

ISSUE 271 + NOVEMBER 2025

# GARDEN DESIGN JOURNAL

## SWEET RAINWATER, WHERE DO YOU RUN TO?

SGLD.ORG.UK

SOCIETY OF  
GARDEN +  
LANDSCAPE  
DESIGNERS



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FROM THE EXPERTS

POINT OF VIEW  
PEAT AND  
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**EXPERTS ON LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION**

Among the speakers at this year's Historic Buildings, Parks & Gardens Event on 11 November 2025 will be Charlotte Harris, co-founder of Harris Bugg Studio. She will be giving a talk about *Transforming Historic Landscapes*, in which she will explore how history can shape contemporary design and will draw on the Studio's work on projects such as the Kitchen Garden at RHS Bridgewater (pictured). The winner of the Historic Houses' Garden of the Year 2025 competition will be announced at the same event (see also page 10 of this issue).

For details and to register, visit [hbpge.hall-mccartney.co.uk](http://hbpge.hall-mccartney.co.uk)





## Hello,

I was reading the regular blurb on my water bill the other day and the words 'Could you save on your wastewater?' caught my eye. I could save quite a bit of money, it seems, if all the rainwater from the house drains into a soakaway, stream or river instead of the water company's sewer. I could also save money if more than 10 per cent of the water I use does not return to the system.

It made working on this issue of *Garden Design Journal*, which looks at water management in gardens, especially interesting. I wonder how many garden designers ask their clients if their water provider offers similar incentives?

Regardless of any financial savings, as the name of Rachel Bailey MSGLD's award-winning show garden reminds us (see page 26), water is life and we need to look after it. If we can do that in ways that add to the pleasure we take from our gardens, so much the better!

**Arabella St John Parker**

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**SOCIETY OF  
GARDEN +  
LANDSCAPE  
DESIGNERS**

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### ← COVER

Photograph, Phil Hirst, garden design by Phil Hirst and Jo Charlton (see page 14). Issue 271/£7 ISSN: 1356-6458

## LETTER FROM COUNCIL

SGLD

Another beautifully curated edition of *Garden Design Journal*. Dropping onto your doormat or maybe into your inbox, it is brimming with interesting and inspiring articles, all brought together by our wonderful Editor, Arabella, the editorial panel and the team at our publisher, James Pembroke Media.

We are very fortunate at the *Journal* that Arabella goes above and beyond to bring each excellently curated issue to life, but what about the members of the editorial panel? Who are they, and what do they do?

Well, they are the unsung heroes behind every edition. Their ideas related to topics such as sustainability, soil, international design and much more are proposed to Arabella and discussed at the editorial meetings.

Printed in the masthead of every issue are the names of these volunteers: Zoe Claymore, Naomi Ferrett-Cohen, Marcus Foster, Amber Hine, Joe Perkins, yours truly and Rae Wilkinson. We meet, via Zoom, three times a

## MEMBERS OF THE EDITORIAL PANEL ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES BEHIND EVERY EDITION.

year, review recent past issues and scrutinise the proposed content for the next three. I am always impressed by the breadth of experience and skills that these designers so generously share and how this influences each edition.

Students, pre-registered and fully registered members are all represented on the panel and their insights ensure that the *Journal* provides a broad range of content for our readers.

Reporting to Council regarding all aspects of the magazine, including the financial, takes time and effort but to learn from these members, whose experience ranges from leading respected design studios and award-winning show-garden creators, to expert arboriculture and student talent, is a wonderful experience.

I hope you enjoy this, the November issue.

**Christina Sullivan,**  
pre-registered SGLD member  
COUNCIL LEAD FOR  
GARDEN DESIGN JOURNAL



## Join us today: become a member of the SOCIETY OF GARDEN + LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS

*Garden Design Journal* is the journal of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers (SGLD), the professional association for garden and landscape designers. The Society has been championing excellence in garden design for more than 40 years and includes both individual designers and design practices among its growing membership. They are all competent, creative professionals, accredited by the

SGLD and working to its Code of Conduct, on a wide range of projects around the globe.

### CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

**Student member** Open to students currently attending a suitable course – see [sgld.org.uk](http://sgld.org.uk) for details.

