

NOSEY PARKER

Matthew Wilson

Landscape Man Matthew reveals his influences ahead of his new series



What is your earliest garden memory? I have lots, as I grew up on my parents' cut-flower nursery. Perhaps the most memorable is mixing up all the nuts and bolts that my father had carefully labelled, having stripped down a glasshouse heating boiler. I was about three or four years old.

What was your first gardening job? Strimming grass banks on a historic estate in Kent where my dad was head gardener. I strimmed just about everything, whether it needed strimming or not.

What are your three cardinal rules of successful gardening? The obvious ones: read as much as you can to improve your knowledge, ask questions and never pretend to know it all. From those things you will plant the right plants for your garden, rather than trying to bend nature to your will.

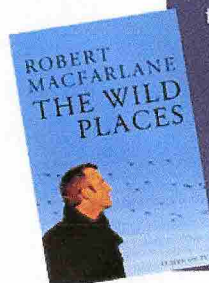
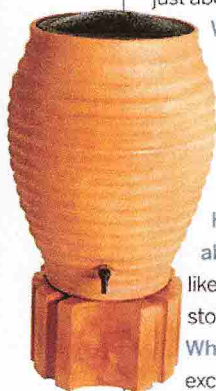
What is your top garden landscape tip? Take your inspiration from as many different sources as possible, not just gardens.

How are we having to rethink our approach to design in the light of questions about sustainability? Plant content needs rethinking, especially the longer-term plants like trees. But I think water management is most crucial issue, be it controlling and storing storm water in winter or sustainable irrigation in summer.

What books are on your bedside table? Our one-year-old twins do an excellent job of preventing me from doing much reading but at the moment I'm enjoying Robert McFarlane's *The Wild Places*.

Who would you most like to have dinner with (past or present)? John Peel, Rachel Carson, Oscar Wilde, Josephine Baker and Catherine Deneuve. Not a lot of people know this about me... My wife Jane and I were married in the Graceland Chapel in Las Vegas, with an Elvis impersonator.

• *Landscape Man* is on Thursdays at 8pm until May 27, Channel 4.



Diary

• **Welsh Historic Gardens Trust Plant Fair** Specialist nurseries and garden-related crafts, plus open garden. 1 May, £3. Crüg Farm Plants, Griffith's Crossing, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1TU. Tel 01248 670232, www.crug-farm.co.uk

• **Borde Hill Sculpture Trail** The Surrey Sculpture Society displays works throughout the Grade II listed garden. 1-31 May, 10am-6pm, £7.50. Borde Hill Garden, Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XP. Tel 01444-450326, www.bordehill.co.uk

• **Doddington Hall Iris Week** Massed displays of bearded iris in the walled garden. 23-31 May, £5 (garden only), 11am-5pm. Doddington Hall, Doddington, Lincolnshire LN6 4RU. Tel 01522 694 308, www.doddingtonhall.com.

• **Spring Flower Weekends at Wakehurst Place** Learn about Wakehurst's plant collections and tour the gardens with expert guides. 1-3 May and May 8 and 9, 10am-6pm (tours at specific times, £10.75, children free. Wakehurst Place, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TN. Tel 01444 894066, www.kew.org/visit-wakehurst

3 of the best websites for

COPING WITH SHADE

www.longacreplants.co.uk

Nursery specialising in shade-tolerant plants along with planting ideas and advice for a range of shady conditions.

www.bethchatto.co.uk

If you thought shade was a tricky growing condition, Beth's long list of suitable plants will leave you smiling.

www.suncompass.info

A product-based website, but with useful information on how the sun tracks your garden through the seasons.



Jam yesterday and jam today

This year Wilkin & Sons marks 125 years of jam-making. The first pot of strawberry jam was produced in 1885 by Arthur Charles Wilkin at Tiptree in Essex. Celebrations start at the Chelsea Flower Show with the company sponsoring a courtyard garden designed by Ben Wincott, a tutor at Writtle College. In June you can visit the strawberry fields, buy fruit and sample preserves. Tel 01621 814524, www.tiptree.com.