

# THE STANLEY SMITH (UK) HORTICULTURAL TRUST

## Application Summary Sheet (please do not extent beyond one page)

### Contact details

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### About your project

*Please provide a project title and short, high level description of the project which you are applying for a grant for.*

**Replanting the box hedge in the Fulham Palace knot garden (parterre).** The box plant hedge at Fulham Palace has finally succumbed to the box hedge caterpillar. Our previous extensive efforts of hand removal of caterpillars and feeding with liquid seaweed with are no longer effective. The formal low hedge is 70% dead soon to be 100%. Treating it with the biopesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (trade name, Dipel) does not fit with our biodiversity policy or sustainability principles nor is it affordable. We would like to replant it with a box hedge substitute Podocarpus sp. that has been successful in the RHS trials over the past 10 years.

*Please identify the category of the Trust's objectives which you believe your project meets.*

*to promote horticulture; to promote the conservation of the physical and natural environment by promoting biological diversity; to promote the creation, development, preservation and maintenance of gardens (preference will normally, but not exclusively, be given to gardens accessible to the public); and the advancement of horticultural education.*

*Please describe personnel who will be participating in the project (if appropriate).*

The Fulham Palace garden team; head gardener Lucy Hart, plus 2 senior gardeners, 1 garden apprentice, 1 Historic garden bursary trainee, get into gardening trainees plus the thriving community of 70 garden volunteers that come in once a week over 5 days including both weekends days.

*Please describe your long-term plans for the future of the project once the grant has been used (if applicable).*

Fulham Palace is open free of charge 7 days a week to the public. The historic knot garden is at least 125 years old, and more likely 175 years old. It is a very popular feature of the garden and is situated in a high profile location. It has a back drop of an old iconic 70m long wisteria and is front of the glasshouse vinery. Once replanted the knot garden will be continued to be cherished and enjoyed by the local community and beyond.

### Financial Information

*Please attach all relevant financial information such as expected other income and proposed expenditure.*

**Sum applied for: £5000**

*Please send your application (including this cover sheet and any supporting documents) preferably in electronic form, hard copy or both to the following addresses:*

**Postal address (hard copies):** Dr David Rae, Director, Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20a Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR

**E-mail address (electronic copies):** d.rae@rbge.org.uk

## Replanting the box hedge in the Fulham Palace knot garden (parterre).

### Introduction to Fulham Palace

Fulham Palace is a historic house and garden, formerly the home of the Bishop of London, and now managed by Fulham Palace Trust. It is open to the public 7 days a week free of charge. Today the 13 acres gardens are primarily an 18th century landscape layout. The 2.5 acre walled garden includes a parterre, orchard, vegetable beds and wall and arch trained fruit. There is a glasshouse vinery and new propagation house. Organic growing techniques are used to grow all fruit and vegetable crops which are harvested and sold to visitors. The Palace itself has a Tudor courtyard and there are drought tolerant themed borders in the courtyard and on the main drive. There is a small woodland area and numerous long grass patches that are being managed to increase biodiversity. In March 2024 National Historic Plant Collection status was awarded to the replanted collection of Bishop Compton species that were grown on site between 1675 and 1713.

Fulham Palace provides a wide range of horticultural opportunities and runs an in-house apprenticeship, hosts an English Heritage (HBG) placement trainee and leads its own get into gardening programme for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The head gardener, Lucy Hart and senior gardeners also work with over 70 garden volunteers that come in once a week including Saturdays and Sundays.

### Project description

The parterre, or knot garden as it is locally known, is a historic planting within the Fulham Palace walled garden. Over the past two years in particular the low box (*Buxus sempervirens*) hedge has been under severe attack from the box caterpillar (*Cydalima perspectalis*). In summer 2024 it became completely overwhelmed and defoliated, leaving it mostly dead. The 300m of box hedge urgently needs replacing.



*The knot garden in January 2025 – dead box hedge - a very sad scene*

In spring 2012 Fulham Palace received funding from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust to plant the inside beds of the knot garden. The planting inside is still looking beautiful although now marred by the unsightly dead box.

