for stock which can be planted at any time of year.



*New container unit.*

## *What a difference a day makes*

In January of this year we performed an ‘instant makeover’ of the garden of Mr and Mrs Raper in Filey. What made this job more unusual is that it started as a rental enquiry for a wedding held at the Downe Arms Hotel in December 2007.

On visiting The Walled Garden to discuss their requirements for plants, pots, lights and an arch to rent for the wedding, the soon-to-be Mr and Mrs Raper also discussed the bare garden of their new house. Following a site visit, the subsequent planting plan became the couple’s ‘wedding list’, to which wedding guests and well-wishers could contribute, either with a fixed sum or by purchasing a particular plant.



*From this ...*



*...to this, in a morning's work.*

Following the planting in January, what was a plain expanse of turf had, in a single morning, become a garden for the whole family to enjoy – one which by spring had already begun to attract wildlife. And for that extra personal touch, a couple of the items that had been rented for the wedding were included in the overall scheme as a memento of the event.

## *Plant focus – The Acer Family*

When you talk about ‘Acers’, to most people this conjures up images of the Japanese Maples (varieties of *Acer palmatum*). As beautiful as these are, the *Acer* genus is much broader, ranging from small garden plants to stately Sycamores, from the native Field or Hedge Maple to the strangely mop-headed *Acer pseudoplatanus* ‘Brilliantissimum’.

One of my favourite groups are the Norway Maples (varieties of *Acer platanoides*). The species form produces an attractive round crown and can grow almost as large as our native Sycamore, but is generally better behaved and doesn’t self-seed as prolifically. It bears fluffy clusters of golden-yellow flowers in spring, and has stunning autumn leaf colours of yellow, orange and red.

The more ornamental varieties are far less vigorous, most only growing to 10-15 metres tall when fully mature and, like all Norway Maples, can be pruned periodically to control their size. These more ornamental varieties vary in shape and habit, as well as in their foliage colour:

- ‘Emerald Queen’ has beautiful bright green, glossy leaves, tinged pink when first leafing-out, turning bright yellow in autumn;
- ‘Princeton Gold’ has golden-yellow leaves turning to a warmer butter-yellow colour in autumn;
- ‘Royal Red’ and ‘Crimson King’ have rich, burgundy-red leaves turning scarlet in autumn;
- ‘Crimson Sentry’ has leaves like ‘Crimson King’ but grows as a narrowly columnar tree;
- ‘Drummondii’ has bright green leaves with a wide creamy-white margin.

Norway Maples are excellent trees for a garden situation as they tolerate a wide range of soils and conditions (except for very wet sites). Even the ornamental varieties with coloured or variegated summer foliage are surprisingly tough and quick to establish, although ‘Drummondii’ and some others can sometimes suffer from wind burn in very exposed windy positions. As always, if unsure which trees would grow best on your site, please ask us for advice.



*Acer platanoides ‘Drummondii’  
Acer platanoides ‘Royal Red’*



## Martin's Tips for Summer

### Dealing with extremes: The answer is in the soil

It would be fair to say that recent summers have been somewhat varied! In fact, it's hard to say these days what the seasons will bring. For instance, summer 2006 was very hot and dry, followed by a very dry April in 2007. As late as May last year many were foretelling summer 2007 to be the hottest, and probably the driest on record. So what happened? Almost as if to spite the forecasters, we were hit with the wettest summer anyone can remember, bringing flooding and misery to thousands in our region.

One thing is for certain, climate change is happening. Whether you believe it to be just a natural part of the cycle of our planet, or caused by global warming due to our polluting lifestyles, it is happening. As a result, gardeners need to be adaptable in their thinking and be prepared to deal with extremes as best they can. Therefore, whether planning a garden from scratch, putting in a new border, or simply planning to refresh things a bit, take a little time to plan things first.

