

The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust
Funding Report – Cascade Garden, Pond Borders Regeneration Project
December 2025

Summary

Earlier in 2025 Leeds Castle commenced with the regeneration of the Cascade garden pond borders, the purpose of which was to reinvigorate this area of the garden, bringing it back to life by inspiring visitors to the garden and providing them with information about the plants. The pond and borders form part of the HRH Princess Alexandra Garden.

Leeds Castle gardens gratefully received £2000 from The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Fund this was used to purchase plants and botanical labels for the borders which has made a huge difference to the area. Since the works commenced the area has again become an area to explore for both adults and children. The area has been successfully planted and the Ghurka bridge has also been repaired and repainted, making the section of the grounds even more inviting for guests to visit.

This project is part of an ongoing action plan to improve the planting and gardens within the Cascade area of Leeds Castle Gardens which is at the start of the visitor route and planted in the early 1990's with species of Asian origin.

Project Overview

The Cascade area of the gardens was chosen as part of the first area of regeneration and conservation at Leeds



Castle gardens. The area incorporates one of the original stone summer houses from lady Baillie's era, (the last private owner of Leeds Castle), the view from the summer house across the Cascade pond to the weir and beyond to the Castle is one of the most romantic and stunning on the estate.

The COVID pandemic had a severe impact on Leeds Castle, it led to a 40% reduction in staff numbers, the reduction of staff adversely affected the gardens and wider estate grounds, with little or no management it led to limited plant species and botanical interest.

The project was to improve the horticultural offering at the Castle by improving the number of species of botanical interest plus enhancing the visitor route. The Cascade area of the garden is the first area of planting visitors see as their journey begins at Leeds Castle.

The goals of the project were to improve the appearance, horticultural offering and to re-inspire the public to visit the area, watch the many wildfowl, and enjoy the Ghurka bridge, which is once again, bright and elegant.

Our target audience is visitors who are horticulturally minded, however as this area is the first all visitors see as they enter the grounds of the estate, it was important we inspire all visitors and encourage them to enjoy the project area. We hoped that everyone visiting the gardens, which is a wide demographic of ages and interests enjoy this redeveloped area due to the conservation of other components such as the Ghurka bridge which had been out of action for a long period. We also took into consideration the experiences that this project would give our volunteers and staff members.

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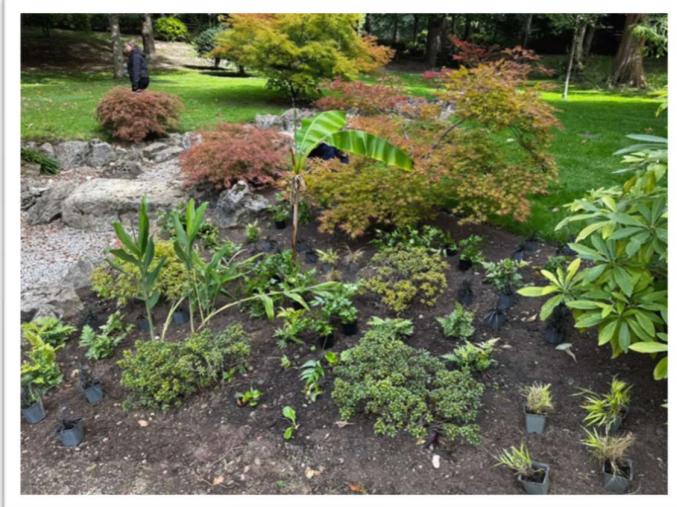
The area originally consisted of an Asian planting scheme, we therefore carefully chose plants that are similar and capture the flavour of the previous planting structure. We wanted the new species to have a bigger impact on the area, including plants that would be used as underplanting to bring cohesion to the borders.

Along with under planting we chose to use *Fatsia Japonica* for its palmate leaf shape for interest and *Euonymus Alatus* for its wonderful autumn colour.

