

The Sky is the Limit!

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After nearly ten years of owning a small arboretum and enjoying a selection of mature and beautiful trees, we moved, in 2009, to a walled garden of about a third of an acre, in a town. This has had many advantages but we missed the trees. For the first time after many different gardens, we had a very fertile soil so planting began. Trees that were planted grew much faster than either we or the reference books indicated and soon perennials and shrubs were losing the sun.

Not daunted the only solution was to find as many fastigate trees that were suitable and this is proving very successful. Four six inch tall *Taxus* 'Fastigiata Auromarginata' were planted at the four corners of the rectangular gravel area and these are now slim six footers. Three large heavy paving slabs were lifted to accommodate *Sorbus* 'Autumn Spire Flanrock' now twelve feet, *Liquidambar styracifolia* 'Slender Silhouette' and *Sorbus ulleungensis* 'Dodong Olympic Flame' either side of these are gathering momentum as is a recent addition of *Parrotia persica* 'Vanessa' and all provide excellent autumn colour as well as giving pleasing form and structure. We hope *Ginkgo biloba* 'Fastigiata Blagon' will live up to its name. Having visited John Massey's inspirational garden, we added *Malus* 'Toringo Aros' and *Malus* 'Laura', not strictly fastigate, but may become so because of lack of room to spread, *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' and *Cercidiphyllum* have a slim appearance and now exceed fifteen feet and the former produces impressive blossom in spring and dramatic colour in autumn.

Running out of planting space, but not enthusiasm for more inappropriate trees, containers were introduced to accommodate *Ulmus glabra* 'Crispa Fastigiata', *Ilex aquifolium* 'Variegatum' and *Acer griseum*. An inherited *Liquidambar* that took up valuable space was dug up and planted in a large wooden tub. It is pruned regularly and in autumn the roots are spaded, fed and mulched, and it is now a handsome specimen of about five feet and the roots have infiltrated the paving slab beneath!

Shrubs also had to be chosen with care always considering duration of interest. *Berberis thunbergii* 'Orange Rocket' and 'Helmond Pillar' provide form and excellent autumn colour. *Rhamnus frangula* 'Asplenifolia' is an interesting eccentric. A beech sapling brought with us for sentimental reasons has been clipped into a slim silhouette. A variety of more voluminous shrubs more than fill in any gaps.

As well as planting fastigate trees, with only limited space it is necessary to keep small trees and shrubs under control without spoiling their natural form. *Prunus mume* 'Beni-chidori' is allowed its head as it gives such a beautiful display in January and February but the *Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' and *Amelanchier canadensis* needs judicious shaping. *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Hoheria angustifolia* and *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' escaped before we could tame them and they are tall and handsome. *Magnolia* 'Leonard Messel' and an inherited large *M. stellata* are lightly trimmed. *Koelreuteria paniculata* has been pruned to fill the space available and seems none the worse for it. It was planted in 2010 and would be double its present size had it not had regular pruning. This proved a star performer last autumn after flowering prolifically, and kept its spectacular seed pods that rattled in the wind.

As a counterbalance to the many trees we have introduced, last autumn a 40' Sycamore was felled. Already there is a dramatic improvement to the increased amount of sunlight. Maybe, just maybe, there might be room for another tree so defying all logic, our latest tree purchase has been a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* which I hasten to add is only two feet at present in a pot and encouraged to be both fastigate and bonsai!