#### • Choose the right plants for your soil

– Consider the soil type (e.g. clay, chalky, sandy, etc), drainage, water table, etc, and decide whether it is (or more importantly if it can be in extreme conditions) particularly wet or dry.

– Look around at what will grow well in your area, but don't forget also to choose a plant that you like! Established trees are a good indicator of the underlying soil conditions – for instance Beech and Mountain Ash like good drainage so they will rarely grow for long in areas that regularly flood, Hornbeam is good on heavy soils if not too wet, Alder and Willow require a good supply of moisture and will tolerate wet areas.

– Avoid fussy plants unless you passionately want them and are prepared to look after them.

– Ask for advice – we're happy to help and advise.

#### • Prepare the site for planting:

– add organic matter to help retain moisture in rapidly-draining soils or to open up heavy soils – from a practical point of view a good compost heap or bin is the most important part of any garden!;

– mound or ridge planting in areas that flood help to raise up the level of plants' roots to prevent them from 'drowning' (but be aware that these are more prone to drying out in dry years, so choose tough plants);

– if planting on a slope, create planting tiers/shelves or even little 'dams' to help slow down the water as it runs down the slope, helping to make the water run down through the plant roots rather than across the top;

#### • Mulch to help reduce moisture loss from evaporation and keep weeds down to reduce competition.

#### • Plants will need watering until they are established.

– How often? – well that depends on the individual plants and on the soil conditions. Remember that overwatering has the same effect as waterlogging from flooding and is just as likely to kill most plants as drought, so water plants as and when they need it.

– Automatic watering systems can be excellent and are often more efficient in their use of water than watering by hand, but remember to pay attention to the weather and the underlying moisture content of the soil and adjust the frequency of watering as required.

– It's easy to get complacent about water after the summer of 2007, but it is important to treat water as a finite resource. Every garden should have at least one waterbutt in use, and one can use 'grey' water (bathwater and washing-up water) for watering beds and borders in dry spells. Water used for boiling vegetables, if not used elsewhere for cooking, is excellent for watering hanging baskets once cooled as it also contains nutrients that will feed the plants.

So what else can we do? Well, the best advice would be to use your best judgement and do what feels best at the time... keep your sun block next to your wellies and scarf and keep a weather eye out!

## Rental service for weddings and events

Further to the report in the last newsletter (Winter 07/08), our new rental service is going strong, with several firm bookings for this year, more expected as the year progresses, and a number of initial enquiries for 2009 and beyond!



Just to recap for anyone who missed it, for weddings and other special events, Wykeham Mature Plants now offer a hire service of plants. This includes topiary, arches, seasonal flowering shrubs, and basically anything from our stock range that can realistically be 'set up' at the site of your venue and then returned safely to the nursery afterwards. When we deliver and set up the plants, we can display them in attractive pots and even dress them with lights (practicalities allowing) if you wish.

As a further service for those planning a wedding, we are also happy to hold/produce a wedding list with the Bride and Groom. As part of this service, we would produce cards which can be sent out with the wedding invitations to notify guests of the arrangements regarding this plant list (which may also include contributions towards planting costs if our planting service is requested).

For further details on this or any other topic in the newsletter, please contact Martin Howe.

## Yorkshire Life's Garden of the Year Competition

Wykeham Mature Plants has teamed up with Yorkshire Life magazine to find the county's Garden of the Year. The first prize is £1000 worth of stock from Wykeham Mature Plants, as well as a £900 John Deere lawn mower from Bob Wild Grass Machinery of Halifax. To enter, if you live in Yorkshire, tell us in 100 words or less what makes your garden special and send this, together with at least one non-returnable photo to: Jane Ramsay at Yorkshire Life, 1200 Century Way, Thorpe Park, Leeds, LS15 8ZA. Contact Yorkshire Life magazine for full details and terms and conditions (closing date for entries: 30th June 2008). Good luck!

## Contact Details:

Wykeham Mature Plants is open to the public Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 4.30pm

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