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**OPPOSITE PAGE** The central area of the Walled Garden features neatly clipped box with stone spheres. The trees, *Amelanchier grandiflora* 'Robin Hill', are renowned for their beautiful autumn foliage.

**THIS PAGE** Low walls are backed by the rich colours of *Aster amellus* 'Violet Queen', *Andropogon gerardii* and *Sedum telephium* 'Matrona'.



**M**arks Hall near Coggeshall in Essex has plantings for all seasons and, in autumn, its fiery colours are mirrored in the glassy surface of the lake. The strong crimson of *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' catches the eye and leads it up to the oranges and reds of *Ginkgo biloba* (the maidenhair tree) and *Sorbus sargentiana*.

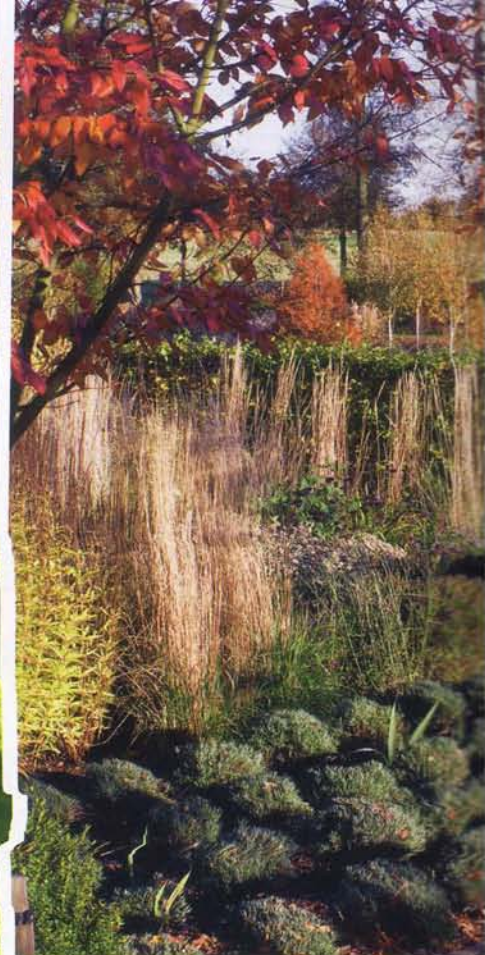
The garden is in two complementary parts – a walled garden and an arboretum – which were designed at the same time so that each works well with the other. The arboretum's big moment occurs from October to winter, although it has its part to play during spring and summer too, when its quiet greenery complements the walled garden. "The two gardens were very different in character," says Jonathan Jukes, the Marks Hall curator, "so when restoring them, we engaged the services of two Kew-trained designers, Peter Thurman, who specialises in arboriculture, and landscape designer Brita von Schoenaich."

The brief for the arboretum, which includes the Birkett Long Millennium Walk, was to create an area that would look good

from October through to March. As Peter explains, "It is important for any planting to have a theme, and we selected mainly ornamental Asian species, which peak in autumn and winter. *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*, with its ghostly white bark, is planted repeatedly throughout the walk as a unifying device, and in winter, its white stems come to the fore."

The Millennium Walk looks across the lake to the Walled Garden, where the challenge was to create a space for all seasons. "The brick wall enclosing the garden on three sides creates a micro-climate," says Jonathan Jukes, "so the planting includes giant echiums (*Echium pininana* and *E. wildpretii*), grasses, and the soft blues of rosemary, teucium and lavenders, which form the cornerstones of winter interest throughout the garden. These Mediterranean plants are ideal for providing year-round colour and shape in sheltered gardens; even the teucium thrives after we've cut it back hard in February."

Inside the walled section, Brita has created five themed gardens, which follow the progress of the year. The first and last



**ABOVE** Grasses in gold, silver and russet were chosen for their sturdy stems and attractive seed heads and provide interest late into the year. **ABOVE RIGHT** In the Walled Garden, plants of differing heights, including *Lavandula* 'Grosso', *Iris* 'Deep Black', *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album' and *Amelanchier grandiflora* 'Robin Hill', add depth and interest.

of these gardens feature grass sculptures. "Grass doesn't have to be a smooth lawn. It can be lumpy and fun," she says.

