



ALL IMAGES: TAYLOR TRIPP ASSOCIATES

TAYLOR TRIPP ASSOCIATES

Sensitive appreciation of the landscape and a respect for ecology unites the work of Nicholas Tripp and Richard Taylor. **Anne Hardy** met them to find out more about their design philosophy and work



Left and below left: Views into a 2ha Hampshire garden completed in 2003 for an old rectory. The garden's formality complements the property's gothic revivalist architecture. *Stipa gigantea* screens a tennis court. Below right and bottom: Axonometric drawing and view into a 0.8ha Hampshire garden created in 2004. Taylor Tripp Associates worked closely with Robert Adam Architects as the original Victorian property was extended and refurbished. The terrace links a new pool house to the main property.



Nicholas Tripp and Richard Taylor work from a converted barn at Beauworth, east of Winchester in Hampshire. They have both lived and worked for most of their lives in this rural environment. Their fondness for and their appreciation of this part of the world is an important factor informing their work. "There is something very special about this part of the country," explains Tripp, "It is distinctive but also quite delicate. It's a place you are always happy to return to."

Nature, nurture and the landscape

Taylor and Tripp predominantly work on the design, build and planting for large country houses and estates. They consider themselves lucky to be working with clients who are comfortable with generous budgets and ambitious projects. "I like the scale of what we are doing and the fact that people will enjoy it for generations to come," comments



DESIGNER PROFILE: Taylor Tripp Associates

Historical landscape assessments

Many of their larger country projects require the completion of a historical landscape assessment. Tripp says: "I enjoy doing the historical landscape assessments. It is becoming a more important component of our work, not only helpful to the estate itself, but using the information to fulfil our obligations to the planners and other bodies like English Heritage."

Putting together a picture of a garden involves using the internet, old maps, working with Ordnance Survey, research at council offices, as well as documents at historical gardens trusts. This is all-important information that ensures any work executed only enhances the estate. Old receipts and accounts can help indicate what the garden was originally like and are a valuable way to find the correct materials, perhaps pointing the way to a local quarry and how the stone should be worked, or how to replicate special hinges for certain doors on the estate. "All this knowledge is beneficial," adds Tripp. "Everything was usually done for a good reason and so by paying attention we can avert mistakes and avoid wasting money."



Above: Broadlands, near Romsey in Hampshire, an estate garden under Taylor Tripp Associates management, is in the midst of a considered redesign programme. The grass in the south garden is mown to echo the footprint of the original Nessfield parterre, of which the pool formed the centrepiece.

Tripp. This longevity appeals to them both and they always ask their clients if their home is 'for life'. Taylor further explains: "It is a wonderful feeling knowing that the client can spend the next 20 years developing the design. We design with this very much in mind, incorporating garden rooms that can be built year after year but don't look discordant in the process."

The absolute antithesis of this is the work they undertook when the business was in its infancy. Initially, they were designing and building small gardens in the Basingstoke and Winchester area. "It was demoralising in that after three years or so, with new owners, many gardens were changed or let go. Few survive," says Taylor.

This is no longer the case. Their current clients are prepared to commit a significant investment of time and money to their projects. From this a good,



long-term working relationship develops, which in turn lends itself to successfully involving the client in the educational process of looking after the garden. "We are always looking beyond the immediate build of the project to make sure that strategies are in place so that the garden is properly maintained. It is an important aspect of our work, something we are passionate about and understand very well," explains Tripp.

In the early years, alongside design and build, they undertook a great deal of maintenance work for large country houses, employing up to 22 people. Tripp recalls: "Maintenance work served us well. It is where we learned our craft and experimented with planting. Importantly, it is when our clients began to ask us to design. Now we have sufficient design work we don't have a maintenance side to our practice, although many of our employees have gone on to set up their own businesses which we now recommend our clients to."

