

# KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

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MAGAZINE

Legends  
*of the Hall*  
THE HOROLOGICAL & HIGH  
JEWELLERY MASTERPIECES  
AT BASELWORLD



Spring into  
*Action*

THE RIIS CHELSEA FLOWER  
SHOW 2016 COMMENCES &  
TARA PALMER-TOMKINSON  
BRANCHES OUT INTO FASHION



# Full Seed Ahead

More than a century since the first RHS Chelsea Flower Show, the event is today recognised as the most prestigious in the horticulturalist's calendar. From a 60-foot carriage courtesy of the Belmont British Pullman to a garden inspired by the nation's eccentricity, the wheels are in motion for this year's show and **REBECCA WALLERSTEINER** predicts it is going to be full steam ahead

**T**he countdown to 24 May is well underway and an electric excitement is in the air. This year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show commences with the launch of an exquisite rose by specialist breeder Harkness, which has been named after RHS ambassador and national treasure, Mary Berry.

Heralding the start of the summer season and all the strawberries, Pimm's and outdoor fun that goes with it, Chelsea usually manages to coax the sun out for at least

some of its five day reign. This year's show marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the English gardener, who moved mountains and rivers to create glorious parks and gardens that still delight. In keeping with his adventurous spirit, landscape designer Cleve West is hauling in 30 to 40 tonnes of stone sourced from the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire to recreate his vision of an ancient oak wood. This year's show promises woodlands, water, healing plants and flowers at every corner.



From left: garden floor, The Chelsea Barracks Garden by Jo Thompson; The Viking Cruises Garden by Sarah Eberle; The Morgan Stanley Garden for Great Ormond Street Hospital by Clats Beardshaw; a Modern Amphitheatre by Jukka McTeer; The Maze Garden by Clive West; The Clarity Bay Garden by Sam Dixon.



The designers behind the 17 show gardens divide fairly evenly into names you will have heard of and names you perhaps haven't. Chelsea welcomes back veteran Andy Sturgeon for *The Telegraph* with an imaginative Jurassic landscape garden, inspired by the Natural History Museum. Meanwhile, Chris Beardshaw reveals his more tranquil garden for Morgan Stanley, designed for Great Ormond Street Hospital as 'a place to reflect'. To celebrate skincare brand L'Oréal's 40th, James Basson has created a rural Provencal garden, which is bound to delight local bees and insects, as well as visitors.

You can expect plenty of novelty and theatre – most remarkably in the Great Pavilion, where an 80-foot carriage from a 1920s Belmont British Pullman train (complete with liveried stewards) stands guard over a station planted with rare jungle ferns. Quirkiness is also thick on the ground with an acoustic garden inspired by percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie. The headlines will no doubt be grabbed by Diarmuid Gavin's British Eccentrics Garden; sponsored by Harrods, it features wacky garden gadgetry and twirling topiary.

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This year's show welcomes more female designers, including Catherine MacDonald, who is presenting a spectacular glasshouse folly and retreat for Hartley Botanic. In the artisan category, seasoned Chelsea exhibitor Sarah Eberle draws on the floating gardens of the Mekong River for her watery garden (sponsored by Viking Cruises) and Jo Thompson's show garden is based on the Chelsea Barracks. In contrast, Juliet Sargeant aims to raise awareness of the problem of modern slavery with two different atmospheres in her debut garden: empty, lifeless and black inside, colourful and open on the outside.

Chelsea is sure to be a sell-out show this year so we hope you've already secured tickets for arguably the most spectacular event of the summer season. *RHS Chelsea Flower Show, 24-28 May, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, SW3*. Ticket prices range from £23 to £68 and must be booked in advance. To book tickets, call 0844 338 7502 or visit the website: [rhs.org.uk/chelsea](http://rhs.org.uk/chelsea) ▶



## The British Eccentric



Chelsea remains to this day the cornerstone of the annual horticultural calendar. And this year, TV presenter and award-winning garden designer Diarmuid Gavin is creating an unforgettable spectacle to celebrate British eccentrics and their gadgets. Inspired by cartoonist William Heath Robinson's overly-complicated machine drawings, The Harrods Eccentric British Garden will have an octagonal folly, a sunken Italianate pond, terraces and topiary – as well as a wooden shed, complete with cogs, wheels and garden gadgetry. But in true Diarmuid Gavin style, it will be full of quirks: every quarter of an hour, the garden will engage in a “short performance”: box balls will bob up and down, conical bay trees will twirl, and plants and herbs will rise from the ground and “dance around the structure”, says Gavin.

Gavin came to prominence as the presenter of TV programmes such as *Diarmuid's Big Adventure* and *Art of the Garden*. Having won numerous medals including a Chelsea gold with his 2011 floating Irish Sky Garden, this spectacular garden for Harrods will be his ninth in total for Chelsea. To coincide with the show, Gavin is also designing matching displays and terrace gardens for the department store.

What was the inspiration behind his delightful and unconventional design? “This is the garden of an eccentric inventor, who loves his garden, but loathes the work involved in its upkeep so he has concocted his very

own DIY scheme,” he explains. “I didn’t set out to create a traditional beautiful garden, but to include a sense of playfulness.” He began planning last November and he tells me that the most satisfying part has been watching his vision gradually come to life. Every 15 minutes, the space will be transformed into a mechanical flight of fancy, with flower beds and patio furniture rising from the ground, and foliage being trimmed by mechanical shears.

Another gem included within is the Guinness Clock, created for the 1951 Festival of Britain. This crazy object contributed to the festival’s feeling of fun after the drab years of World War II and features well-known characters from the beer brand’s advertisements. Designed by the firm of Lewitt-Him, it took five months for clockmakers Baume & Co. Ltd to construct. Only seven Guinness clocks were created and Gavin managed to track down the only intact one left to take inspiration from its wacky performance.

