



## Garden Notes – 24th April 2024

### *Head Gardener Steve Lannin (@SteveLannin)*

There's a moment that comes every year around this time when I suddenly realise that all the years of gardening have finally paid off and that I've cracked this gardening lark once and for all. The lawns are mowed, the edges are neat, the beds are (mostly) weed free. Then all hell breaks loose, the weeds appear everywhere all at once (seemingly overnight), the tulips all decide that they've had enough of tuliping and collapse, and chaos generally ensues and refuses to stop until this moment is mirrored towards the end of October and the garden takes a breather again. It catches me out every year, and by now I really ought to know better. Thankfully, at Iford the wisteria is on hand to distract from the gathering imperfection, not that we are aiming for a perfect garden. Perfectly imperfect is the balance we want. It's one of those things - you know it when you see it!

The wisteria on the front of the manor was planted, we believe, around 1820, soon after wisteria first arrived from China. Peto added the freestanding ones directly opposite, with the exception of two. One of these is a modern cultivar which will, in time, be replaced. Can you spot it?

The rose by the front door is Fortune's Double Yellow, which was discovered by plant hunter Robert Fortune, growing in a garden in Ningpo, China in 1845. It was introduced to the garden by Lanning Roper and flowers at the same time as the wisteria.

Most of the wisteria you will find in the garden is straight Wisteria Sinensis which is heavenly scented and flowers before leaves appear. The obvious exception being the wisteria trained over the iron archway in the patio garden, Wisteria Floribunda, which produces the most beautiful seed pods echoing the shape of the arch and hanging like jewellery into the winter.

It's perhaps no surprise that the gardens at Iford have become known for their stunning wisteria display, but for me the garden is about so much more. In high summer, there is the sound of grasshoppers in the long burnt-out grasses, the cool of the cloister and the hot afternoon sun on the terrace with a shimmering heat haze over the valley (so evocative of the Mediterranean), and then, into autumn, the garden blazes again with colour. Iford is a wonderful garden to enjoy the annual wisteria hysteria, but visit again later in the summer and the garden reveals its true identity. See you in the garden.

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