

PARTNER GARDEN

PLANTS ENHANCE ADVENTURE PLAY FOR KIDS AT BLENHEIM

Plants are a key part of a new £3.6m adventure play area created at RHS Partner Garden Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, featuring a wooden fort, zip wires, log swing, water jets, and giant interactive sunflowers and carrot sculptures to play on.

“Blenheim Palace wanted to integrate the planting with its bespoke new play equipment to make an environment that parents, carers and children would all enjoy,” says Katie Dixon of ASA Landscape Architects. “So we chose a mixture of robust evergreen and perennial plants that have plenty of colour and sensory appeal all year round.”

Katie’s best tip for play area planting is to buy good-sized plants where you can afford it. “They’re less likely to get trampled and won’t get lost in the bark mulch,” she says. “Raised corten-steel edges encourage children to stay on paths, while mounded beds help elevate planting, out of harm’s way. Temporary fencing and fun signage can protect young plants while they’re growing. And don’t be afraid to include perennials and annuals among the evergreens – they’ll add seasonal colour, fragrance and texture, plus they’re great for pollinating insects and biodiversity.”

Blenheim Palace is offering free entry to RHS members from 11 Sept–20 Oct 2023. Additional charges for Adventure Play apply.

✂ For details visit: blenheimpalace.com and turn to p85 for more Partner Gardens to visit

KATIE DIXON / MEGAN RIDGEMAN



Three to try:

- 1 Clipped yew balls (above) or topiary shapes are a fun way to divide space.
- 2 *Calamagrostis* planted densely makes a sturdy ‘hedge’ that adds movement and a sensory element.
- 3 Alliums with large globes impress little people, and give fascinating structural seedheads.



Plants are an integral part of The Lost Garden Adventure Playground at Blenheim Palace

People making a difference

Meet George Hassall, the 17-year-old RHS Young Ambassador who encourages children to find joy in growing and gardening sustainably

I was 10 years old when I became the first RHS Young Ambassador, a year after winning the RHS Young School Gardener of the Year award in 2014. My gardening teacher, Sarah, inspired me in school and nurtured my passion for growing through our ‘gardening gang’ sessions. As an RHS Ambassador, I hope to inspire children in just the same way.

I run planting sessions and stalls at schools and events. These hands-on activities really engage children – potatoes are always successful because it’s like digging for treasure! It’s heart-warming to see the joy they get from gardening – I always look forward to receiving growing updates from them. Whether you’re five years old or 50, it’s magical to see those first green shoots from seeds you’ve sown.



The effects of climate change will be a particular threat to the next generation, so it’s important to arm youngsters with trowels now, to mitigate its impact and help them adapt. One day gardens will be a lifeline for us; growing food and saving water are key skills to instil in children. Teaching about sustainable gardening is something that I focus on.

Having someone of a similar age to connect with is so important for kids, and I love having that direct interaction with them to find out what their gardening interests are. My goal is to meet as many children as possible to spread the seeds of gardening knowledge. If I give just one young person the gardening bug, I feel I’ve accomplished something.

✂ For more on RHS Ambassadors, visit: rhs.org.uk/ambassadors