

RHS CHELSEA
FLOWER SHOW 2016

Telegraph wins best in show

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Garden for the ages makes history at Chelsea

Telegraph wins record eighth top prize with design invoking the ancient fabric of the Earth

By Gordon Rayner CHIEF REPORTER

MILLIONS of years in the making, and built to withstand whatever the future holds, The Telegraph Garden made its own piece of history yesterday by winning the ultimate accolade of Best Show Garden at Chelsea.

Andy Sturgeon's "captured landscape" impressed the judges with its bold design, attention to detail and faithful execution.

It also cemented *The Daily Telegraph's* place as the most successful sponsor in the history of Chelsea Flower Show, with eight Best Show Gardens and 18 gold medals from 25 entries. *The Telegraph* has now won garden design's ultimate prize twice as many times as any other sponsor, and has five more gold medals than any other. Mr

Sturgeon, 50, designed the garden intending to remind us of the fleeting nature of our own time on Earth by building a landscape reflecting the planet's geological history. It includes paths built from limestone and bronze fins that represent an ancient mountain range.

Mr Sturgeon - who has now won two Best Show Garden awards, both with *The Telegraph* - said he was "totally over the moon" at the result.

He said: "There must have been 100 people involved at various stages in bringing this garden together, and it's so hard to thank them all properly, so this is a great way of recognising what they have all put into it. The award is not just for me, it's for everyone."

The garden, which contains 80 tons of stone, and plants from France, Italy and Spain, took 10 months to design, source and build. Although the plants would never be found in the same place in the wild, and are not even necessarily native to the same continent, they all need a similar climate, meaning the garden would be completely viable in

A story of success The Telegraph's past triumphs

1997 The modernist garden that changed everything: Christopher Bradley-Hole's Latin Garden was a minimalist composition inspired by the Roman poet Virgil. It comprised a straight walk from one end to the other, subtly divided on either side by low walls.

1999 Michael Balston's Reflective Garden used tensile

structures, a decking walkway and ascending levels of lawns.

2001 A little corner of Japan right in the heart of Chelsea, the garden by Prof Masao Fukuhara combined three styles: pond and spring, dry stone and tea garden.

A waterfall gushed into a lake backed by rocks.

2006 Enclosed by alternating sections of hornbeam hedge and a pre-rusted

steel wall, Tom Stuart-Smith's garden combined minimal asymmetric plan with materials, surfaces and planting of rich patina and texture.

2009 This was Swedish landscape architect Ulf Nordhjel's homage to British traditions, conjuring the "secret garden" magic of the enclosed cottage garden.

2010 Andy Sturgeon defied the harrowing sudden death of his wife earlier that year to mastermind the triumphant gravel garden with Mediterranean feel and exuberant planting.

2011 Large columns and self-seeding plants were orchestrated by Cleve West to create a sense of time elapsed, inspired by Roman ruins in Libya.

the right setting. Mr Sturgeon, whose design studio is in Brighton, was commended by the judges for his attention to detail in choosing plants that could coexist, for hidden plant groupings tucked in behind the bronze plates, and for the attention to detail in the hard landscaping, which features three-quarter-inch gaps under some of the stonework to create unusual shadows.

Mr Sturgeon said: "Part of the reason *The Telegraph* has been so successful over the years is that they are a very hands-off sponsor. There is no design brief, they just trust you to come up with something special, and over the last 10 years every garden that has won Best Show Garden has been without any written brief."

"I have done eight show gardens at Chelsea but until I did the first one for *The Telegraph* I didn't really think about winning Best Show Garden. Then I designed my first *Telegraph* Garden in 2010 with the specific intention of winning the prize, and it did."

"This means every bit as much as that award did."

Mr Sturgeon becomes only the fifth designer to win Best Show Garden more than once. Only one person, Tom Stuart-Smith, has won three times.

At the end of the show, the garden may be given a new lease of life, as Mr Sturgeon has had a request to rebuild it as a private garden elsewhere, but with plants better suited to British weather.

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Among the smaller gardens, Martin Cook and Gary Breeze won Best Fresh Garden for The Marble and Granite Centre's "Antithesis of Sarcophagi" - a granite cube containing a woodland garden that can only be seen through peepholes - and Sarah Eberle's Viking Cruises Mekong Garden won Best Artisan Garden.

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Andy Sturgeon, *The Telegraph's* designer, holds the winner's vase in his garden, which took the Chelsea Flower Show's prize for Best Show Garden. Right, some of *The Telegraph's* previous prize winners



WARREN ALLOTT FOR THE TELEGRAPH