Passionate planting

With one full-time gardener where there may have been four, years ago, it is a constant challenge for the pair to create gardens of real interest. Their ambition is to create something that is timeless but also has vibrancy and is 'of now'. To



Left and page 22: Images of a Taylor Tripp Associates project in Hampshire. The work, begun in 2005, has seen sensitive complete replanting of an original Lutyens-Jekyll garden, which included a sunken pool (left). Views out to the surrounding countryside have been carefully preserved. Below: Sketch of a proposed lime walk for a major new country build. Richard Taylor and Paula Downard work up free-hand sketches by overlaying tracing paper on photos. The sketches are used to bid for a job. On winning a contract and completing the necessary surveys, sketches are replaced by CAD drawings.

be chosen for a scheme, each plant must have the ability to perform successfully in a number of ways. Their schemes rely principally on simple successional planting. In addition, each plant will often be expected to have successional interest of its own, such as the crab apple *Malus x robusta* 'Red Sentinel', which provides a display of blossom, followed by bright green leaves and finally colourful dark-red fruit. In addition, maximum benefit is extracted from each plant through the application of proper maintenance — for example, cutting nepeta and delphiniums down to the ground in July so that they will perform vigorously through to October.

Taylor is the plantsman: "It is important to resist over-complication and be restrained. This is something I have had to learn over the years as I'm not naturally a restrained person! A limited palette can be very freeing and can result in a more creative outcome. For me, there is nothing better than green and white."

Landscape connection

"It is crucial that the garden relates to the house but, most importantly, it must connect to the landscape and not jar," says Taylor. "I am inspired by nature. The distance needs bold drifts of planting that echo the landscape. Swathes of



The office team

Taylor and Tripp have a relatively small team of five, who are committed to delivering the hectic work schedule on time. Helen Robertson manages the office; working closely with Tripp she also looks after his diary and the accounts. Paula Downard is design assistant to Taylor and produces base plans and 3D images in AutoCAD. Further architectural work and AutoCAD is completed by Jackie Frampton, while Jackie Harper specialises in planting plans. They are currently looking to appoint another design assistant.

DESIGNER PROFILE: Taylor Tripp Associates

Leucanthemum vulgare are a joy to me, whereas phormiums or *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald 'n' Gold' I find abhorrent in the landscape."

Typically, a design will see the front of the house kept simple, with perhaps evergreen planting giving a dramatic but unfussy entrance. At the rear of the house by the terrace they will often create just one complex herbaceous border. The use of structure, such as avenues and hedges, ensures that the transition into the wider landscape flows in a subtle, harmonious way. Plenty of native planting is used to further secure the house to the landscape.

Flower meadows are a big part of Taylor and Tripp's work, as the gardens lend themselves to naturalistic ways of planting (but definitely not prairie planting), as well as providing a haven for wildlife. Thoughtful and subtle in their approach, they are determined that their designs resonate with the existing countryside and that the frames, contrasts and rhythms they create for their clients will continue to echo the patterns and language of the existing landscape.

Anne Hardy is a garden designer in Surrey.
Email: anne@annehardy.co.uk

Right: A border packed with *Sisyrinchium striatum*, *Achillea* 'Moonshine', salvia and eryngium forms a colourful interplay. The duo aim to include at least one perennial border with a strong impact in each project.



Personal history

Nicholas Tripp (37, right) and Richard Taylor (35, left) met ten years ago. With very different personalities and diverse skills they complement each other and enjoy an enviable working relationship.



Tripp trained at the English Gardening School, London, after concluding that there must be more to life than accountancy.

His relaxed and gentle manner belies a fierce drive and ambition. "We run a busy practice with up to 40 projects 'live' at any one time (including ongoing consultancy projects)," he says. "Our projects are typically over £75,000 with a few over £2 million. The process is very clear and focused and it is important that this is communicated succinctly to the client with fixed fees and a very consistent practice."

Taylor graduated from the University of Sheffield in 1996 with an MA in landscape architecture after realising, at the time, he could not make a living from his first love of ecology (his first degree was in environmental science with ecology). "Yes, I am the original tree hugger," he jokes. "My passion is native species and the natural landscape, but I am also passionate about things I find loathsome, such as the wrong thing planted in the wrong place — the 'blob brigade' (those people with their hedge trimmers who shape everything into blobs) and the supermarket car park planting mentality."

Head of landscape design, Taylor says: "Nick and I totally trust each other to be on the same wavelength, to take the same approach to our projects and to relate to the client in the same way. I like to think that it is this that makes the practice as successful as it is."

Contact details

Taylor Tripp Associates.

Tel: 01962 793500.

Website:

www.nicholastripp.co.uk