

# HOUSE & GARDEN®

DECEMBER 2005  
£3.30

## HOW TO HAVE A BRILLIANT CHRISTMAS

- THE BEST BAUBLES AND PRETTIEST LIGHTS
- 150 PRESENT IDEAS
- FAKE FIR THE MOST GLAMOROUS TREES

FESTIVE RECIPES  
FOR ENTERTAINING

INSPIRED  
INTERIORS  
From a converted  
barn in Norfolk  
to a sumptuous  
apartment in Paris



# EMPLOYMENT CURVE

CHELSEA GOLD-  
MEDALLIST ANDY  
STURGEON CLAIMS THAT HE  
OWES HIS SUCCESS TO A  
CHANGE IN PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION  
OF GARDENS; CLARE FOSTER  
ATTRIBUTES IT TO HIS HARD-  
WORKING DESIGNS FOR  
REAL PEOPLE



Andy Sturgeon's gold medal-winning design for the Merrill Lynch show garden at Chelsea earlier this year was a triumph, affirming his place among Britain's leading garden designers. Unlike many Chelsea creations, the garden seemed both real and usable. Leading from a glass-fronted building designed by Andy himself, the garden was built on a simple diagonal layout to give the illusion of space, incorporating a sophisticated black reflecting pool 'punctured' with square voids, an area of lawn and deep triangular beds planted with shrubs, bulbs and perennials. 'It was the type of garden I thought I might like myself,' says Andy, 'and the building, which could have been a home office or rear extension, made it relevant to a wider audience.'

In real life, Andy Sturgeon's garden designs are similarly hard-working, but they are modern, aesthetic and exciting, too. He has been designing gardens for 17 years, but had to substitute his income in the early years with garden-maintenance jobs. 'In the early Nineties, people didn't understand what garden designers did, and there just wasn't the work out there.' So disillusioned did he become with his chosen career that he gave it all up in 1994 to go travelling, spending time in Africa and Southeast Asia, where he looked at how plants grow in the wild. Returning in 1997, he took advantage of the huge wave of interest in gardening that had been building in his absence. He soon relaunched his career with a book, *Planted* (Hodder & Stoughton), which aimed to interest people younger than the stereotypical gardener in plants and gardening. Suddenly, his skills as a garden designer were very much in demand.

Today, his portfolio encompasses both country and city gardens, including roof terraces, which have become something of a speciality. One of these roof gardens, with spectacular 360-degree views over the London Docklands, encapsulates his flair for design. The 100-square-metre space, designed for a 27-year-old bachelor who wanted to use the roof for entertaining, comprises deck and dining area, a pool and water feature, and a seating zone with simple oak cubes arranged round a gas fire – a source of light and heat, as well as a striking focal point. Within this framework, there are generous beds planted with wind-tolerant plants such as phormiums, agaves and grasses.

When choosing plants, Andy is principally interested in texture and shape; colour plays a lesser, though important, role. 'I use a lot of shrubs – textural contrast within the planting is very important,' he says. The hard landscaping materials he favours are generally natural, but are used in innovative, interesting ways: 'I tend to shy away from shiny stainless steel and glass and use a more limited palette, mainly of wood and stone.' Reflecting his interest in architecture, each garden is designed to link visually with its associated building, and increasingly he is working with architects on gardens for new homes and extensions. A garden he recently designed for a modernist house in Kent, for example, echoes the lines of the round tower in the centre of the building with a series of curvy, tapering walls. Built in rendered concrete, the walls create a gentle but dynamic framework, dividing the space into natural-looking compartments for lawn and plants.

With another Chelsea garden in the pipeline for 2006, and dozens of private gardens in the planning stages, Andy believes that he has benefited from changes which have occurred since he embarked on his career. 'People's general awareness of design is so much higher than it was,' he reflects. 'Television-garden make-overs may have had their day, but they have created a profession that just wasn't there before' □

Andy Sturgeon (tel: 01273-553336, website: [www.andysturgeon.com](http://www.andysturgeon.com))



OPPOSITE Andy Sturgeon sits in his own garden in Brighton. THIS PAGE In this ingeniously designed rooftop garden in the London Docklands (top), oak cubes provide seating from which to admire the view. Curving concrete walls echo the form of the round tower of the modernist house at this garden in Kent (middle). Integral to his gold medal-winning garden at Chelsea Flower Show 2005 was a black reflecting pool 'punctured' with square voids (bottom)