**Pre-registered graduate** For those who have recently obtained their garden design qualification and who wish to join the Pathway to Registered Membership.

**Pre-registered member** Open to all professional garden designers who aspire to Registered Membership.

Applicants need to provide evidence of competence in garden design either by qualification or review, plus evidence of professional indemnity insurance. This category now includes submission for accreditation as an inclusive fee – there are no additional charges.

**Registered member** The status awarded to professional garden designers who have been assessed and approved by the SGLD Accreditation Panel. MSGLD (Member of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers) or FSGLD (Fellow of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers) can be used after their name and they are profiled and

promoted on the SGLD website.

**Affiliated business partnerships** Open to landscape professional suppliers who foster and promote sustainable and environmentally friendly garden design, using responsible techniques and practices.

**Registered practice** A category for Registered Members who would also like to advertise their practice alongside their MSGLD/FSGLD status.

**You can also join the Society as a Friend.**

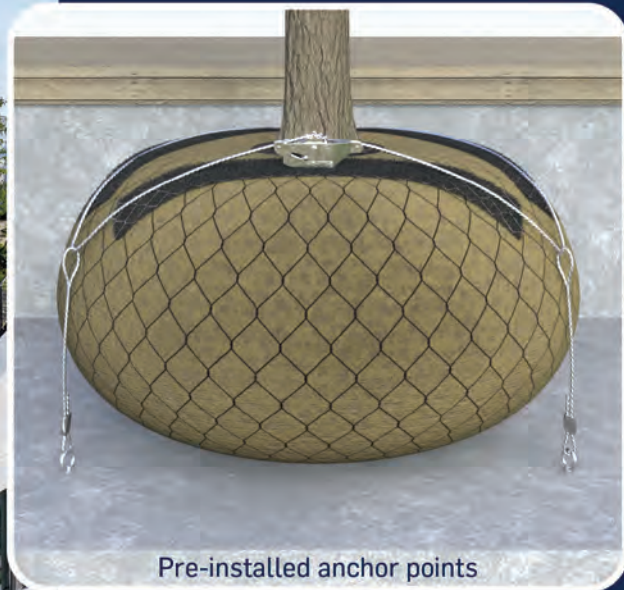
**To find out more, visit the SGLD website:**  
[sgld.org.uk](http://sgld.org.uk)

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[sgld.org.uk](https://sgld.org.uk)



# NEWSPRINT

ALL THAT'S NEW IN THE WORLD OF GARDEN DESIGN  
COMPILED BY ZIA ALLAWAY



## VOTING NOW OPEN FOR THE SGLD 2026 PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

By the time this issue of *Garden Design Journal* lands on your doormat or drops into your inbox, the SGLD Awards' judges will have made their choices and announced the names of the finalists in the Society's 2026 Main Awards. The

publishing of that shortlist will also signal that the SGLD membership, wider landscaping community and the public in general can now go online to select their favourite garden from the shortlist and vote for it in the People's Choice Award, which is sponsored by the Awards media partner, *The English Garden*.

The shortlisted gardens in categories one to nine of this year's Main Awards are automatically entered as finalists in this public vote, and voters



Left: pre-registered SGLD member Colm Joseph won the People's Choice Award in 2025 with his design for a Suffolk Walled Garden, and Adam Vetere MSGLD's Treetop Garden (above) won it the previous year.

are allowed to select one garden only.

Last year's People's Choice winner was pre-registered SGLD member Colm Joseph, whose bold design for a Suffolk Walled Garden, which was inspired by the surrounding landscape and site's historic heritage, captured the imagination of the voters.

To view this year's competing gardens, visit the Awards page of the SGLD website and vote before the deadline, which is midnight on Friday 31 October 2025. The winner of the People's Choice Award, together with the winners of all the Main and Student Awards categories, will be announced at the SGLD Awards Ceremony at The Landmark London on Friday 6 February 2026.

