

Press Release

Hampton Court Palace goes green in 2016!

Historic Royal Palaces announces an exciting year ahead for Hampton Court Palace's royal gardens.

They are some of Britain's best-loved gardens – home to a world-famous maze, a record-breaking grape vine, around 8,000 trees, and 650 acres of historic deer park. Hampton Court Palace gardens – where King Henry VIII once hunted in the 16th century, and where Capability Brown honed his skills as Chief Gardener in the 18th century– remain popular with the public centuries later. In 2016, the palace's gardens are set to take centre stage at the heart of an exciting year-long special programme packed with new openings, exhibitions, events and activities for all the family.

At Easter, an imaginative new garden for families, designed by Chelsea award winning landscape architect Robert Myers – **The Magic Garden** – will open in King Henry VIII's former Tiltyard, where the elaborate spectacle of Tudor tournaments once played out. Inspired by tales from the palace's past, this new addition to Hampton Court's landscape will bring the rich history and legends of the Tudor Court to life in a completely unique and innovative way.

An immersive world, populated by mythical beasts (including a 25m dragon!) every feature of the garden has been designed for discovery and exploration. With towers to besiege, battlements to storm, and a secret grotto to hide in, the Magic Garden will prove that the best way to learn about history is to live it!

In April, Historic Royal Palaces will mark the 300th anniversary of Capability Brown's birth with a new exhibition - **The Empress and the Gardener** - exploring the famous English gardener's surprising influence on the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great, who was passionate about all things English and created English palaces and gardens in St Petersburg.

The Empress settled instead for a collection of watercolours of Hampton Court Palace and gardens by Brown's draughtsman, John Spyers. Sold to Catherine the Great for 1,000 roubles, these evocative drawings are a remarkable record of Brown's tenure as Chief Gardener at Hampton Court in the 18th century, and will go on display at the palace for the first time since their rediscovery at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg in 2002.

The palace gardens span five centuries of history: from Home Park, where King Henry VIII once hunted, to the formal parterres of the Baroque Palace, to the newly recreated Georgian Kitchen Garden. Their fascinating evolution will be explored in more depth than ever before in a series of special events and new displays throughout the gardens in 2016, celebrating some of the famous gardeners of the past who created the palace gardens across the centuries. Throughout the year,

visitors will be able to discover more about the work of today's team of 35 specialist gardeners, in a special film following their work through the seasons.

Exciting new additions will pop up in the palace grounds throughout the year. From a recreation of the palace's most famous figure, **King Henry VIII, in topiary**, to a grand **Elizabethan joust**, to a **new horse-drawn carriage** in which visitors will be able to tour the grounds, there'll be lots to see and do. There will be plenty of opportunities to get involved too! A large scale community project over the summer will see the palace gardens peppered with mysterious **Gnomes**, recounting secrets and tales from the palace's past. Hampton Court is set to reveal itself as the home of the English gnome – first described by Alexander Pope, in his satire, 'The Rape of the Lock', set at the palace.

The celebratory year promises to shed new light on one of Britain's best loved gardens – don't miss out!

Notes to Editors

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Historic Royal Palaces is the independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. We help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built. We raise all our own funds and depend on the support of our visitors, members, donors, sponsors and volunteers. With the exception of Hillsborough Castle, these palaces are owned by The Queen on behalf of the nation, and we manage them for the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Registered charity number 1068852. For more information, visit www.hrp.org.uk.