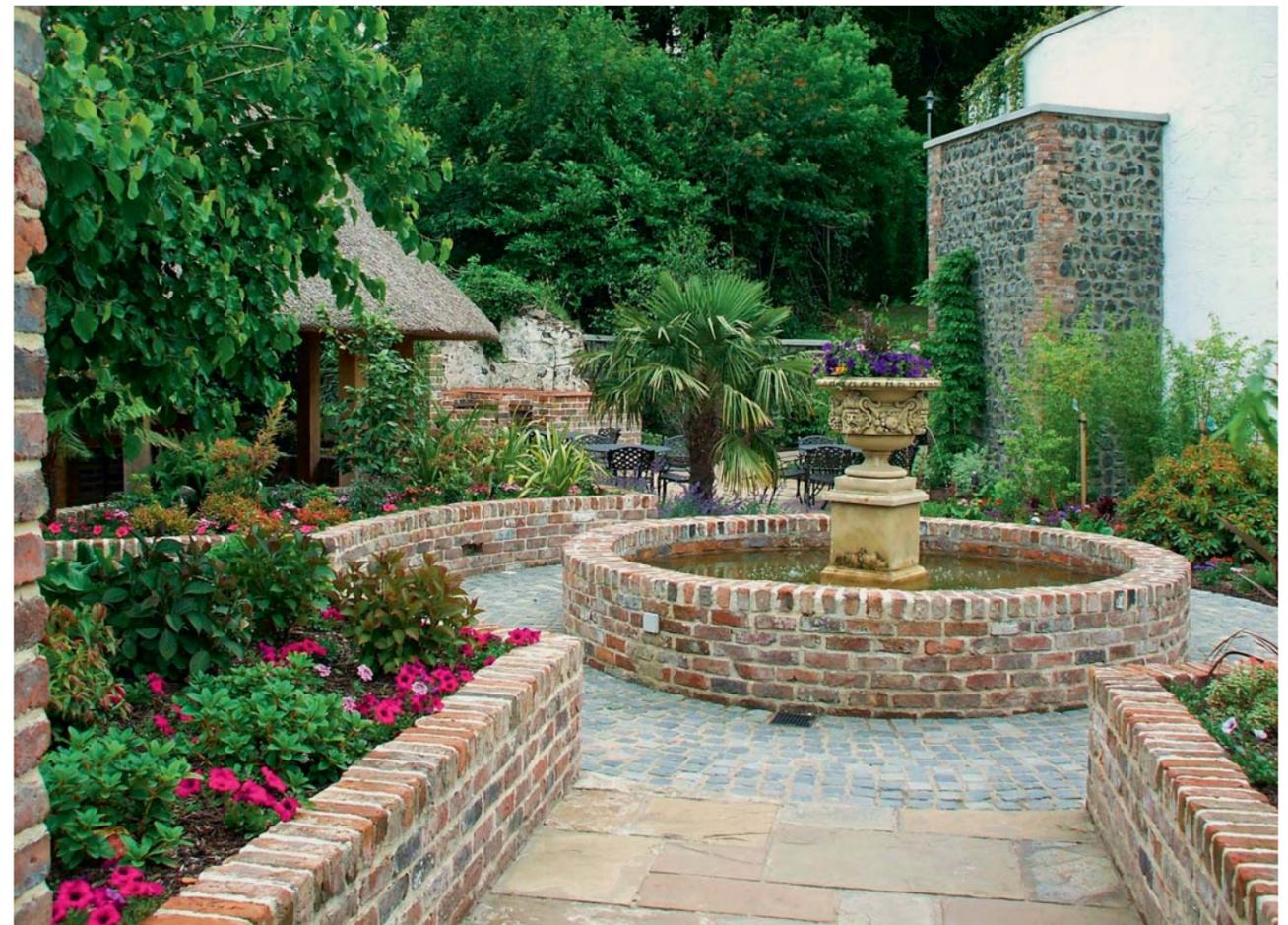


The Mulberry Courtyard Garden

Landscape Designer Kevin Cooper highlights one of his most rewarding and challenging design projects at the Galgorm Resort and Spa outside Ballymena, County Antrim.



The brief was to create a walled courtyard garden to complement and complete this magnificent country house. The garden should have a timeless and elegant character to seamlessly merge with the existing house and landscape at the same time as incorporating bar and dining facilities with unique focal point features to stimulate the imagination.

