

Rupert King's carefully designed and lavishly planted Chiswick garden (right) enjoys a mild climate.

**M**oments from the ever-busy Hogarth roundabout in Chiswick, West London, nestles the sanctuary of Field House, with its splendid garden, the creation of its owner Rupert King.

Despite his having no professional horticultural training (Rupert is a psychotherapist) he has an evident understanding of how to create a sublime, calming environment, and his garden has evolved into a beautiful outdoor space.

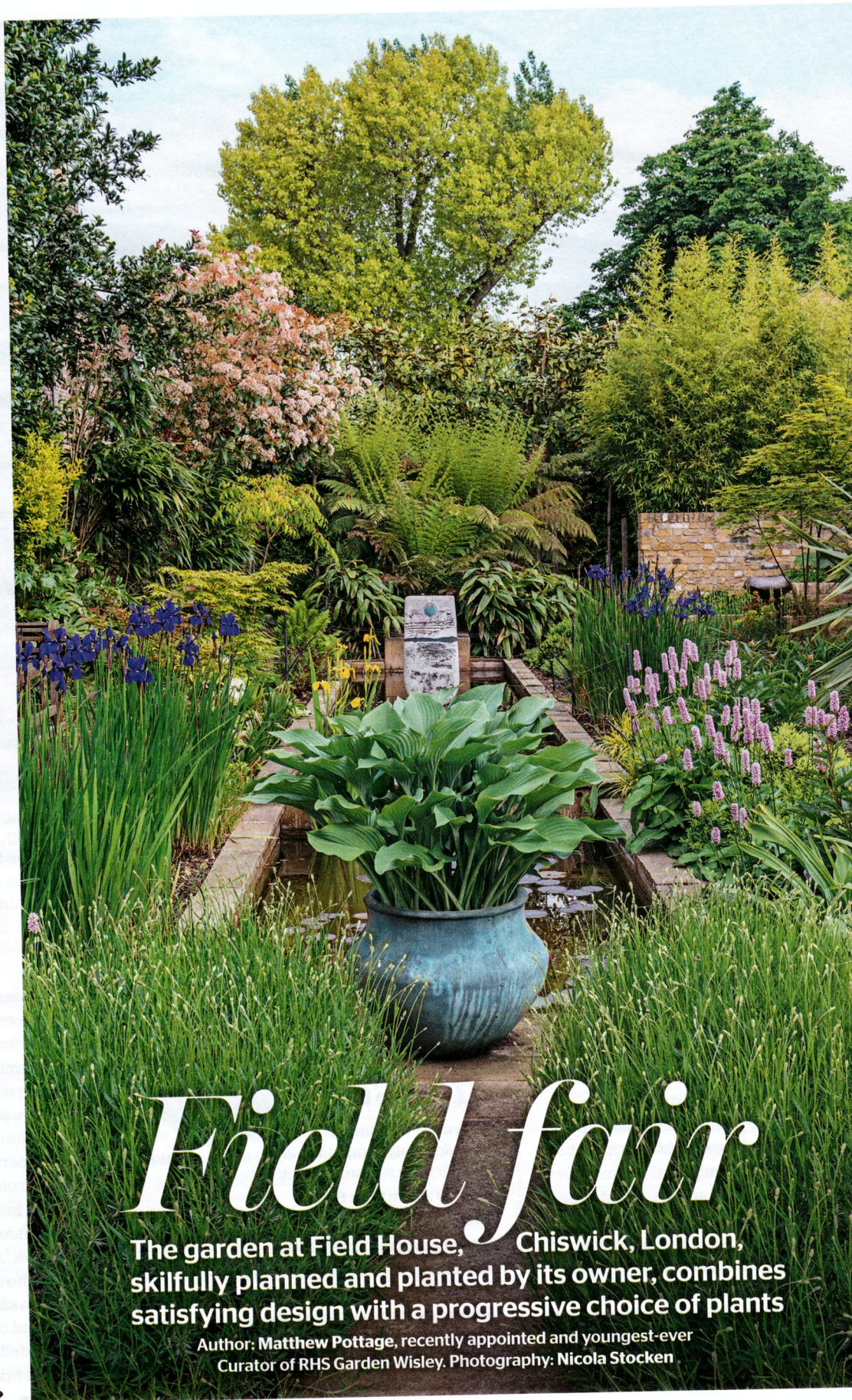
Early inspiration for the garden came from childhood memories of his great grandmother's garden; he has captured perfectly the sense of magic and atmosphere that a well-created, diversely planted garden can evoke.

Having previously lived for many years with a tiny Notting Hill courtyard garden, Rupert moved to Chiswick in 2008, the house providing him with garden space in which to combine his love for tranquillity and exotic plants.

### Serene setting

Across the road, in front of the house, flows the Thames, which provides blustery but mild conditions, causing *Trachycarpus* palms in the front garden to rustle and sway, recalling memories of Tresco Abbey Garden, another childhood experience which has influenced the garden.

In the main garden, to the rear of the house, restfulness is the order of the day, >>>



# Field fair

The garden at Field House, Chiswick, London, skilfully planned and planted by its owner, combines satisfying design with a progressive choice of plants

Author: Matthew Pottage, recently appointed and youngest-ever Curator of RHS Garden Wisley. Photography: Nicola Stocken



## Garden at a glance

Despite formal, rather angular lines, this garden feels relaxed and highly elegant; select, exotic plants adding to its appeal.