The plant list consisted of the following:

1. Hakonlea Macra 'Allgold' x 100
2. Dryopteris 'Golden Brilliance' x 100
3. Cyrtomium Falcatum x 100
4. Bergenia Cordifolia x 100
5. Euonymus Alatus x 10
6. Fastia Japonica x 10
7. Ophiopogon Nigrescens x 10
8. Primula Bulleyana x 200
9. Primula japonica 'Apple Blossom' x 200

We also purchased botanical labels for the plants, which is a wonderful addition, visitors can learn more about particular species and the labels remind staff/volunteers of the Latin names for each plant.

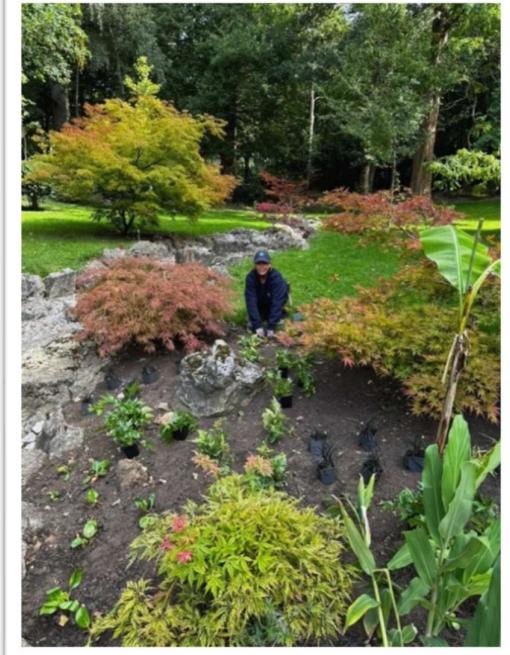


Activities and Implementation

During this project our volunteers were a great support with organising the borders ready for planting and making the area look presentable once again.

Our staff and volunteers replanted the area and have transformed what was a sad and bare area to an area of interest, the majority of the planting had taken place in time for our summer and autumn school holidays.

For the project we ordered 10 *Fatsia Japonica* plants, these were delivered with many young plants in each of the 10 pots. We were able to use these 10 pots of young plants to train staff and volunteers. This showed our team that plants will be sold sometimes using many smaller plants to make one busy plant, in this case the could be split into individual plants. The staff and volunteers were trained to carefully split the plants into individual plants and potted them on. The carefully potted individual plants totalled 110 *Fatsia Japonica*, something that will greatly benefit the garden and has proved valuable learning for both staff and volunteers alike.



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Financial report

Of the £2000 donated to Leeds Castle by the Stanley Smith Horticultural fund

£1845 was spent on plants to improve the area

£155 spent on Botanical Labels for the planting

Total Spend: £2000

Results and Impact

The planting of the area has drastically improved the borders, making the area more inspiring for the visitors we have seen many more visitors using the area and enjoying the replanting, the Ghurka bridge and the antics of the many wildfowl that call this area “home”. This project also had a big impact on our staff and volunteers inspiring them for future works that need to be undertaken and giving them a strong ownership of the borders for many of them it is the first horticultural project that they have been able to be part of and has given them great experience for the future.



Challenges and Lessons Learned

Overall the project has been a great success the only challenge has been the availability of plants and having to change our supplier which has meant that our plants arrived later than expected.

We also found it hard to find a good quality supplier for our Botanical Labels, we wanted to make sure that these were sourced and manufactured in the UK, however we eventually found a wonderful small business based in the UK to produce them which has proved invaluable.



Future Plans and Sustainability

Now that the border has been planted they will be cared for by our volunteers and garden staff, this will be completed on a regular basis, with most of the plants being long living, the borders will sustain themselves with a little help from compost to mulch the borders once a year. Compost is produced onsite at Leeds Castle.

Our hope is that once the borders become established that our volunteers and Staff will be able to propagate material from the borders to refresh the borders if needed in the future.

Acknowledgments

Leeds Castle would like to thank The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Fund for making the rejuvenation of the Cascade Garden Pond Border possible, it has proved invaluable to the garden. The new interpretation has been enjoyed by visitors, and the Leeds Castle garden staff and volunteers.