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Designer profiles

From sculptural landscapes to a bit of bonkers Britishness, we look at the ideas behind some of the main show gardens at Chelsea 2016

WORDS ANNIE GATTI



Natural landscapes are at the heart of Andy's 2016 Chelsea garden.



Profile

Name Andy Sturgeon.

Training Dip (Landscape), MSGD, MLI.

Chelsea history

Six gold medals, including Best Show Garden 2010.

Andy Sturgeon

Nature in its many forms – and the countryside of any country – are what feed my imagination. When I was buying plants in Spain for this garden, I was stopping the car all the time to photograph stones, the way light was falling on a rock face or some scrubby old plants in a car park.

Probably one of my favourite designers at the moment is Andrea Cochran. She has the marriage of plants and sculptural architecture that I really like.

I tend to do the character and spatial definition of a garden with hard landscaping and although it contributes to the atmosphere, I often feel I can swing the mood in different directions depending on what planting style I opt for.

This garden is quite sculptural and architectural so I made a model rather than draw it. When I shaped the bronze-coated steel fins I had in mind the bony plates of a stegosaurus and I felt the character of the space had an arid feel. It is meant to be carved out of an existing landscape. I want the plants to be ones you'd never find growing together in the wild because they are from different parts of the world, but as they're from the same climatic regions they should grow happily together.

I really like bringing a modernist aesthetic to something older. I used to design mainly urban gardens but now I might get called in to do a modernist garden within a historic walled garden.

Andy's essential design elements



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1 Curved paths

This curving, raised path creates river-like movement down a rectangular garden by the Thames. The curves also carve out areas for sitting and opportunities for textured planting.



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2 Sharp lines

Andy took his cue from the geometry of this timber and glass house by Huf Haus to create the granite steps that wrap around the building. Plants help to soften the sharp lines.



ANDY STURGEON

3 Links to landscape

Low, meadow planting is used to bring the landscape right up to this award-winning contemporary house, affording it an uninterrupted view across to the Sussex Downs.



ANDY STURGEON

4 Use of clump-forming perennials

Dry-stone walls are used as a visual link between the disparate areas of this Surrey garden. Clump-forming perennials, shrubs and grasses are repeated in many of Andy's plans.

Plot MA423.

Sponsor

The Telegraph.

Contractor Crocus.

Theme A sculptural garden carved out of a rocky, arid landscape that celebrates the geology and plants of such regions.

2016 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

This is a boldly designed garden, both in terms of its structure and planting. Angular, bronze-coated steel fins, rising to 2.5m, seem to burst out of the limestone bedrock and create a linear flow down the garden. Chunky boulders anchor the garden in the arid landscape and sawn limestone paths and bridges drive an irregular way through the garden, with two angled slabs forming resting places. Three wide steps lead down to the largest of these paved slabs, which is partially enclosed by a cluster of fins. Here sawn pieces of limestone form seats on either side of a hand-forged steel firebowl with a bronze finish that tones with the fins and the adobe-like render on the boundary walls. Water flows from stylised, bronze-hued shoots at the

front of the garden to create a shallow pool. The planting at the boundaries has a shrubby, scrubby feel from forms of *Eremophila*, *Osmanthus* and *Pistacia lentiscus*, suggesting the landscape beyond this gardened space. Andy has chosen corky barked *Schinus molle* trees and an evergreen oak, which he hopes will not be in full leaf, to evoke "a dusty, dirty" atmosphere while the lower planting in the centre of the garden features shrubs, perennials and grasses in shades of silver, olive and grey green, and with a variety of interesting textures. Sprinklings of umbels, spikes and daisies in shades of yellow, soft pink and purple, pale blue, white and orange are dotted around the edge of the garden. **Contact** 01273 553336, andysturgeon.com