Planting is lush and varied, with a good balance of perennials, shrubs and trees. Key plants, such as *Iris* 'Caesar's Brother' are repeated or planted in groups.

A central, stepped, canal-like pond filled with waterlilies and lined with moisture-loving *Iris* and *Persicaria* gives the garden a formal yet lush, restful atmosphere.

running water flowing gently from one pond to the next, while the fronds of another palm, this time a fine, young *Phoenix canariensis*, dance and twist in the breeze. Despite its being a fairly young garden, the planting feels pleasantly mature, and the eye rests on an old pollarded golden poplar in the borrowed landscape, seemingly perfectly in line with the central pond. The back of the house faces north, and the garden is growing on typical heavy London clay soil, yet the addition of home-made compost helps a wide range of plants to thrive.

The tranquil atmosphere is not incidental – inspired by the temple

## Field House



**Address:** Field House, Chiswick Mall, London W4 2PR; [www.fieldhousegarden.co.uk](http://www.fieldhousegarden.co.uk)

**Size:** 10 x 23m (33 x 82ft).

**Soil:** London clay.

**Age of garden:** started 2008.

**Aspect:** north-facing but enjoying a mild, riverside site.

**Summary:** formally designed, informally planted garden with plants that thrive in a mild climate.

gardens in Kyoto while on a study placement in Japan in the early 1990s, Rupert remembers being moved by the calming influences that water, plants and sculpture can have on the human mind.

Running his business from home, Rupert wanted to create a space for reflection while seamlessly blending the indoors with the outdoor garden, somewhere to relax from client work. A garden room at the back of the house has a glass gable end, providing a spectacular vantage point over the garden with its central, formal, canal-like pool.

A brief view inside the garden room reveals that the owner also



An urn planted with *Hosta* 'Krossa Regal' provides a focal point in front of the pool, while a sculpture, backed by fronds of *Dicksonia*, leads the eye up the garden.



### Key features

Owner Rupert King has used ceramic sculptures and other elements such as this small birdbath (above) to inject extra interest around the garden. The mild microclimate suits tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica* well - a group of them flourish here (right), new fronds erupting in verdant shuttlecocks of growth. In late spring and early summer, clumps of glorious Siberian *Iris* 'Caesar's Brother' flower (below) - they are tough, easily grown plants if the soil is not too dry.



has a fondness for houseplants, and not everyday examples either: stout *Dyopsis decaryi* (triangle palm) graces one corner, while a small table is adorned by pans of flowering *Paphiopedilum* (slipper orchids).

From the top of the garden, the eye is led to a well-placed grouping of *Dicksonia antarctica*, a tree fern reliable in the London microclimate. Eruptions of new fronds reach for the sky, and their success is further validated by the visible extensions to the trunks since planting. In the shade and shelter underneath is a perfectly placed display of *Mahonia eurybracteata* subsp. *ganpinensis* 'Soft Caress', its soft, delicate leaves

and bushy habit all flying in the face of *Mahonia* stereotypes of being large and unsociably prickly.

The pond makes no apology for its formal look and is a nod to the Persian-inspired 'paradise garden'. Elegantly positioned ceramics play an important part here too, and represent Rupert's love of collecting.

### Refined planting

Japanese touches are provided by well-placed groupings of vivid purple *Iris* 'Caesar's Brother', complemented by hummocks of *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' lighting up the planting around the water as only a variegated plant can.

Tree peonies also reflect an interest in the Far East, with several thriving in the garden, especially a super, vigorous specimen of *Paeonia rockii*. It has always puzzled me how something with such a large flower can look so exquisite, as opposed to being vulgar and blowsy. I quickly assume that it must be Rupert's favourite plant in the garden, but that title has to go to his *Nandina domestica*, which 'always has something of interest, even if it's just the winter sunshine on the red fruits,' he says.

These delicacies are joined by other choice plants, and in some cases bold jungle-effect plants: >>

## West London garden



Field House's glass-fronted garden room offers fine views even in the evening.

the glaucous blue, dramatically saw-toothed leaves of *Melianthus major* have no problem peeping over the top of the yellow, London stock brick walls, as if to guide the eye to a neighbouring garden where an enormous evergreen globe of *Magnolia delavayi* happily resides.

A young but mighty foxglove tree, *Paulownia fortunei* Fast Blue (syn. 'Minfast') has formed a lovely goblet shape and provides a visual anchor to the house, while the wide, shiny, cardboard-like leaves of an *Eriobotrya japonica* (loquat) make a much lower umbrella of foliage across the other side of the pond. Rupert also tries to manage the height of a large bay tree, one of the few plants already in the garden when he moved there.

While the river helps keep winter temperatures mild, this can be a windy spot, gusts funnelling between the tall houses. In recent years, these

conditions have seen the end of both a large *Acacia dealbata* (mimosa) and *Eucalyptus nicholii*.

Fortunately, in a sheltered corner, a dramatic group of rice-paper plant, *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex', has the required space to show off its hefty proportions. *Geranium palmatum* seeds freely around the base, its pink flowers peppering contrast to the nearby bold, opulent spathes of *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (arum lily).

Field House garden is cared for entirely by Rupert, and although its floral peak is in late May, with so many structural plants and evergreens, this lovely place is a haven of contemplation throughout the year. ●

### VISITING DETAILS

The garden is part of the National Gardens Scheme and is open on Sunday 29 May 2016 (2-6pm), when three other gardens along Chiswick Mall will also open for charity.

❖ [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)



Noble *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex' adds foliar impact.