Another important inspiration was the 18th-century English gardener, Capability Brown, who designed the gardens at Stowe and Highclere Castle (as featured in television drama *Downton Abbey*), among others.

If there was a prize for the wackiest and most fun garden at this year’s Chelsea Flower Show, it would definitely be awarded to Gavin’s, which is bound to draw huge crowds with its playful design that appeals to the child in all of us. [diarmuidgavindesigns.co.uk](http://diarmuidgavindesigns.co.uk)

## Poison Ivy



Another seasoned Chelsea Flower Show exhibitor, Jekka McVicar’s gardens and floral displays have been admired by thousands of visitors and won many prizes over the years. This time round, McVicar has been sponsored by St John’s Hospice, an independent charity which provides palliative care to terminally ill patients and their families. The charity asked her to design a show garden that was soothing and reflective, but also inspiring and challenging. McVicar has therefore carefully chosen plants, herbs and trees based on their healing properties, colour, form, leaf texture and scent.

“My garden will provide an oasis of calm away from the city’s noise and also offers a friendly habitat for birds, bees and other wildlife,” she comments. For more than 30 years, the gardening expert has advised governments, the media and chefs as to herbs’ cultivation and health-giving properties. She is the author of the bestselling *Jekka’s Complete Herb Book: In Association with the*



Photography: Jekka McVicar

*Royal Horticultural Society*, which has sold over a million copies.

Her Modern Apothecary Garden reflects key themes selected for this year: regeneration, sustainability and local wildlife. “The inspiration has been based on extensive conversations with doctors and care professionals about ways to improve health within the context of gardens and plants.”

She imagined a refuge of quiet and solitude, where clinicians, patients and their families could come to reflect. “I have designed a soothing garden, with ‘wellness’ at its heart, to highlight the vital relationship between medicine and nature. The simple act of sitting in a garden, surrounded by plants, has a calming effect and can lift the spirits,” she tells me. “In Ayurvedic medicine, doctors often ask patients to sit in a herb garden.” Specially-designed oak benches will provide a resting point for doctors, patients and families, while water will provide the central, soothing focal point.

Grown at her Herb Farm, the garden will feature research-based plants known to encourage well-being. The outer section will be given over to native herbs and grasses and enclosed by apple trees, yews and hawthorn. “I aim to show people how beautiful herbs are in a garden space and how diverse the herb world is.” Among the many herbs included will be rosemary, which has been proven to be good for memory and stroke-prevention, vitamin C-rich parsley, which helps support the immune system and aids wound healing, St John’s wort (helps to counter-act depression), and thyme (helps to prevent nightmares).

“All our food was called ‘pot-herb’ before the word vegetable came in. The Zulus still use herbs as food and medicine – the same way we were using herbs in England 500 years ago,” she comments.

After the show, the garden will live on, being painstakingly dismantled by crane and relocated to St John’s Hospice. But before moving to its permanent home, it must face the necessary scrutiny of bustling crowds and judges at this year’s show. [jekkasherbfarm.com](http://jekkasherbfarm.com)



Modern Apothecary Garden, designed by Jekka McVicar



## Go West



Embrace the romance of quintessentially English woodland with Cleve West's design, capturing the spirit of Chelsea past and present. Stunted oaks, a gravel path, rough stone and woodland may be more commonly associated with the English countryside, but this award-winning West Country designer brings them together at this year's Chelsea with his aptly-titled Ancient Oak

Woodland Garden. This is his second

garden sponsored by M&G Investments and he has been planning his design since last summer. In 2014, West's paradise-themed M&G garden won a gold medal.

His garden has drawn influence from the ancient trees on Exmoor National Park, one of West's favourite places to visit as a teenager, and a place of great sentimental value for the designer. "I am seeking to capture that moment in my youth when I was first inspired by the natural landscape and then take that memory and use contemporary design to create a garden that blends both ancient and modern, past and present," he explains. He aims to show how garden design, which should trigger the imagination and excite the onlooker, has changed over the decades. His garden successfully marries the old and the new – feeling both traditional and modern thanks to contemporary features in an unmistakably

English atmosphere. It will include a diverse range of plants, shrubs and trees, including native British oaks, honeysuckle, grasses, thistles, perennials and wild strawberries.

It will feature approximately 30 to 40 tonnes of stone, sourced from a quarry in the Forest of Dean, along with seven trees, and a stone and gravel path with woodland-edge planting leading to a sunken terrace and pool. "The path, a metaphor for my own journey into garden design, starts with rough stone and gravel becoming smoother with sawn stone towards the sunken 'designer' space," says West. Sustainability is the cornerstone of West's philosophy, incorporating local materials wherever possible and carefully selects plants that work in their surroundings. His planting schemes, natural or contrived, will always be guided by existing flora and local conditions, especially where biodiversity is an issue. "My garden includes a wild planting area consisting of long grasses and flowers that will invite wildlife and has selected plants that will encourage pollinating insects."

Another highlight will be the sandstone-edged, half-hidden pool, which has been set low and with natural plants gently spilling over the edge of its banks. The sunken terrace is crafted in grey sandstone sourced from the Forest of Dean and embraces the tension between the familiar and unfamiliar to give the garden an 'edge'. The layout is geometric, with sharp lines – the essence of modern design.

Lovers of the English countryside will adore the woodland, tumbling roses and perennials all in a palette of greens, punctuated by soft pinks, pale yellows and creams. Its impact at the CFS is destined to be memorable so, in my view, a gold medal would be an entirely appropriate award, for this remarkable rugged, woodland garden. ■

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