

Weds 8th April 2026 at 7.30pm Timothy Walker

Timothy joined the staff of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden 1980 as a trainee gardener and in 1988 became the Horti Praefectus (director), a post he held for 26 years until July 2014.

‘Paradise Lost and Restored: 400 years of garden design in Oxfordshire’

The history of English garden design can be told in different ways, but rarely can it be told “through the lens” of one garden. The Oxford Botanic Garden was founded at the beginning of the 17th century and its design bears all the hallmarks of 17th century design. Through the next 400 years successive Horti Praefecti changed the features reflecting the art of gardening, and very occasionally the science of botany. This talk looks at how the art of gardening has changed, or perhaps has not, in four centuries in Oxfordshire and how the Oxford Botanic Garden now reflects garden design at the beginning of the 21st century. The title of the talk refers to the fact that one of the motivations for garden design remains the desire to create a paradise on earth. The meaning of paradise may now be less rooted in the Biblical account of the rise and fall of man but there is still a clear vision of what we would like the world to resemble.

This is a return visit for Timothy who visited us in June 2024 and talked about 'How to be a 21st Century Gardener'.

<https://lavanthortsoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/How-to-be-a-21st-C-Gardener.pdf>