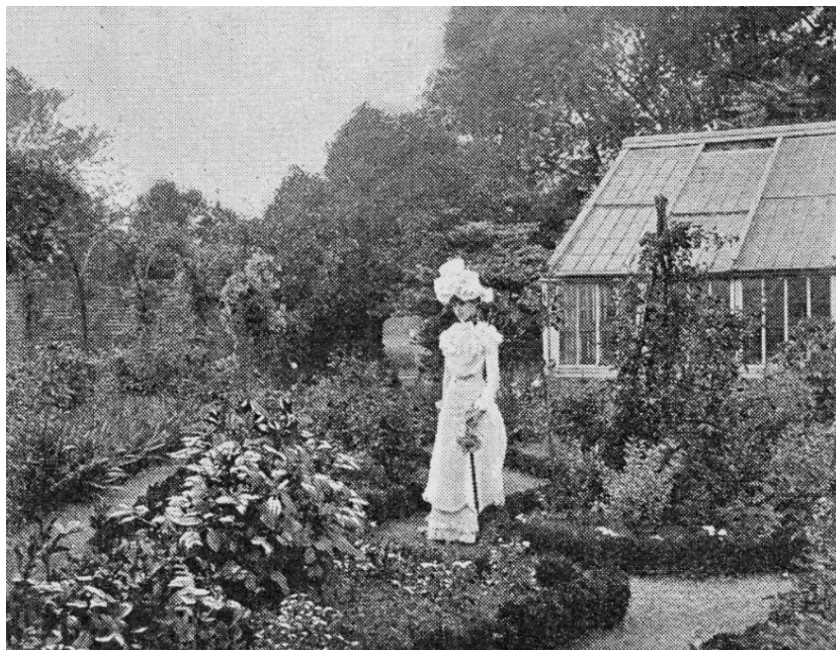
**Box caterpillar damage** The caterpillars eat box leaves and produce webbing over their feeding area. Caterpillars are also capable of stripping bark, which can result in girdling of affected sections and consequential plant death.



*Box caterpillar feeding on box*

### **Fulham Palace knot garden History**

The knot garden is believed to have been first planted by keen horticulturalist Bishop Blomfield (Bishop of London 1828 -1856) during the start of his residency at Fulham Palace. The earliest image we have shows the low box hedge established by 1901, with beautiful plantings within the beds.



*Earliest image of knot garden from 1901*





*Jessie MacGregor's 1915 painting showing box hedge and beds filled with irises and peonies*

The last Bishop of London to live at Fulham Palace left in 1972 and Hammersmith and Fulham Council took over and opened the site to the public in 1975. Images from the 20th century show a different design to what was believed to be the true original design.



1960s well established box plants tightly trimmed



1970s with gardener Mr Delanley tending to the herbs within the box planted beds.

By the early 2000s the knot garden had become overgrown and patchy and was possibly infected with box blight.



2008 – box hedge patchy and over grown

It was replanted with box, *Buxus sempervirens* to its original 1830s layout in 2011 as part of a restoration project, funded by the Heritage Fund.





*Summer 2011- metal bed edges in place*



*Spring 2012 box plants established and trimmed*



Head gardener Lucy Hart planting the beds May 2012 from Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust funding





*Garden volunteers brushwood staking the perennials in March 2014*



*Fulham Palace knot garden thriving in 2017*



*Box hedge still looking good in 2022*

### **Controlling the box hedge caterpillar**

Managing box caterpillar in recent years has proven to be a challenge. Our previous cultural efforts of hand removal of the caterpillars and feeding with liquid seaweed could no longer keep the caterpillar infestations at bay.

In 2024 the caterpillar had a veracious year with multiple instars within one season and by summer 2024 the box hedge finally succumbed. The formal low hedge is 70% dead soon to be 100%.

The caterpillar can be controlled by spraying the biopesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) (tradenname, Dipel). Fulham Palace has applied this in the past but this method is not sustainable or affordable nor does using a biopesticide longer fit with the Fulham Palace Trust's biodiversity policy. BT affects other lepidoptera (butterfly and moth) species.





Previously managing the box caterpillar; spraying Dipel, *Bacillus thuringiensis* in 2020 and hand picking caterpillars each summer.

## Project aim and Objectives

To replant the knot garden to bring it back to its former visual glory.

- Using a reliable box hedge substitute: *Podocarpus* sp.
- To be pest and disease resistant so that the Fulham Palace garden team can maintain it using organic growing techniques
- To be low maintenance and not grow too fast so the crisp low hedge shape can be easily kept clipped.

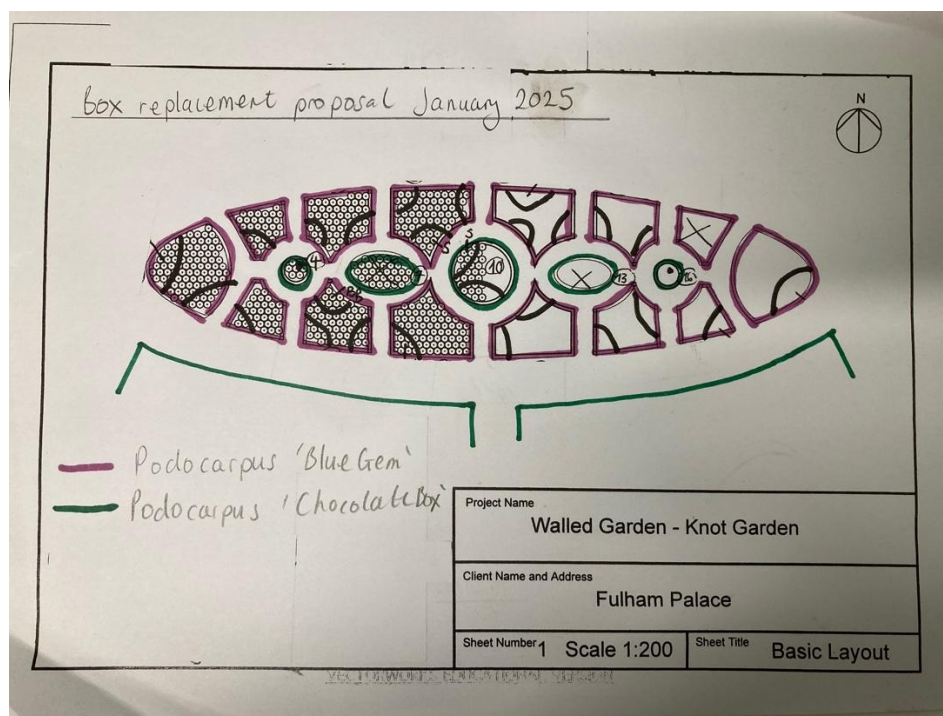
## How it will be undertaken?