As the Main Awards shortlist was not available in time for this issue of *Garden Design Journal*, the selected gardens will be presented in the December 2025 issue. [sgld.org.uk](https://sgld.org.uk)

## DESIGN A SHOW GARDEN FOR RHS SANDRINGHAM

The Royal Horticultural Society is calling on garden designers to submit their original, bold and brilliant design plans for show gardens that celebrate plants and sustainable design innovation across industries at next year's RHS Sandringham Flower Show 2026.

Applicants need to be quick, however, as the deadline for applications is 31 October 2025.

There are two categories for designers to

consider: Creative Coastal is for gardens that champion resilience and innovation in a coastal setting and showcase the unique conditions of seaside environments. The Grow Forwards Gardens category, meanwhile, is for gardens that show how horticultural design research and development can be used to mitigate against climate change and improve landscapes.

Plans should be for a minimum 258.3 square feet (24 sq m), with no maximum size for a fully sponsored garden at application stage.

Visit [rhs.org.uk](https://rhs.org.uk) – 'Shows' to download an application form.



The estate of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla's Norfolk retreat, Sandringham House, will be the site of RHS Sandringham between 22 and 26 July 2026.





NEWS IN BRIEF

**ACCREDITATION AND AFFILIATE UPDATE**  
The Society of Garden + Landscape Designers congratulates Nick Baldwin on passing his first project for accreditation, and Peter Berg, who has passed all three projects to become its latest MSGLD. The Society also extends a warm welcome to two new SGLD Affiliates: McNaughtons Landscaping (mcnaughtons.co), which works with designers throughout Sussex, Kent, Surrey and London; and The Modern Garden Co (modernrgarden.co.uk), which delivers tailored, design-led furniture solutions for residential, hospitality and commercial projects around the world.

**NEW TOOL LAUNCHED TO HELP DESIGNERS IMPROVE PARK SAFETY**  
A new practical resource has been launched to help designers, landowners and managers identify interventions that will help them to make green spaces safer for women and girls. Developed by Parks for London's Women's Safety in Parks Action Group, the Environmental Visual Evaluation (EVE) tool highlights environmental factors that may influence how safe a space feels, such as visibility, lighting, pathways or signage. The tool is free to download at [parksforlondon.org.uk/eve-tool](https://parksforlondon.org.uk/eve-tool).

**HESTERCOMBE ESTATE GOES INTO ADMINISTRATION**  
The 50-acre Grade I-listed estate of Hestercombe House & Gardens, with its historic gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll, has been put into administration. Despite recent efforts to stabilise its financial position, the Trustees have concluded that the estate is no longer viable in its current operational form. They hope that the appointment of administrators will help to manage the Trust's cashflows and assets while they explore potential avenues for future sustainability. The property will remain open to members of the public during the transitional period. [hestercombe.com](https://hestercombe.com)



**JOE PERKINS MSGLD PLANS CLIMATE-RESILIENT DESIGN FOR CWGC CEMETERY**

An historic burial ground in Tunisia, where more than 2,900 Commonwealth servicemen are laid to rest, is to be transformed into a climate-resilient, biodiverse and sustainable landscape by Joe Perkins MSGLD and his design team.

Working in collaboration with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) on the Medjez-El-Bab War Cemetery project, Joe will replace the irrigated turf between the headstones with gravel pathways

and use drought-tolerant native and resilient plant species to soften the surrounding landscape.

Some turf will be retained in the central axis and principal cross avenues of the site, to maintain the clarity and structure that define the cemetery's visual identity. Meanwhile, a more varied landscape (which will include gravel gardens, orchard-style planting, and textured native understorey) will create greater biodiversity and visual interest in other areas. Olive and

almond trees will also be planted as part of the project to symbolise peace and regional identity.

The cemetery, which is situated in Tunisia's fertile Medjerda Valley and was designed by architect Sir J Hubert Worthington to commemorate those who fought and died in the North African Campaign during the Second World War, is the inaugural site in the CWGC's Pioneer Sites Initiative. The Initiative aims to adapt historic cemeteries to climate challenges, while maintaining the symbolism, integrity and original character of these significant landscapes.

