

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?



LATE GROWTH

Andy Sturgeon FSGD and **Jekka McVicar VMH** on how their garden for retired residents is designed for participation as well as enjoyment

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED

GARDEN and landscape designer Andy Sturgeon FSGD set up his studio in 1988. His many awards include eight Chelsea Gold medals and three Best in Shows. Here, we talk to him about a community garden at a Fulham development by Riverstone, specialist in retirement living, which he has created alongside renowned herb expert and horticulturist, Jekka McVicar VMH.

Tell us about the Riverstone project

The Fulham garden is one of two projects that Jekka and I are creating for Riverstone and both share the same ethos, to enable residents to live life to the full, whatever their age or ability. Riverstone was keen to include

horticulturally-rich and seasonal landscapes for the residents to enjoy and interact with.

What was your brief?

To maximise the potential of the urban site, with spaces for social gatherings, as well as areas where residents can enjoy privacy. The clients are aware of the biophilic benefits of being in a garden and of being able to participate in gardening and wanted the gardens to have planting that would show the passing of the seasons. They also asked for a herb garden that residents can work in.

How have you responded?

I created a geometric design to reflect the architecture and with glimpses through to



the river, to connect the garden with its location. The paths provide opportunities for friendly interaction, while trees and shrubs enclose more private areas. We wanted to avoid using a lot of hard structures and when you look across the garden, it reads as a very green space. At its heart is the herb garden with planting designs by Jekka.

What type of planting have you used?

It includes many flowering pollinator plants, such as *Phlomis russeliana*, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, *Salvia x sylvestris* 'Mainacht', and *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty'. For year-round colour, I have included a backbone of evergreen shrubs such as *Mahonia eurybracteata* subsp. *ganpinensis* 'Soft Caress', hebes, and one of my favourites, *Baccharis halimifolia*, which flowers in autumn. Trees, including *Betula utilis* subsp. *albosinensis* 'Pink Champagne' and *Carpinus betulus* 'Frans Fontaine', have been chosen for their notable barks and structure. And, of course, we have herbs chosen by Jekka.

Were there any major challenges?

This is a podium garden, installed above a swimming pool and gym, so we had to work around sky lights, hide vents, and calculate the soil volumes needed to sustain the trees and other plants. But solving these problems is the part of the process that I really enjoy. ○

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DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT FOR GDJ?

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IN THE HERB GARDEN, WITH JEKKA MCVICAR

Celebrated herb expert and horticulturist Jekka McVicar VMH is Vice President of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and has been awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour in Horticulture by the RHS, won 62 RHS Gold medals for her herb exhibits, and written eight books, including the best-selling *Jekka's Complete Herb Book*.

She says of the project: 'Riverstone has a really progressive attitude towards its clients and asked me to design a herb

garden that would encourage them to remain active by tending the plants and harvesting them for use in their homes.

'We were keen to get the residents involved in the actual planning of the plot; many will have had – and maybe built – their own gardens before moving here so I have created the planting for three of the raised beds, and the residents will choose the herbs for the fourth one. I will also be giving talks and

workshops to show the benefits of herbs, such as how rosemary improves memory, and the calming effects of lemon balm, and we hope the residents will enjoy the whole process and perhaps take on some of the maintenance of the beds in the future. The herbs also increase the biodiversity of the garden and bring in a huge number of pollinators when they flower.'

Jekkas.com