

The Garden Façade

Construction Guide

INTRODUCTION: The idea for the Garden Façade was to build a decorative wall to hide the functional area so necessary in every garden, large or small. The compost heap, bonfire area or facilities management station (general dumping ground) is always somewhat unsightly but could be just the excuse you need to design another interesting feature into your garden. In this case we did just that. In fact a rather unsuccessful attempt had been made previously using some wooden trellis and a wire arch, but the saving grace was that the climbing plant material had matured and provided the perfect setting for an 'instant ruin'.

THOSE ALL IMPORTANT FOUNDATIONS: Great care was required here as we wanted to make the most of the planting available to us. We built before the plants were really in full bud so as to minimise any damage and carefully cut out the wooden trellis and the wire arch laying the plants back out of harms way. We were perhaps a little too wary of possible root damage as we dug the foundation and, with hindsight, should have provided a wider and deeper foundation for this one dimensional wall. However we did have a safeguard up our sleeves and at the end of the build added to the wall's stability with reclaimed timber props and an added buttress making it look even more like an authentic ruin. Even so there has been some minor movement over subsequent years so this is a cautionary tale. I think it was worth the risk for the instant ruin look that we achieved for the first Spring, but extra work has had to be carried out since.



DAY ONE: As always the initial layout of the plinth course is the vital time to check all your levels and opening widths so as to minimise any chance of problems as the build progresses skywards. As you can see we keep checking these at every stage. It may seem pernickety but you must remember that we are building a ruin, not waiting for the elements to create one. We want to build in character but not instability. After all the Garden façade is intended to be a permanent feature: a little of the past built for the future. Once we have got to cill height for the Window and column top height for the Arch we stop and leave overnight for the mortar to harden. We should now be able to finish on Day Two.



DAY TWO: Today is the interesting time when the whole structure begins to take shape. As everything is now sturdy it is time to fit the Tracery Window and the Gothic Arch. The construction of both of these items is covered comprehensively in their own respective construction guides. You do, however, get a hint of how things happen from this picture. The timber template for the arch (the centering) is still in place. Arches and vaulted ceilings, even the Pont Du Gard in Avignon have all been constructed in this way for centuries. Any overhanging masonry is supported by the timber until, as with an arch, its inherent structural integrity takes over.



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DAY THREE: Although it only took two days to build the Garden Façade (excluding foundations) there was another full day needed to carefully retrain the climbing plants over the structure. Ted prided himself on the way he trained the Clematis, Roses and Honeysuckle over the masonry, and rightly so as can be seen from the photograph from our brochure—taken only weeks later.



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