[joeperkinsdesign.com](https://joeperkinsdesign.com); [cwgc.org](https://cwgc.org)



**HAUTE COUTURE-INSPIRED PLANTING WINS PPA AWARD**

A planting installation by Scottish-Swiss garden and landscape design studio Semple Begg that helped to transform the Drummond Castle gardens in Perthshire into a catwalk for an haute couture fashion show has received a Landscape Design Award of Excellence from the Perennial Plant Association (PPA).

Studio co-founders and pre-registered SGLD members Nicola Semple and Susan Begg were commissioned by DIOR to create a temporary planting (pictured) within the gardens and grounds, ahead of the company's Cruise 2025 show, which was unveiled at the castle in June 2024.

The design duo created the scheme using nearly 10,000 plants to reflect the drama and cultural significance of the new collection by DIOR's creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri. The predominantly purple and violet tones echoed the colours of the bespoke tartan, and shrubs and topiary provided structure for the scheme within the formal parterre. For the full story about the installation, see the October 2024 issue of *Garden Design Journal*. [semplebegg.com](https://semplebegg.com)

**LATE-PAYMENT REFORMS TO BENEFIT SMALLER BUSINESSES**

Design and landscape practices are among the Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) set to benefit from the government's new Small Business Plan, which promises to wage the most comprehensive crackdown on late payments in a generation.

Key measures will be to give the Small Business Commissioner stronger powers, including the ability to levy multi-million-pound fines on large firms that consistently pay late; mandatory payment terms capped at 60 days, and eventually 45 days; audit committees of large companies to be legally required to review supplier payment practices at board level; interest charges to be made mandatory on overdue invoices; and enforcement of a 30-day invoice verification period.

Currently, late payments are responsible for the closure of 38 businesses in Britain every day, a trend that undermines small operations and the broader built environment supply chain. [gov.uk](https://gov.uk)





## KRISTINA CLODE MSGLD CELEBRATES FOURTH SUSSEX LANDSCAPE & DESIGN WIN

With three Sussex Heritage Trust awards already under her belt, Kristina Clode MSGLD celebrated once again at the same event after securing the trophy for Landscape & Design for the fourth consecutive time. This year's accolade was for an accessible meadow garden, which she designed for a newly built timber-clad eco house in East Sussex.

The garden (pictured below) has transformed an acre of post-construction clay subsoil into a biodiverse, wildlife-friendly haven. Centred around a wheelchair-accessible courtyard, it features a perennial wildflower meadow, stacked habitat log piles, a rain garden and a drought-tolerant gravel garden. Using on-site materials and managing rainwater naturally, the low-maintenance, climate-resilient landscape was praised by the judges for its seasonal colour and texture, as well as its wildlife habitats.



## MOASURE RELEASES NEW FEATURES FOR MOTION-BASED MEASURING APP

A series of new tools has been added to the Moasure 2 Series, enabling professionals to better customise and streamline landscaping measurements when using the application.

The latest updates enable users to add text directly to the measurement canvas, to create text labels hands-free (voice labelling), to define custom contour intervals, assign any colour to measurement layers, to import X and Y co-ordinates directly from DXF/DWG files, to view gradient changes, rise, run and angles in a single streamlined display, and to navigate and see metadata more clearly.

Moasure is a motion-based measuring technology that can be used without GPS or lasers. [moasure.co.uk](https://moasure.co.uk)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST DESIGNATED A RESPONSIBLE BODY**  
The Wildlife Trusts has announced that Cheshire Wildlife Trust has been appointed as a Responsible Body by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). This flexible and bespoke legal designation enables landowners to deliver biodiversity net gain alongside a trusted and experienced local partner. Cheshire joins The Wildlife Trusts in Cumbria, Hampshire & The Isle of Wight and Staffordshire, all of which are already a designated Responsible Body. [wildlifetrusts.org](https://wildlifetrusts.org)

**BORDER CHECKS ON PLANTS SUSPENDED**  
The government is to suspend extra border checks on plant goods from Ireland, to support British businesses and ease trade ahead of the new sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) deal with the EU. Plant goods will be referred to as non-qualifying goods when arriving from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, without physical inspection, to reduce delays at the border. [gov.uk](https://gov.uk)

