

# PRIVATE VIEW

PHOTOGRAPHS ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS | WORDS DEBORAH CURTIS

Designer Tom Stuart-Smith managed to rein in the exuberance of an established Wiltshire garden to create a picture of restrained winter elegance



When Juliette and Guy Leech bought Moor Hatches

almost a decade ago, it was an established garden with traditional deep borders and an abundance of roses. They worked with internationally acclaimed landscape designer Tom Stuart-Smith to redesign the 3.5-acre site, which stands on Wiltshire chalk about 3m above the River Avon. The river forms a natural boundary 90m to the south of the brick and flint house, which was originally a row of cottages that has been amalgamated over the years to form a picturesque family home.

'When we first met on site, our main objective was to integrate the house ▶



## private view

into its setting, specifically the River Avon, and to give it both privacy and expanse,' says Juliette. The family also wanted space to play games, entertain friends, and Guy - a keen swimmer - wanted a decent-sized pool.

'Guy wasn't prepared to have a pool under 20m,' says Juliette. 'Tom didn't want one over 12m. The final result disguises a 21m pool rather brilliantly.'

'We decided there wasn't any point trying to hide this pool in a corner,' explains Tom, 'so in a way, the walled garden is about the pool; it's a kind of journey around the swimming pool. It's the main event in this part of the garden. The low walls are made from zinc, and most of the paving is silvery timber. The planting is silvery, pale and grassy. The effect is particularly beautiful in the middle of winter.'

A lot of work was also done between the house and the river. A huge yew tree, which severed the connection between the walled

garden and the rest of the plot, was removed along with established ornamental planting, coloured foliage trees and decorative shrubs.

'I was pretty ruthless about that lot,' says Tom. 'I wanted to create something really quite compact that stood back from the river and let it get on with its own thing. We did a lot of work on the river; naturalising it and narrowing its course so the water runs faster. We also made a whole wetland area; and then sowed the area between the river and the house as a wildflower meadow, so there was a much greater distinction between what was garden and what was not.' It is this boldness that Juliette most admires. 'The thing I like most about Tom's work is its sheer generosity: his plantings are invariably generous and liberal despite the order and control that lie beneath. Nothing is done by halves.'

**Moor Hatches is open by appointment. Email [garden@juliettemead.com](mailto:garden@juliettemead.com)**

### ▶ ON THE BOARDWALK

The modular layout of the walled garden both complements and contains the impact of the 21m swimming pool. The planting forms a maze around the pool and the grass paths amongst the straw-coloured clumps of *Stipa calamagrostis* and *Stipa tenuissima* encourage a gentle wander. 'Come December, we have lots of corpses, such as the giant cardoons and phlomis heads, which frost beautifully,' says Juliette.



### ▼ A RIVER RUNNING

As you move from the walled garden across the terrace and down to the River Avon beyond, Tom has created a clear distinction between the formal and the wild. The further away from the house you travel, the more naturalised the garden becomes. As well as the pale grasses, the beds in the foreground include *Sedum 'Matrona'*, and as you go on down to the river, the planting is all native species. ▶

