

# The Mulch

## New Therapy Garden for Thrive in Reading

A highlight of the year for me was the opening of a new therapeutic garden for horticultural therapy charity, Thrive, by HRH Princess Alexandra in July.

The Secret Garden will enable Thrive therapists to work with two client groups with contrasting needs: young people with attention deficit disorders and older people with memory loss and other cognitive impairments.

The culmination of two years design and planning, the garden was built by volunteers, staff members and Graham Bell Landscape Design and Construction.

It was an enormous pleasure to design this flagship new garden for Thrive. It represents a high point in my ongoing work with organisations to create healing gardens that help to improve the health and care of patients, staff and service users.

There will be more pictures of the garden on my website shortly. To find out more about the therapeutic work carried out by Thrive across the country, visit: [www.thrive.org](http://www.thrive.org) or telephone 0118 988 5688. If you are interested in developing a therapeutic garden, then check out the BBC's 'Breathing Places' campaign for possible lottery funding: [www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/)



^ A view through the new Thrive therapeutic garden with the custom-designed Living Wall feature in the foreground and raised beds with trellis screen dividers in the centre of the garden. A cedar summerhouse in the top left of the picture doubles as an office, presentation space and shelter.

## Magnolias in Danger

A plea for gardeners to include a magnolia in their borders. Ever since I learned that this important family is on the Red List of 'critically endangered' plants, I've actively included magnolias in as many of my planting schemes as possible.

Magnolias are among the most ancient groups of flowering plants and have long been cultivated for their nutritional and medicinal value as well as their striking appearance.

Their habitats are under increasing threat. In the wild, more than half of magnolia species (131 out of 245) are in danger of extinction. For example, my favourite magnolia, (*M. stellata*) is vulnerable in the one small area of Japan where it grows naturally, due to land encroachment and development.

For further information about the Red List, where to see magnolias in the UK and how to take part in a global magnolia survey, visit [www.bgei.org](http://www.bgei.org).

Also, for further information on conservation efforts, visit a couple of useful websites: [www.fauna-flora.org](http://www.fauna-flora.org) and [www.globaltrees.org](http://www.globaltrees.org).



^ *Magnolia stellata* 'Waterlily' and *Magnolia sieboldii* subsp. *sinensis*

## Going Potty over Plastic

Ever wondered what to do with those old plastic plant pots and trays?

Well, there's a local end user who'd very much like to have them: local plastics recycling company, **Associated Polymers**, Castle Lane, North Baddesley, near Southampton.

To find out more, call Steve Griggs, transport manager, on 07899 672684. You can take them to the depot yourself or he can pick them up (there may be a charge for this).

He just asks that you separate trays from pots to make storage and handling easier. Allotment holders can usually recycle these items via their local association.

Would like more copies? Give feedback? Get in touch? Please email me at:

[mark@thegrowingcompany.co.uk](mailto:mark@thegrowingcompany.co.uk)

## A Touch of the Tropics

Five years ago, I planted up an exotic / tropical border along my garden's northern boundary to disguise a new development. The banana (*Musa basjoo*) quickly developed into a multi-stemmed thicket (it has been seriously cosseted) and this year the oldest, central stem flowered and fruited!



## Goodbye and Hello again!

Back in the spring, a gardening client in Exbury called me to let me know that his bamboo had started flowering. Based on what I thought I knew about this unusual happening, I suggested that it probably meant that the plant would now die.

Sure enough, the magnificent plant remained in a state of inactivity all summer long, with just its fluffy tufts of seedheads poking out from the nodes along the culms (see photo below).

That was until a few weeks ago. During one of my gardening visits, we both noticed that the centre of the plant had started to grow new leaves along the younger culms, from behind the seed tufts. Puzzled (and a little embarrassed about my earlier prognosis), I promised to find an explanation.

I found some useful information at [www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2175851](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2175851), which says that bamboos flower irregularly and sometimes over a two year period which can put enormous strain on the plant causing many to die as a result. Also, bamboos flower 'gregariously', meaning that different species often flower at the same time all over the world (probably as a result of cloning from the same plant).



Unusual flowering activity on an Exbury bamboo in the spring

printed on conservation grade recycled paper

## Cuttings...

**Where there's Muck there's Brass** - did you know that landscaped gardens can add, on average, 15% to the value of a property and nearly 80% of homebuyers are prepared to pay a premium for a house with a garden? (*Haart Estate Agency-Sep 07*).

**Snap Happy** - June and Trevor Parkinson from East Hampshire, have been visited by Leigh Clapp, freelance photographer for a spread on their garden in February's **Hampshire Life** magazine.

**Spread 'em!** - A quick plug for a wonderful site on the internet that is the 'ebay of seed swapping': [www.seedypeople.co.uk](http://www.seedypeople.co.uk).

**Touchy Feely** - Some vindication for those of us who admit to talking to plants. Scientists in South Korea believe they have found a set of "sound responsive genes" in plants that may affect the way they grow. (*The Scotsman 30.08.07*)

**Red Cross Go Green** - I'm supporting the British Red Cross Hampshire Open Gardens Scheme 2008. For more details, visit:

[www.redcross.org.uk/opengardens](http://www.redcross.org.uk/opengardens)

## And some website news...

**A Real Page Turner** - the website is undergoing a much needed update. I'll be rearranging pages, deleting others and adding loads of new ones all to make the process of getting across more succinctly my whole approach to designing and making a garden. Thanks to Gary in Poole and Chris in Eastleigh for all their help.

**A La Carte** - I've been busy cooking up a series of easy to follow garden border 'recipes' based on some of the borders I've planted up. They'll be available as downloads shortly.

**Freeze Frame for Hot Border** - Winchester plantswoman, Jane Hughes, allowed me to photograph one of her borders each month this year. Check out the website shortly for Jane's commentary accompanying the photographic sequence from February to November this year. A fascinating project. Thanks, Jane!

**Digging up the Past** - a gallery of unused sketches and designs will be uploaded onto a new 'Plan Chest' area shortly. I'm putting up older plans (more than 5 years old), sketches and design tenders and talking about the stories behind the concepts and layouts.

**Logo A Gogo** - keen eyed colleagues and clients will also notice a shift to another logo in the new year!

**Mark Rendell**  
garden designer

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