**TIM O'HARE WELCOMES NEW SOIL SPECIALISTS**  
Environmental consultancy Tim O'Hare Associates (TOHA) has expanded its Oxfordshire team with the appointment of three new soil specialists. Neema Kumar is working on research and data collection, while Ebony Gheorghe is helping to deliver the company's soil-testing services and Nataliia Lahush is tasked with classifying soils and determining their different characteristics. [toha.co.uk](https://toha.co.uk)

**YPHA LAUNCHES NEW MANAGEMENT TRAINING**  
The Young People in Horticulture Association (YPHA) has launched a new nine-day residential programme designed to support young managers in horticulture. The Management Development Programme will run from late 2025 into 2026, with training led by Lindsay Muir, managing director of Cedar Associates. For details, email [admin@ypha.org.uk](mailto:admin@ypha.org.uk).

## VECTORWORKS 2026 NEW TOOLS HELP TRANSFORM BIG IDEAS INTO REALITY

Smarter automation, seamless customisation and sustainability insights are just some of the innovations that garden and landscape architects can expect from



the new version of Vectorworks 2026, which has been released this September.

The 2026 iteration of the software offers a unified workflow for creative planting plans, with a new Plant Style Manager that can instantly build, manage and customise the Plant Style library. As well as these features, it allows batch editing, web data import from nursery partners, spreadsheet import, flexible plant placement and editing tools, and has a streamlined content structure so that users are able to keep plant data accurate and ready for use during the project process.

Other functions include regulation-ready Existing Tree models that integrate with landscape projects, and tools to design and edit flexible Grade Objects, with Data Tag labelling for faster, clearer site plans. For more information, go to [vectorworks.net](https://vectorworks.net).



NEW ADDITIONS TO  
2025 PLANTS FOR  
POLLINATORS LIST

The RHS's science team has increased the number of drought-tolerant plants on its *Plants for Pollinators* list. This comes in light of the prolonged heat and drought conditions in Britain this year, and the way in which this has affected the number of pollinator blooms and their length of life.

The 2025 list includes 19 plant groups recently elevated to genus level, with *Eryngium*, *Origanum*, *Lavandula*, *Prunus*, *Euphorbia* and *Campanula* among those cited as most beneficial for pollinators. Plants added to the list for the first time are *Alcea rosea*, *Centaurea* species, *Eschscholzia californica* and single-flowered forms of *Callistephus chinensis*.

Fourteen plants have been removed from the list, including *Cleome hassleriana*, *Catananche caerulea* and *Amberboa moschata*.

See the full list at [rhs.org.uk](https://rhs.org.uk) – 'Plants for Pollinators'.



*Origanums* (pictured, *O. 'Rosenkuppel'*) are among the newly elevated genera to be added to the RHS's *Plants for Pollinators* list.



RABY CASTLE GARDENS RECEIVES PRIZE FOR  
DEVELOPMENT AT EUROPEAN AWARDS

The landscape design and redevelopment of the Walled Gardens at Raby Castle in County Durham have led to them being awarded second prize in the Management or Development of an Historic Park or Garden category of the European Garden Awards 2025 competition.

The award was made in recognition of the design work by Luciano Giubbilei MSGLD, in creative collaboration with the Castle's owner, Lady Barnard, which has led to improvements in the 18th-century garden's sustainability credentials.

The redesign of Raby Castle's extensive public areas throughout the grounds, which was managed by pre-registered SGLD member Alistair Baldwin, was also praised by the judges. Both projects were completed in 2024 as part of Raby's three-year regeneration development and the Castle is one of eight gardens that have been shortlisted in the Historic Houses Garden of the Year for 2025. The winner of that public vote will be announced at the Historic Houses National Annual General Meeting on 11 November 2025. [eghn.org/en](https://eghn.org/en); [historichouses.org/garden-of-the-year](https://historichouses.org/garden-of-the-year)

TURING LOCKE HOTEL  
GARDEN SHORTLISTED  
FOR LI DESIGN AWARD

Robert Myers Associates, led by Robert Myers MSGLD, has been shortlisted for a Landscape Institute (LI) Award in the Excellence in Small Landscape and Garden Design category, for a garden (pictured) the design practice has created for the Turing Locke Hotel in Cambridge.