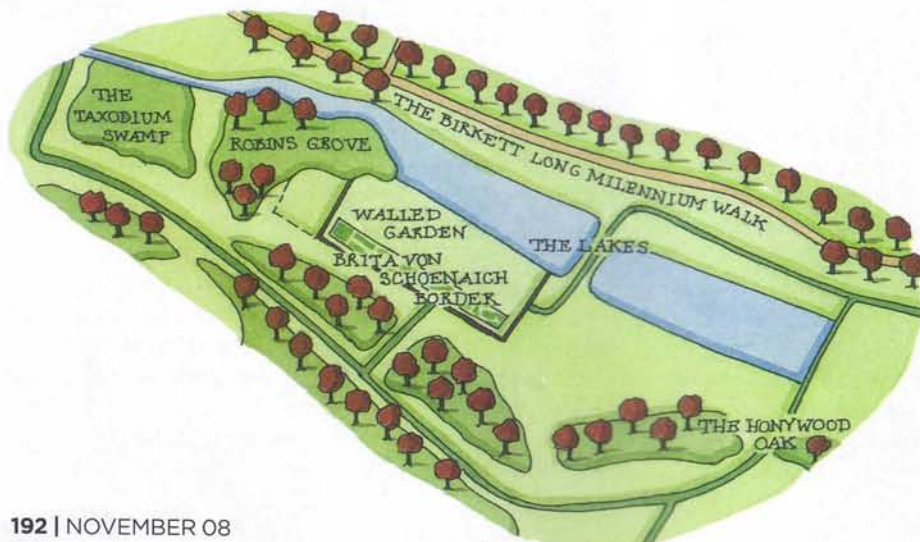
Although the individual gardens are all seasonal, each of them looks good throughout the year. "The spring garden has later structural interest from *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' as well as *Rosa rubrifolia*," says Jonathan. "In the summer garden, strong linear planting makes a dramatic contrast to the traditional borders. Lines of the blue *Iris* 'Jane Phillips' are set against the waving fronds of *calamagrostis* and variegated *pittosporum* and, later, against the see-through curtains of *Verbena bonariensis*. Linear planting can be unusual and effective for creating contrasting shapes and colours."

In the final quarter of the year, the planting bursts into autumnal oranges, golds, yellows and vivid reds, with tall

grasses providing winter structure. The dramatic colours of *Amelanchier grandiflora* 'Robin Hill' set the scene, with *Sedum* 'Ruby Glow' contrasting with *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer', and *Aster amellus* 'Violet Queen' sitting alongside the purple foliage of *Sedum telephium* 'Matrona', while *Persicaria polymorpha* gives bold height.

Brita advises, "Select plants such as phlomis, sedums, heleniums and echinacea, because they don't flop and drop in winter. Strong stems and good seed heads can create a presence that gives interest from autumn onwards."

*Amelanchier* is one of Jonathan's favourites for providing autumn colour in a small garden. "Plant it as a tree together with *Euonymus hamiltonianus* and the neglected but excellent *fothergilla*. A garden designed with strong structure and simple planting will look beautiful in all seasons," he says. ■



## GARDEN GUIDE

**ORIENTATION** The Walled Garden faces southeast, opposite the Millennium Walk in the arboretum, which faces southwest.

**SOIL** Chalky boulder clay with areas of free-draining loam, gravel and sand.

**SPECIAL FEATURES** A high brick wall along three sides, with an open aspect to the lake on the fourth side.

**DESIGNERS** Peter Thurman, [thurmanconsultancy.com](http://thurmanconsultancy.com), and Brita von Schoenaich, [schoenaich.co.uk](http://schoenaich.co.uk). To visit Marks Hall, call 01376 563796 or log on to [markshall.org.uk](http://markshall.org.uk) for details.





The glorious autumnal colours of *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' and *Sorbus sargentiana* are reflected in the lake waters of the garden at Marks Hall

# BLAZE OF GLORY

*Autumn is the season when the arboretum at Marks Hall in Essex comes alive with fiery colours to create a kaleidoscopic display*

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