

# KEEPING THINGS NATURAL



As a designer I am always looking for innovative ways of incorporating good materials into my designs, writes garden designer *Teresa Potter*

almost black finely cut foliage contrasting with the stone, the delicate spire of white flowers rise up above to punctuate the design while Euphorbia Charcias 'Wulfenii' throws up its display of bold acid green flower spikes early in the season.

Alchemilla Mollis picks up these colours with its frothy clumps of flowers and carries them into the summer. Later in the season Crocosmia 'Lucifer' becomes the star performer. The sword like foliage moves with the wind bringing the scheme to life in the breeze. As the flower spikes rise, their shadows dance against the wall until finally the bright orange petals emerge.



**N**atural materials are always a joy to work with. They take the form that we craft them into and then go about settling themselves into their new surroundings and becoming part of the landscape.

The local stone of the Ribblesdale valley is no exception, freshly quarried, it has a beautiful bright warm hue to it, the shades of golden yellow and amber almost come alive in the sunshine. As time passes the exposed surfaces react with the elements and the brightness fades, becoming softer to the eye. Designing a planting scheme to complement the colours of this particular stone is a joy.

Planted just 12 months ago, this season has seen the dark heads of Aquilegia 'Black Barlow' stand out against the stone whilst the delicate foliage contrasts with it. Actaea reverses the colour combination, having dark

An essential key to good design is to build using materials that look better as they get older. I used 100-year-old reclaimed Accrington pavers to create a number of small terraces some



years ago. Lifted from the entrance of an old mill, hundreds of mill workers had walked over them every day twice a day for the entire working life of the mill. Following thousands of footsteps they looked as perfect when laid in their new home as they did the day they were made. The terraces were inlaid with two-inch square cobbles cut

from reclaimed Yorkstone lifted from the factory floors of the same mill - the soft grey shades of the stone complementing the order of the man made pavers. Every time I visit the garden I can't help but wonder about all those people who once walked across them with out giving them a second glance.

The York stone reclaimed from the mill tells its own story.

Larger pieces form a path in the sunshine in the same garden. On hot days dark stains appear – the oil is from the machines that used to be bolted to them, you can still see the holes. Each machine was kept well oiled and so drops would soak into the flags and it is this that appears to move to the surface depending on the temperature. I never fail to stop and look wondering what sort of cloth was being produced on the machine that used to occupy that same spot, all be it in a very different location some 10 miles away from where they are now laid. ■