

Tale from the Garden!

As I enter Tanton Fields, the new Kier estate, I am greeted by a hedge bearing beautiful tiny pink bell-shaped flowers - and signs saying 'Keep off the grass'! As today's theme is all about reaching out across barriers, I just had to choose a hedging plant for our tale from the garden.

Escallonia is a hedge plant that provides beautiful colour to your garden with white, pink or red flowers emerging from June to October and evergreen foliage throughout the year. Escallonia hedge plants can handle full sun and various planting conditions meaning they're perfect for some difficult planting areas, and their ability to tolerate a wide range of planting sites mean they can even adorn your patio if grown in pots. These eye-catching plants display fantastic, bright flowers and the evergreen foliage provides year-round interest, keeping your garden colourful even once the flowers have faded. Although classified as evergreen, some Escallonia hedges may lose some foliage in the very harshest of winter conditions but otherwise the aesthetic dark foliage provides the perfect background for the bright flowers in the Summer, as well as offering a great wind break. A wonderful multi-purpose hedge plant, Escallonia can also be grown as a specimen plant or a climber; whether they are pot grown or left to grow as a bush, and they adapt well to rockery planting. It grows well in seaside areas due to its hardy nature.



No matter which variety of Escallonia you plant, or what colour flower you prefer (pink, red or white), you will find that honeybees, bumblebees and butterflies will come and enjoy the flowers. Any hedges that produce flowers are good for local wildlife so Escallonia is perfect for a bee garden, whether planted as a hedge or within a rockery or planted in a garden border.

Escallonia hedging plants are native to Chile and are named after the plant collection of an 18th century Spanish traveller, Antonia Escallon y Florez from Colombia (1739-1819), which was introduced to the UK in the 1840s.

In this day and age, hedges & walls can be viewed with negative connotations. It seems such a shame that I'm being kept off the lush green grass on the other side of the Escallonia hedge. Such 'walls' can be seen as a source of imprisonment and division. They are often referred to as things we need to break down and overcome. However, when we look at walls in the bible, they are also seen as structures that protect, providing security, and represent a place of shelter forming a sense of belonging.

Did you know there is to be a national landmark built of 1 million bricks each representing an answered prayer? The Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer is to fulfil a vision to make hope visible.

A wall built for beauty

Revelations 21 v9-27 describes the Holy City descending from heaven. This New Jerusalem has 'a great high wall' according to verse 12, and 'the wall was made of jasper' according to verse 18. This is not a wall of barrier or exclusion, but a thing of beauty and awe. Whether this vision is literal or metaphorical, biblical walls are not always negative.

A wall built for Gods Glory

In Old Testament times the city walls represented not only the strength of the people within that city, but also the strength of the God they served. Nehemiah depicts the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. He was distraught when he heard that the walls in Jerusalem were in disrepair, as it reflected not only the weakness of his people but also misrepresented God as weak. "The wall of Jerusalem is broken

down, and its gates have been burned with fire. When I heard these things, I sat down and wept" (Nehemiah 1 v3-4).

The Eternal Wall represents the strength of God. It will represent the belief that He is alive, listening and able to respond. Nehemiah and his team faced significant opposition yet, were able to rebuild the city walls in just 52 days. This was a miraculous feat that was a monument to God's glory and faithfulness, as depicted in Nehemiah 6 v15-16. God can and does use walls to bring Him glory, and we look to Nehemiah as inspiration on our own journey to build a wall that will glorify Jesus.

A wall of believers

In Ephesians 2 v17-22 the body of Christ is described like the walls of a temple, 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone' (verse 20). We are all part of the wall that 'rises to become a holy temple in the Lord' (verse 21).

A similar idea develops in 1 Peter 2 v5-6, where believers are described as living stones 'being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.' We as a family of believers stand together as a wall; by doing so we create a sanctuary which the Lord inhabits. We are not a wall of separation, exclusion or imprisonment, but one of faith, salvation and glory.

A Wall of hope

The Eternal Wall is based upon these biblical images of walls. It will not be a divisive landmark but rather a landmark of hope. This will be a place where visitors are inspired to encounter Jesus, where people catch a glimpse of the infinite DNA of the God who answers and see the breakthroughs they read about fulfilled in their own lives.

Our Church Walls

Do we believe in the power of Prayer? Let's pray that our church walls don't display exclusion; instead that they display the glory of God. Instead of saying 'Keep Off', let's make sure we say 'Come in'. Let's make Hope visible for all.