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MAY 2016/ISSUE 166/£6



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THE JOURNAL FOR THE SOCIETY OF GARDEN DESIGNERS



WORDS: Emma Reuss & Jodie Jones

# RHS CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW 2016

With big-name designers and fresh talent, this year's show is shaping up to be one of the most interesting in years

Visitors to Chelsea 2016 will be thrilled by the arsenal of big guns making show gardens at Chelsea this year.

Cleve West MSGD, Andy Sturgeon FSGD, Chris Beardshaw, Diarmuid Gavin and Jo Thompson MSGD will all be recreating their visions on Main Avenue or Royal Hospital Way. Popular gardening pundit Matthew Wilson is back for a second time and Sarah Eberle FSGD is not only making an Artisan garden but designing the renowned Hilliers stand in the Great Pavilion too, now that Andy McIndoe (see page 58) has bowed out. Thomas Hoblyn MSGD is also designing for the Pavilion as opposed to Main Avenue (turn to page 53 for our student interview with Thomas).

The RHS garden is being designed by Pre-Registered member Ann-Marie Powell (see page 23), and there is shining youth in the form of Hugo Bugg and Sam Ovens, as well as

designers from Australia, Ireland, South Korea, Russia, Holland and Japan.

There are 17 show gardens, two more than usual, plus six Fresh gardens and six Artisan gardens, promising an eclectic mix of themes and styles, which suggests a good, if not great, show. Everyone is talking about the fact that the number of women creating show gardens this year has gone up from two in 2015 to seven this year; and many people are eager to find out how Pavilion queens Rosy Hardy and Jekka McVicar get on with their big outside plots. There is also some novelty in the new Contractor's Award, which will be presented to the best build of the show; and a new format of delivering feedback for judges.

Here we take a look at some of the gardens SGD members are designing for the show and other highlights, and find out how things are shaping up behind the scenes. →



# 05 THE TELEGRAPH GARDEN

Andy Sturgeon FSGD

**ANDY STURGEON'S** *Telegraph* Garden design represents an unconventional theme; that of a snapshot within wider geological events that have manipulated the landscape over time. It's a "gently gardened place within a larger, wilder setting," says Andy.

Mountain ranges are symbolised by bronze fins that jut out of the ground, creating vertical accents around the space – something that is challenging to do in an unusual way at Chelsea. The fins work hard in the scheme; sculptural shards that create definition between spaces, enclose seating areas, frame views through and around the space and provide a contrasting backdrop to the planting. Their different angles catch the sun as it moves around the garden, each lighting up in turn and casting interesting shadow shapes. There are islands of stone: big blocks of roughly hewn Chilmark limestone, which echo those laid down during the late Jurassic period 150 million years ago. All the

built elements are formed from similar rhomboid shapes.

The metal fins were the starting point, an idea that had been waiting for an opportunity. He made a model rather than a drawing. "It didn't take very long and the fins almost designed themselves. They sort of flow through and I developed the garden by placing other components around them," he says.

Andy always incorporates artistry into his gardens and this year he employed a bevy of craftspeople: architectural ironworkers, artists, sculptors, stonemasons, water feature designers, nurserymen, concrete artists, ceramicists and metal fabricators.

Planting consists of a contrived landscape, using plants from the semi-arid regions of about 32 different countries. It is an imagined but harmonious planting plan that is designed to sit comfortably in natural surroundings.

This is Andy's eighth Chelsea and he admits that the pressure never diminishes. "I'm

taking risks here. It's a really complicated garden to build. I'm really bored with all the rectangular grid layouts often seen at Chelsea, but there is a reason for their popularity: they are easy to draw and design, cheaper and simpler to build. We have 19 days to make the garden and the logistics are daunting: large trees, 80 tons of stone, 17 huge monoliths and thousands of plants to place."

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"I'm taking risks here. It's a really complicated garden to build"

Andy Sturgeon FSGD

