



**Mistakes are good, you often learn more from them; incredible combinations only happen if you experiment**

GARDENING TALENT

## PHIL CORMIE

As co-founder of Till and Wild in the Scottish Highlands, Phil offers a nature-driven and plant-focused horticultural consultancy service

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

**First plant love** The humble apple tree. My grandparents had some old, gnarly, lichen-covered apple trees in their back garden that were beautiful. My sisters and I would always be playing in among those trees.

**Who has inspired your career the most?** My dad, Len. Whether it was collecting leaves with him on an autumnal day, having a blazing bonfire to keep warm on a winter morning or eating the first tomatoes of the season.

**Who are your horticultural heroes?** While I hugely admire and take much inspiration from such people as Fergus Garrett, Dan Pearson and Elliott Forsyth, my true heroes are the lecturers and staff at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, who nurtured my interest in conservation and sustainability.

**Favourite landscape and garden** While studying at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, I attended a first-year tour to East Sussex, which included a visit to Great Dixter. Seeing the wonderful meadows there was breathtaking and I came away with a greater focus on gardening alongside nature.

**Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener** Visit other gardens for inspiration. Make notes, as gardens need constant editing and it's great to build up observations over the course of a year. Mistakes are good, you often learn more from them; incredible planting combinations only happen if you experiment and make mistakes.

**Favourite planting style** I love the Arts and Crafts style, it's a little informal with a big dash of romance thrown in.

**Favourite 'weed' you're happy to have in your garden** *Digitalis purpurea* – an icon of the British countryside, they are hardy, prolific and give wonderful vertical accents.

**Biggest challenge facing gardeners today** Climate change. Dumps of rain followed by periods of drought, and late frosts. The unpredictability means we have to adapt.

**One easy thing that every gardener can do to be more sustainable** Use a good organic mulch on your borders. This will help to reduce the need to water during drought, suppress weeds and improve soil health.

**What principles have guided your attitude to gardening** I like to garden alongside nature. It's important to have a source of nectar throughout the year. I choose simple flower forms rather than double forms to allow easier access to nectar for the bees and butterflies.

**In what direction do you see horticulture heading in the next few years?** Irrigation is going to become a bigger issue.

**Website** [tillandwild.com](http://tillandwild.com)

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