

the idea is that at 8 o'clock we start filming. We stop at about 11am for a

GARDEN TIPS

'Always use fresh compost when sowing seeds. Old bags can have spores in that kill the seedlings.'

TOBY BUCKLAND



cup of coffee, then we stop for a half-hour lunch at 1 o'clock – just a sandwich and a cup of tea. Then we push on and absolutely try to finish by 6 o'clock. It's an exceptionally full-on day.'

Yet filming the short segments can be just as troublesome, says current presenter Nick Bailey, 41. 'It's always the noise that's difficult. Last year we were in a city garden with a school on one side, a load of chickens on the other side, an ambulance run at the front and a mosque at the back. The noise was unbelievable. Every time we were just about to finish a perfect piece to camera, an ambulance would whizz past.

That's why a six-minute slot takes ten hours to film.'

Dozens of presenters have graced the show over the past half century, and in recent years it has embraced diversity with the appointments of garden designers Mark Lane and Flo Headlam. Mark, 47, was born

ARTHUR BILLITT

WHEN: 1969-1982 **WHERE:** Clack's Farm, near Ombersley, Worcestershire **KEY TRENDS:** Large beds with straight rows of vegetables

During the Percy Thrower era, this was the second base from which Arthur (right, far right), a fruit and veg specialist, would present. When Percy left, it became the main garden used by Arthur and also Peter Seabrook, who did not want to use his own home. Arthur bought the farm in 1956 for its high-quality soil, well-drained loam overlying old red sandstone. 'You can always change a house,' he said, 'but never its soil.'



Chinese takeaway for seedlings. He shared his failures as well as his successes and encouraged people to experiment and just

But I guarantee that if you follow us programme by programme then you too will have a beautiful garden.'

ALAN TITCHMARSH

WHEN: 1996-2002 **WHERE:** Barleywood, near Alton in Hampshire **KEY TRENDS:** Decking, multicoloured fences and ornamental grasses

Alan (right) presented from his garden, where he'd lived for 14 years. It was a beauty, with a seaside garden, a pond and a butterfly meadow, but he'll forever be associated with the craze for decking and blue

with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, while Flo, 51, is the show's first black presenter. 'It's a dream come true for me,' says Mark. 'I've always loved the show and never believed I could one day be on it. There are quite

a lot of logistics involved – we have to think about how I can get around and how we film me being at a lower level, especially if I'm interviewing someone. But I do like holding the baton of being Britain's only wheelchair garden designer. I like to say, 'I'm here in a

wheelchair and I can do these things.' If I can be an inspiration to other people, all the better.'

For Flo, whose parents are from Jamaica, it's an overwhelmingly welcome development. 'It was a little weird seeing myself on TV for the first

time,' she says, 'but the response has been very positive. Obviously I'm a black woman and they've never had a black woman on the programme before, so it's a breath of fresh air.'

The structure of *Gardeners' World* though – that mixture of inspiration



A Japanese maple

Gardeners' World presenters choose the plant they believe has had the biggest impact on British gardens over the past 50 years...

ALAN POWER JAPANESE MAPLE TREES

(*Acer palmatum*) Over the past 50 years acers, or Japanese maples, have appeared in gardens

WHAT'S THE MOST INFLUENCE

all over the country, partly because they're happy to grow even in containers on shady urban patios. And it's not just their ability to add a splash of autumn colour that makes them so popular. 'The detail in the plant is what gets me,' says Alan. 'The foliage, the shape of the plant itself, that's what made me fall in love with it.'

GAY SEARCH VERBENA

(*Verbena bonariensis*) This border plant, with its delicate purple flowers, is increasingly popular, and not just because it's easy to grow. 'Since the individual flowers are so small and the stems so narrow, even though it can reach 2m in height verbena works as

well at the front of a border as in the middle or at the back,' says Gay. 'It represents the resurgence of interest in easy perennials in small gardens.'

FLO HEADLAM SUMMER FLOWERING JASMINE

(*Jasminum officinale*) Flo says it's easy to

SLUG IT OUT

'It's a fallacy that slugs and snails won't crawl over eggshells,' says Nick Bailey. 'I spray repellent onto the

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