The first feature that greets one when entering the courtyard is the inviting Pergola constructed from handmade Victorian bricks and classic green oak timber beams, with the majestic climbing plant Wisteria gently entwining itself over the structure. The bricks used in the pergola were also

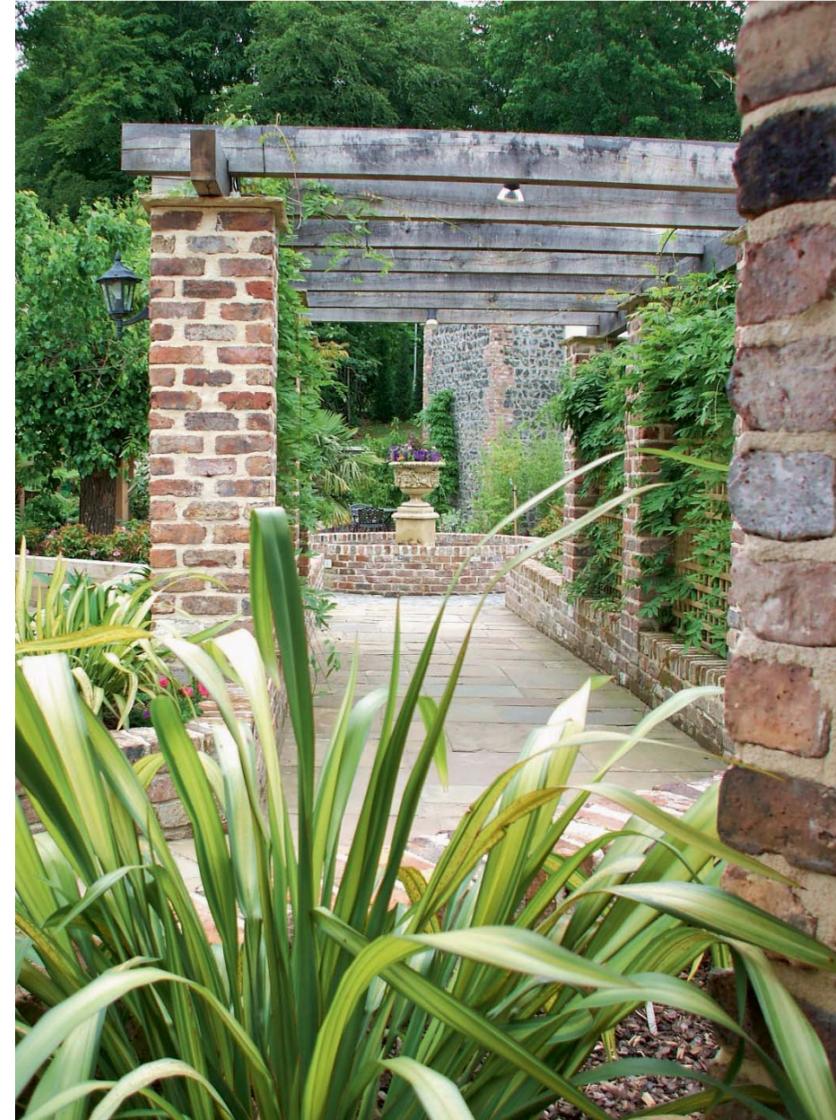
used to construct the imposing walls that enclose the courtyard and the spectacular fireplace in the hotel dining room creating a central and uniting theme. The pergola frames the view of, and draws one towards the central water feature with its classic stone fountain, which forms the hub around which the whole courtyard revolves.

Walking around the fountain the first thing that catches your eye is the dramatic thatched gazebo which forms the exciting focal point of the garden and creates a unique environment to enjoy a meal or a relaxing drink. The gazebo was a real international challenge being supported by

green oak beams sourced from the Black Forest in Germany, topped with thatch from Turkey and finished off with a gorgeous floor of Donegal Quartz stone cobbles, a lot of effort, but well worth it.

Leaving the gazebo up the lovely pathway of genuine York Stone one is drawn to the tempting outdoor bar, once again constructed from the old handmade bricks and topped with a beautiful roof of reclaimed 'Rosemary' tiles to complete the timeless appeal. Inside the exposed oak beams and roof trusses create a warm and inviting atmosphere with a lovely stone paved floor completing the picture. The courtyard also boasts an outdoor games room with pool table and children's play space to keep young and old alike entertained on a Summer's evening, while the outdoor kitchen and BBQ has been known to feed up to 300 people in one sitting!

At the heart of the garden is the 300 year Mulberry tree from which the garden takes its name, standing bold and majestic it gives the courtyard a real sense of depth and maturity and like all the features sourced for this project it has an international history being transplanted from a silk farm in Germany no less! The tree was so large it was one of the first features built into the garden with the courtyard then constructed around it.



'At the heart of the garden is the 300 year Mulberry tree from which the garden takes its name, standing bold and majestic it gives the courtyard a real sense of depth and maturity and like all the features sourced for this project it has an international history being transplanted from a silk farm in Germany no less!'

After savouring the courtyard one is then drawn to the large steps so proudly guarded by the 'Hounds of Kinsale' which lead to the fabulous restaurant inside the hotel. This pair of stone dogs, like all the period features and building materials used in this project were sourced from Wilson's Conservation Building Products, at Dromore.

This was a challenging design brief, a huge team effort and logistically demanding, but it was so worth the hard work when you see the pleasure derived from the garden. Like the Hounds of Kinsale, I am so proud to have been a small part in the creation of this timeless garden.'

Kevin Cooper Garden Design, 07791 560519.
www.kevincoopergardendesign.com