Garden



Himalayan White Birches, *Betula utilis var. jacquemontii*, Autumn colour

Hare Court

Imogen Hambridge, Gardener

Nestled between Middle Temple Lane and Temple Church, Hare Court feels rather special with the cool greens and dappled light that you would expect to find in a woodland. It comes as no surprise to me that, while I am working there, people often tell me how much they use and love the space. I find that its small, enclosed size lends to its intimate and peaceful nature.

The space is anchored by four very grand Himalayan White Birches, *Betula utilis var. jacquemontii*. These fill the space elegantly, stretching their branches towards the corners of the square, rising with the buildings that surround them. These were planted back in 2006 as an integral part of a scheme by Garden Designer, Kathy Brown of **'Kathy's Garden'**, the wonderful garden of Kathy and Master Simon Brown. The design celebrated the original Purbeck stone paths and the drainage channels which criss-crossed the courtyard, which date back to around the Great Fire of London, very few of which now remain.

The four trees were chosen to honour the four Hare brothers (Nicholas, Ralph, Hugh and John) who were members of The Inner Temple in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The eldest brother, Nicholas Hare built chambers on the south side of the court in the late 1560s. After his death in 1597, the chamber and buildings were granted to his brothers Ralph and Hugh successively. Now mature, the four birches create much needed coolness and light shade during the summer months whilst striking clear forms in winter with their white bark and pendulous branches.

The design of Hare Court evolved again in 2016 by the then Head Gardener, Andrea



Pride of Madeira, *Echium candicans*, in the gravel garden

Brunsendorf working with The Garden Company. The serpentine brick pathways were added alongside an understory of Black Birches, *Betula nigra*; cushions of Sweet Box, *Sarcacocca confusa* enveloping the benches; and a fresh ground cover of ferns, perennials and grasses.

In recent years, there have been more developments with the addition of the large stone planters and the planting of the gravel garden which lies around the edge of the courtyard. This receives more light than most of the courtyard and is an ideal space to experiment with planting drought tolerant species into free draining gravel, ensuring they won't struggle with sitting wet in the winter whilst enjoying the warm sheltered conditions of the courtyard. Initially Campanula, Erigeron and Sedums were planted, immediately adding carefree colours and delicate softness to the buildings and paving. Later additions such as *Erodium pelargoniflorum, Rudbekia maxima, Crambe maratima* and *Eucomis pallidiflora ssp.pole-evansii* amongst others, have added variation and interest to the scheme.



Large stone planters with shady foliage plants



Eucomis pallidiflora ssp.pole-evansii in the gravel garden



Scotch Thistle, Onopordum acanthium, in the gravel garden

In addition to this, we have decided that the planting in Hare Court will be adjusted so that it no longer requires irrigation. As a garden we are very conscious of our water usage (especially in areas such as Hare Court, which are still mains water rather than borehole) and are always looking for opportunities to use less where possible. The aim is to adjust areas of planting that are not holding up well in our hot dry summers, to more drought resistant species, creating a resilient and beautiful space.

Along with tweaking and adapting the perennials with this aim in mind, we've introduced a selection of small trees suited to our changing climate to diversify and strengthen the canopy layer of Hare Court. My favourites of these additions are *Styrax formosa*, the Taiwanese Snowbell, which has dainty green leaves and will develop clusters of white, star shaped, scented spring flowers; and *Cladrastis kentukea*, the Kentucky Yellowood, which will have long racemes of white, scented summer flowers, followed by a golden display of autumn leaves.

And of course, Hare Court wouldn't be part of The Inner Temple Gardens without two of our favourites, *Echium pininana* and *Melanoselinum decipiens*, adding instant fun and drama to the space.

It is always interesting to see how gardens develop over time, gradually evolving whilst keeping certain plants and themes intact. It is exciting to be a part of the development of Harcourt and has been a real joy to watch the gravel garden spring to life!