

Frognaal Rise House. London. NW3 6RE

23029. Landscape notes. April 2025.

The owners pre application enquiry is positive towards the retention of roadside trees and their protection during construction.

The preapp is also positive to proposals to replace other trees and shrubs with new plantings.

The Charlton Brown landscape proposals as shown on drawing 23029 PL 00- 002 are tastefully understated and are similar to a 1930s cottage garden. The plans allow for plenty of herbaceous plantings which will benefit from the summer surface radiation from brick walls.

Inspection boreholes show the subbase to be better than expected in that there is a fair proportion of sand and silt in the clay. The anthropogenic top layer is thinner than expected and the coal in it reminds everyone that London always was a heat island (although these days there is unlikely to be a repeat of the 1952 Great Smog). Camdens metre of topsoil over the basement lid as proposed here will improve the prospects for new plantings, replants and existing retained. The ph of introduced topsoil should be around 6 to restore optimum growing conditions, (on the day of the tree survey some of the existing plantings are looking a bit chlorotic). There are existing plants which are well worth putting aside for replanting and these include a fine tree Paeony which has the characteristics of the French hybrids which were introduced to the UK at the turn of the 20th century.

Great effort should go into drastically reducing the turnover of treated tap water. There is plenty of space here for water butts. Grass for lawns should be a waterwise mix which sends roots down a metre. Drought resistant grasses were very commonly used prior to the introduction of oil based nitrogen fertilizers - these deep rooted grasses brought nutrients up from the subbase. Drainage and porosity is greatly improved with deep rooted grass.

New trees here could of course be Apples and Pears which would please the Reverend Winnington- Ingram. (London church lands sold for development had to have fruit trees planted in their gardens). Bramley is always a favourite Apple. The Pear "Invincible" can flower twice in a season. Other fruits can be planted on walls as espaliers.

This garden design lends its self to Irish Yews (*Taxus baccata* "Fastigiata"). Four of these could be planted in the southern part of the garden at the intersection of the paths. These will provide tight cover for nesting song birds and will not require pruning for years as they grow tall and thin at a slow rate. These were very popular in late Victorian and early Edwardian gardens. The arils are edible (not the seeds or any other part) and are enjoyed by birds.

Pink Hawthorns were popular in Victorian times and are very common in Hampstead. Time has allowed some giants of these small trees. These are spiky nesting sites for small birds and are high rise bugotels. The flowers are most useful to bees and the haws most useful to birds.

An old tree which is becoming a new tree due to its climate resilience is the Wild Service which is a rare native. This tree grows well in clay and is suitable for a small garden such as this as it grows slowly. It has four star amenity - flowers, fruit, bark and autumn colour. It like the Hawthorn is an important food source for insects and birds.

All garden trees should be handled and planted by professionals so that they do not require any horticultural paraphernalia such as stakes, ties, mulch mats, irrigation systems etc. Woodchip is the cheapest and by far the best mulch (and eventually soil conditioner) bar none.

Tree diseases can be minimised by companion planting (many plants are co evolved) - you might not want invasive tree medicine such as Ramsones here but hard neck garlics do the same job.

This garden design lends its self to modern “zero waste away”.

- The selected trees will only require the minimum of formative pruning for many years.
- Grass can be cut little and often with a robot mower.
- A mulch mower can be used to mulch all other arisings including woody prunings at the time of cutting or shedding.
- All mulched arisings can be used in the garden as a winter coat for herbaceous plantings.

All pavers should be set on washed sand and joints should not be grouted.

Construction releases funds to refurbish and build this garden using plants which are mainly native and characteristic of the various stages of this houses history.

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