The Fulham Palace knot garden requires 1000 plants to replace all the box.

Matt Pottage former curator of RHS Wisley is a Fulham Palace Trustee. In April 2024 the Fulham Palace garden team visited RHS Wisley with Matt and looked at the box hedge substitute garden. From this research we are looking to replace the box with one of the higher elevation New Zealand podocarps, with small leaves, such as *Podocarpus nivalis*, or *P. acutifolius*, or any cultivars of these species, depending on trade availability. These were the leaders of the alternatives to box trial carried out at RHS Garden Wisley over a ten-year period.

Other box alternatives have been considered such as *Ilex crenata* and *Eunonymus* 'Green Spire'. Whilst these species may be less expensive to buy, they were poorly rated in the RHS Wisley trials for their growing habit and low pest resistance.

An exciting supply opportunity has arisen with Provender Nurseries who are able to supply Fulham Palace with *Podocarpus* 'Blue Gem' and *Podocarpus* 'Chocolate Box'. As in the names the two cultivars have differing foliage colours 'Blue Gem' a greenery blue hue and 'Chocolate Box' flushes a magnificent bronze with the cooler seasons. Both are recommended as suitable as a box plant alternative in the London area and able to withstand temperatures down to -15 degrees C. The knot garden design lends itself to using mixture of podocarp species/cultivars as single types could be used for each bed, keeping to the symmetrical pattern. See plan below.



### Knot garden plan

### How it will be maintained into the future?

Fulham Palace has a full-time gardening team of 6 people. This includes the highly experienced head gardener and 2 senior gardeners who guide and train the 2 training positions and gardener. With volunteer and trainees help, the old dead plants can be removed and then the new stock planted. The new plantings would be frequently watered throughout the first 18 months and monitored after. Once big enough the hedge will be shaped and trimmed and kept low. This is great training opportunity for the student/training roles within the garden team where they are learning about invasive pests and diseases, box plant substitutes and replanting a historic garden on a big scale.

### Itemised schedule of proposed expenditure

Item	Supplier	Quantity	Unit Price ex VAT	Total ex VAT	Total incl. VAT
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2.5L Podocarpus 'Blue Gem' include delivery	Provender Nurseries	650	£6.50	£3645.87	£4,375.04
2.5L Podocarpus 'Chocolate box'	Provender Nurseries	350	£6.50	£2,275	£2,730
Liquid seaweed foliar feed – maxicrop	LBS horticultural supplies	2 x 10L	£67	£134	£161.20
Inhouse home made mulch	Fulham Palace Trust	9m3	0.00	0.00	£0.00
<b>Total</b>					<b>£7266.20</b>

**For the box hedge replacement project Fulham Palace Trust requests a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust of £5000.**

We would like to replace the all the box hedging even though it costs more than the support limit from Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. We are not able to afford the whole amount ourselves. In 2024 we received a grant and did some fundraising for a new glasshouse and that has wiped out our small pot of funding for the garden.

Fulham Palace Trust will aim to fundraise locally to make up the £2300 balance required for the planting. We don't think we should do another crowdfunding project for the garden of the scale we did in 2024 for the glasshouse. We do however think there are a couple of private donors who would contribute to the box hedge fund to give us the rest we need to replace all the box hedge.

Fulham Palace Trust would supply all labour to plant the knot garden alongside the after care and maintenance. The project will be providing training to the student garden post and the community of garden volunteers.

**Long term plans**

The Fulham Palace Knot garden is a very popular and much loved feature of the Fulham Palace garden. It has the backdrop of an old wisteria thought to be 190 years old – together forming an iconic and representative image of Fulham Palace. The garden will be cherished and well looked after by its gardeners and volunteers for decades to come.

**Recently audited statement of accounts\***

Please find attached.