

# Tulip triumph

In April, tulips flood the contemporary parterre at Broughton Grange with pockets of vivid colour. The garden's creator, **Tom Stuart-Smith**, reveals more about his design. Photography by Matt Anker

**THE WALLED GARDEN** at Broughton Grange in Oxfordshire has a special feel; it sits some way from the main house and has an independent, self-assured quality. It is designed in relation to the surrounding countryside, with narrow vistas to the distant church or a clump of trees on the horizon alternating with wider panoramas of the valley beyond.

The garden comprises three terraces, each 20 x 60m (65 x 200ft), that step down the slope and are partially open on the south and east, whereas the north and west sides are walled. On the lower terrace is a large parterre, which at first appears to be quite unrelated to the surrounding landscape. But this abstract pattern, which I designed more than 10 years ago, is in fact a magnification of the cell structure in the leaves of the surrounding beech, oak and ash trees.

In April each year the parterre explodes into a polychromatic dazzle of 5,000 tulips and the box hedging, which forms the parterre, flushes vivid fresh green. The tulip planting is composed of repeated groups of brightly coloured mid- and late-season cultivars, with Triumph, Lily-flowered and Viridiflora Groups predominant.

Red, purple and red-and-yellow stripes have proven to be especially effective combinations, as they contrast with the hedging. My favourites include *Tulipa* 'Abu Hassan' (rusty, cardinal-red with orangey-yellow edges), *T. 'Arabian Mystery'* (fresh purple with pure white edges), *T. 'Negrita'* (dark purple) and Single Late Group *T. 'Queen of Night'* (even darker purple).

Developing my original planting, head gardener Andrew Woodall and the

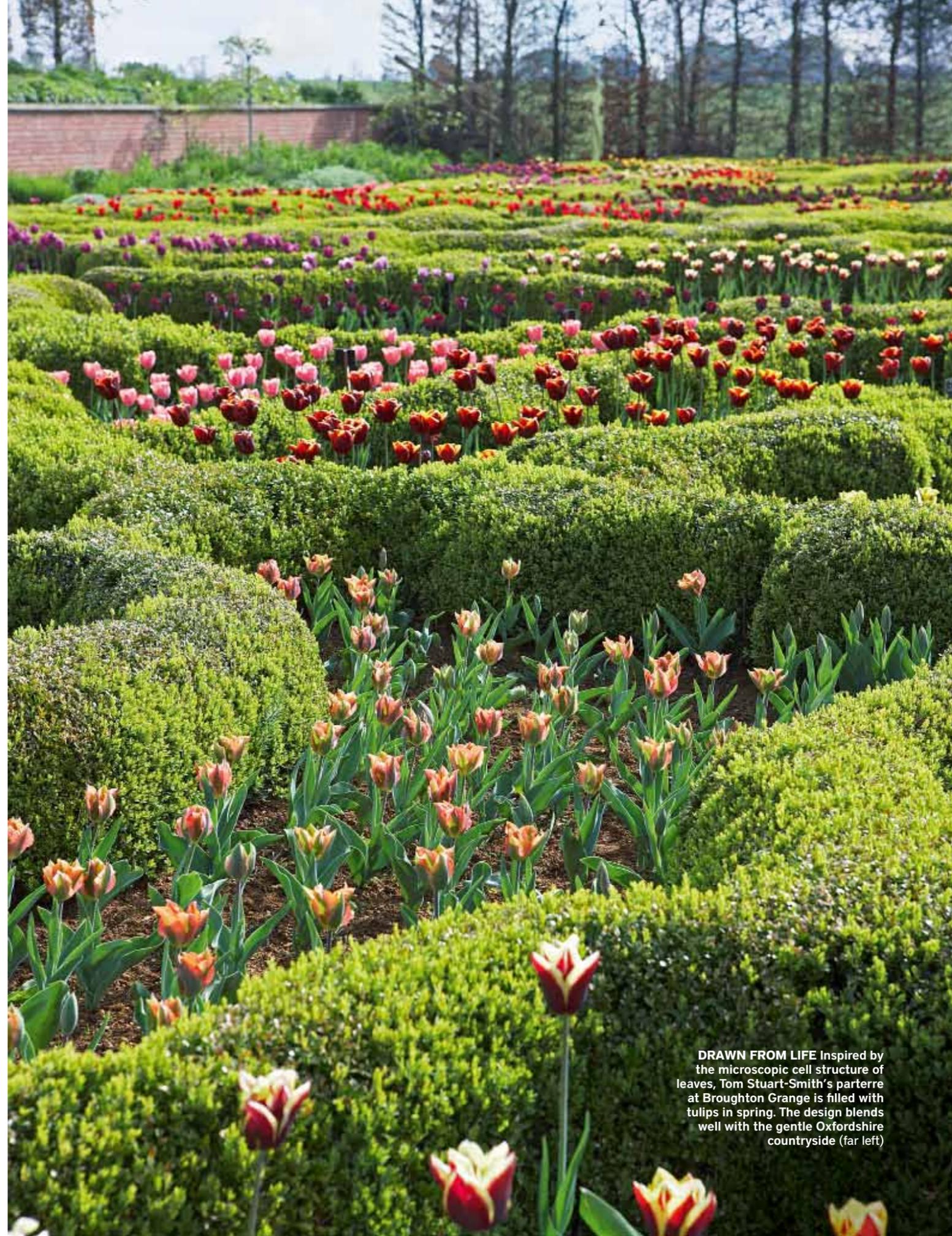
owner review the display each year, deciding on changes for next time. In 2009 pink *T. 'Paestrina'*, with pink-and-green Viridiflora Group *T. 'Artist'*, added more subtle shading in contrast to the prevalent palette of purples and reds. Pure yellow and white tulips are difficult to incorporate – yellow makes for a bilious contrast with the *Buxus* and whites are attention grabbing, drawing the eye away from more subtle shades.

Tulips are planted 15–20cm (6–8in) deep in October and November using an 8cm (3in) petrol-driven auger, which makes the process quicker and not so back breaking. At the same time, hedges are cut and every other year the ground is mulched with compost. Plants are spaced 15cm (6in), so that the inevitable flush of spring weeds can be hoed off without damaging the flowers.

Once May arrives, and the show is over, the tulips are lifted and dried ready for planting out in other parts of the garden later in the year, though only about 15 percent flower again. The box hedging is clipped again and the parterre is planted up with summer annuals and vegetables for another season of interest – and then the second act begins. ■

*Tom Stuart-Smith* is an award-winning landscape designer

@ **Broughton Grange**, Wykham Lane, Broughton, Oxfordshire OX15 5DS is open on 25 April, 20 June and 1 August under the National Gardens Scheme. Visit: [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)



**DRAWN FROM LIFE** Inspired by the microscopic cell structure of leaves, Tom Stuart-Smith's parterre at Broughton Grange is filled with tulips in spring. The design blends well with the gentle Oxfordshire countryside (far left)