

Lavant Horticultural Society

'Making the Most of What You Have' Ben Pope Wed 8th June 2022

These are just some rough notes that may help in jogging memories.

Garden & its setting

Aim for a garden for all seasons, including winter, to look good and be productive.

Garden to fit in with the surrounding countryside - use the view beyond the hedge.

Visual impact and atmosphere. Make the most of existing features – e.g. a beautiful tree could be reflected in a pond.

The 'lawn' does not get any treatment, other than being scarified.

Beds for cut flowers and vegetables.

Lots of roses for perfume, also other fragrant plants, such as dianthus.

Use grasses – essentially short-lived perennials – but they do not like the wet.

Use topiary and hedges. When clipping box, make sure the shears are sharp and keep disinfecting them.

Planting to provide structure during winter.

Along the periphery

Daffs under trees and tulips

Working on perennials in long grass. Chose meadow area – sandy soil with high water table. This was cleared and then a flower meadow mix sowed. This was supplemented by plugs of foxgloves grown from seed.

Prairie style areas to provide not only late summer and autumn colour, but structure to carry on through winter.

Walled garden: Step-over apples. Deep beds. Avenues and vistas.

Site and soil problems/opportunities

Take a little time to get to know your own plot. It all starts in the ground. In Ben's case, it is sandy loam, which needs lots of feeding.

He uses plenty of mulch (30-40 cu. metres!); also green manures to lock in nutrients – they are then dug in.

Define your space. Decide how you will divide it and use boundaries; can also make use of raised/lowered areas.

Don't forget about growing upwards: wisteria on wall; also annual climbers

Know your plants

Spend time with plants – get to know them.

Ben has ensured that planting is crowded to keep out grass seeds from farmland next door.

The extensive mulching significantly reduces self-seeding.

Plant right – plant small – 9 cm pot plants will get away quicker and grow stronger than larger ones.

Temporary gaps between them can be filled with annuals.

Stake in February – takes less time.

Early in the season clear perennial weeds, then hoe to remove annuals.

Summer is for dead-heading (once a week) and watering – should not need to be weeding

Edges should be regularly clipped and paths kept clear.

Mow paths through long grass.

Give beds and borders a clean line of a vertical edge 2-3 inches deep, with the soil mounded up away from lawn edge. This makes it easier to cut edges and avoids grass/weeds invading bed.

Design and layout

Be realistic in what you undertake and do a bit at a time.

Keep some old/dead apple trees – use as support for other plants

Produce – getting something back

Grow like an artist. Mix it up

Maximise your potential: for instance, with trained forms of fruit trees, where more can be fitted into a small space.

For step-over apples use spur bearing varieties – summer prune, using [modified Lorette system](#).

Also thornless varieties of blackberry.

Take time to make a note

Stop and look. Take photos around garden so that you have a record

Plan ahead, using lists and notepads

Take inspiration from others

Mulch

Recommended mulch from Compost Centre in Woking or [Stubbs Copse, Arundel](#).

Warned against “council stuff” due to its inconsistency.

Sandy soils – mulch in spring.

Clay soils – mulch in autumn