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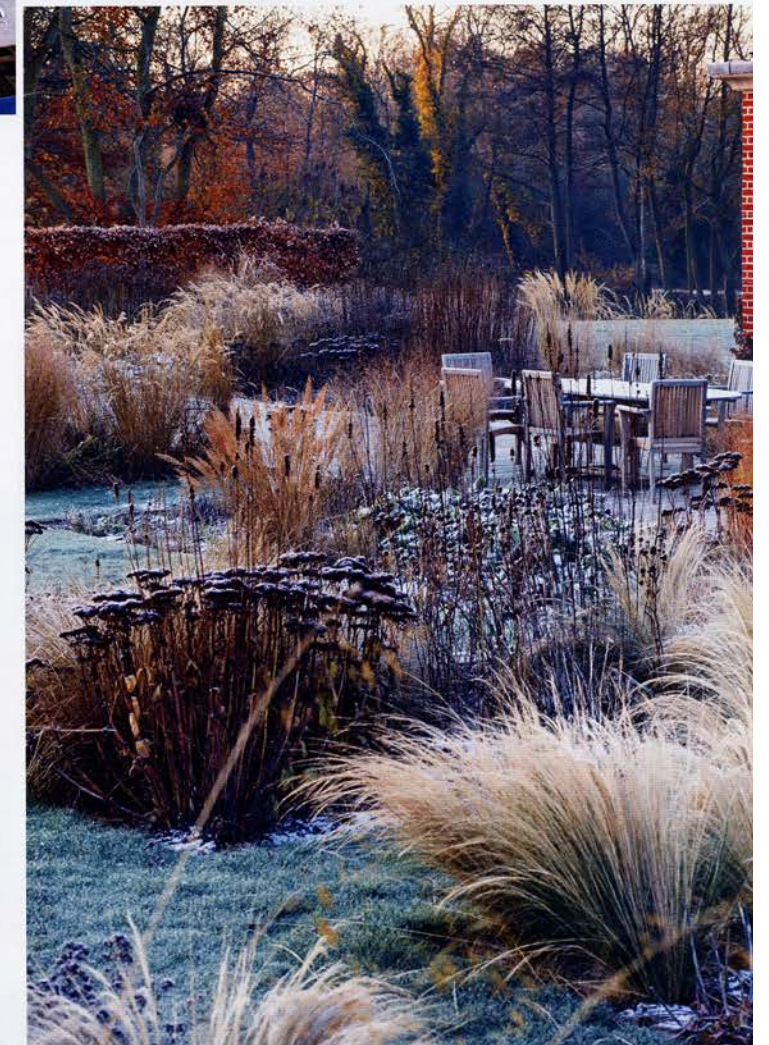
### ▼ WITHIN THESE WALLS

Lime-rendered thatched walls are traditional in this part of Wiltshire. Planting here includes *Eryngium yuccifolium*, *Echinacea purpurea* 'White Swan', *Euphorbia cornigera* and *Stipa gigantea* as well as other grasses such as *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln', which complement the pale wall and bleached-out thatch.



### ▼ CENTRE STAGE

There are short beech hedges in the garden that are kept quite low, so that from above they almost resemble a copper-coloured barcode. This acts as a structural foil to the pale profusion of grasses and frosted perennials.







▲ BEST OF THREE

Three blocks of grasses including *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus' and *Panicum virgatum* 'Cloud Nine' have been planted in sequence to form a strong yet soft division between the courtyard garden to the left and the rest of the garden.

PLANT PROFILES



▲ IN THE PINK

The bright-pink flowers of *Sedum* 'Karl Funkelstein' emerge in tight clusters late in summer and will stay on the plant for many months, although their colour will fade.



▲ GOOD COMPANION

*Euphorbia wallichii* is a fantastic foliage plant for the border. This euphorbia likes to be in full sun, although it can tolerate semi-shade in a sheltered spot.



▲ STAYING POWER

Also known as Korean feather reed grass, *Stipa brachytricha* turns a gentle straw yellow in autumn and provides strong form and texture in the depths of winter.



▲ FASHIONABLY LATE

A native of prairies and savannahs, late-blooming *Aster turbinellus* complements the grasses, which take centre stage during the winter at Moor Hatches.

► DEGREE OF SEPARATION

The courtyard garden separates the parking area from the house. Here, Juliette took out a 70-year-old azalea border. 'I don't think gardens should have sacred cows, and I'm simply not fond of azaleas,' she says. The rectangular beds now provide year-round interest. The planting here includes *Hakonechloa macra* and *Helleborus orientalis*, while multi-stemmed crab apples, *Malus* 'Evereste', provide colourful winter focal points.



*The muted colours of the dormant plants and a soft blanket of snow lift the spirits in the depths of winter*

▼ WINTER WONDERLAND

The contrast of the brick and flint walls with the muted colours of the dormant plants and a soft blanket of snow lift the spirits in the depths of winter. 'You've got the straw colours of the grasses, and the white and grey,' says Tom. 'We have been quite disciplined with the muted colours, because this is what this landscape is all about.'



ANDREW LAWSON

DESIGNER PROFILE

**TOM STUART-SMITH** read zoology at Cambridge before completing a postgraduate course in landscape design. He set up his own practice in 1998. Projects include a number of large private gardens in the English countryside and the two-hectare garden around the Glasshouse at Wisley. Tom has designed eight Gold medal-winning gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show; three were awarded Best In Show. He writes occasionally for a number of publications, and has lectured widely in the UK, Europe and USA. [www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk](http://www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk)