

# GARDEN DESIGN JOURNAL

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# SHOW REPORT 1: CHELSEA

Above: The calming space of Tom Stuart-Smith's 'The Laurent-Perrier *Harpers and Queen* garden' won gold. The garden featured a black pond contrasted strongly with soft red sandstone and an enclosing in-situ concrete wall. This garden was one of only a select few that demonstrated strong garden design

JERRY HARPLUR



Right and below right: For a first time Chelsea designer, Andy Sturgeon's 'Circ contemporary man's garden' was full of many varied garden elements, making for a strong contrast with Stuart-Smith's minimal-meets-meadow style

JANE PORTER



The Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show has been and gone. Jules Mallinson outlines the varying themes that amounted to an unimpressive year

In 2000, the RHS' Chelsea Flower Show featured many show gardens that exhibited an underlying formal symmetry with a central focal point: for example the *Gardens Illustrated* 'Evolution' garden. This year's show however, included more varied spatial design, but seemed to be lacking an atmosphere. This was due, in part, to the reduced number of show gardens: just 16 compared to 22 in 2000.

There were a range of themes this year. A contemporary feel was evident with gardens from Tom Stuart-Smith ('Laurent-Perrier *Harpers and Queen* garden'), Cleve West and Johnny Woodford ('A garden for learning'), and Andy Sturgeon ('Circ contemporary man's garden'). As a contender for best in show, Stuart-Smith's design represented an interesting juxtaposition of minimal-meets-meadow style. Exotic planting was prevalent in 'The Shloer garden' designed by Judith Sharpe; HMP Leyhill's 'The garden of eden'; and in Sturgeon's architectural planting featuring *Agave attenuata*. This theme continued into the floral marquee with numerous displays of bamboos, palms and grasses.

## SIGN THEMES

On paper, the show's line-up looked varied, including inspiration from garden styles around the world: Turkish carpets, Arabian tranquillity and authentic Zen with Shintoism. In reality however, the show did not live up to expectations. There was some controversy over the award of only two gold medals, one of which was for a textbook garden — 'A real Japanese garden', designed by Professor Masao Fukuhara, Masahiro Yoshida and Jun Takeda — which also won the best in show award. The garden will be rebuilt as a permanent feature at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Three other gardens were of particular note:

- ➔ 'Circ contemporary man's garden' designed by Sturgeon. The mixture of elements included rusted walls, crushed concrete, dramatic steel hoops, sleek zinc and polished beech. A stainless steel pool and sculpture were inspired by the logo of the sponsor. The views into the garden were maximised by the double aspect emphasising some effective planting compositions — however, hard landscape features largely overshadowed these;
- ➔ 'A garden for learning', by Woodford and West. The design aim was to create a 'restful but inspiring space conducive to learning and contemplation'. The finished result had the Woodford-West trademark style stamped all over it — bold art forms, moving water and complementary planting;
- ➔ 'The Laurent-Perrier *Harpers and Queen* garden', designed by Stuart-Smith. A move away from his previous use of historical references gave him the opportunity to try something new: the resulting garden was without symmetry, ornament and the obligatory vista. The planting was calm, but not without detail and form. The hard landscape was minimal — concrete walls, a red sandstone terrace and a black pool — but dramatic. The resulting visual contrast was a balanced strong and restful composition.

It was encouraging to see a courtyard from a garden design school: 'The tastevin garden' by the Pickard School of Design. However, the award of best courtyard garden went to another group of students from the London Borough of Barnet's Skills Training Centre, for 'The garden of elements'.

Whether you would prefer the excitement of Sturgeon's garden, the sophistication of Stuart-Smith's design or the replicative competence of Fukuhara's garden, you have to agree that next year's show needs something more stimulating.

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Above and top right: Details from 'A garden for learning', by Johnny Woodford and Cleve West including sculptures to provoke a contemplative response from the garden user — in keeping with the learning theme of the design. The garden was awarded a silver-gilt medal

Left: 'The tastevin garden', using the theme of claret wine, designed by Students from the Pickard School of Garden Design



JANE PORTER

## PRINCIPAL SHOW GARDEN WINNERS AT CHELSEA 2001

Gold medal winners:

- ➔ 'A real Japanese garden'. Designer: Professor Masao Fukuhara and team. Sponsor: *The Daily Telegraph*. (Also best in show garden).
- ➔ 'The Laurent-Perrier *Harpers and Queen* garden'. Designer: Tom Stuart-Smith. Sponsors: Laurent-Perrier (UK), *Harpers and Queen* and *crocus.co.uk*.

Silver-gilt flora winners:

- ➔ 'Bradstone's grotto garden'. Designer: Alan Sargent. Sponsor: Bradstone.
- ➔ 'Circ contemporary man's garden'. Designer: Andy Sturgeon. Sponsor: Circ.
- ➔ 'A theatrical garden'. Designers: Xa Tollemache and Jon Kelleff. Sponsor: *The Evening Standard*.
- ➔ 'Help the aged lifetime care garden'. Designer: Paul Stowe. Sponsor: Lifetime Care.
- ➔ 'The garden of tranquillity'. Designer: Charles Funke Associates. Sponsor: His Highness Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan.
- ➔ 'A garden for learning'. Designers: Johnny Woodford and Cleve West. Sponsor: Merrill Lynch Investment Managers.