The hotel is arranged around a central courtyard garden that features lush woodland planting, open lawns, dining terraces and entertainment spaces where visitors and residents can meet and relax.

The design also incorporates a series of rooftop terraces and green roofs,



with raised planters containing colourful, aromatic, flowering shrubs and herbs to enhance the site's biodiversity, provide a habitat for wildlife and help with rainwater attenuation and cooling of the building.

The shortlist for the 2025 LI Awards can be viewed at [awards.landscapeinstitute.org](https://awards.landscapeinstitute.org), and the winners will be announced on 14 November at an awards ceremony in London. [robertmyers-associates.co.uk](https://robertmyers-associates.co.uk)

← Alistair Baldwin (far left) and Lord and Lady Barnard, with their European Garden Awards 2025 certificates for their work with Luciano Giubbilei on the gardens at Raby Castle (pictured).

WHAT'S ON

FOR A FULL LIST OF SGLD  
EVENTS, AND TO BOOK,  
VISIT [SGLD.ORG.UK](https://sgl.org.uk)

8 OCTOBER 2025 TO  
25 JANUARY 2026  
EXHIBITION: RORY MCEWEN:  
NATURE'S SONG

This celebration of the work of Scottish artist and musician Rory McEwen (1932–82), one of the 20th century's greatest botanical painters, will showcase his luminous paintings of flowers, leaves, butterflies and decaying vegetables. [gardenmuseum.org.uk](https://gardenmuseum.org.uk)

5 NOVEMBER  
SGLD CPD: SUCCESSFUL  
COMPOSTING

Spend a day at Garden Organic in Warwickshire to discover different composting methods and types of bin, and how to apply effective processes in garden designs. Participants will receive a certificate on completion of the course. See page 47 of this issue for further details.

10 TO 12 NOVEMBER  
SGLD CPD: INTRODUCTION TO  
PRACTICAL LANDSCAPING  
This three-day course at SGLD Affiliate The TASK Academy in Pershore, Worcestershire, will combine classroom-based theory with practical workshops, and instruct designers on how to specify construction techniques and materials with contractors with confidence. As part of the course, participants will also gain valuable hands-on experience of landscaping methods and processes.

Photographs, (Raby Castle) Jason Ingram; (Origanum) RHS/Nicola Stocken; (Turing Locke garden) Sarah Blee

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Visual of Ann-Marie Powell's design for the new kitchen garden at Borde Hill, which is being designed using biodynamic principles.

## ANN-MARIE POWELL FSGLD DESIGNS BIODYNAMIC GARDEN FOR BORDE HILL

Ann-Marie Powell FSGLD has joined forces with Green Michelin-starred chef Chantelle Nicholson and Jay Goddard, chatelaine of Borde Hill in West Sussex, to form the Cordia Collective. The trio is working on plans to build a productive garden and restaurant within the Grade II\*-listed Victorian walled garden on the 2,300-acre Borde Hill estate.

The kitchen garden is being designed using biodynamic principles,

and its layout will be split into four elemental quadrants that celebrate the heritage of the site. The planting will be 'edimental', a mixture of edibles and ornamentals, with the produce grown for use by Chantelle and her chefs in a new glasshouse restaurant on the site.

'From heritage espalier fruit trees adorning century-old sandstone walls to rare edible plants from around the

globe, the garden will tell many food stories,' says Ann-Marie.

'Visitors will also be able connect with nature in the wildflower meadow beneath the orchard trees, and wander through the tranquil vine arbour tunnel,' she adds.

The immersive 'field-to-fork' experience is due to open in the spring of 2026. [ann-marielowell.com](http://ann-marielowell.com); [bordehill.co.uk](http://bordehill.co.uk)



## NEW HOME FOR LONDON SQUARE CHELSEA PENSIONERS' GARDEN

The Gold-medal-winning London Square Chelsea Pensioners' Garden, originally designed for RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025 by pre-registered SGLD member Dave Green, has been relocated to its new home at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

The new garden (pictured), which is almost a replica of the show garden, is a plant-filled space at the heart of the Royal Hospital and designed to connect the Chelsea Pensioners more closely with nature and thus improve their wellbeing.

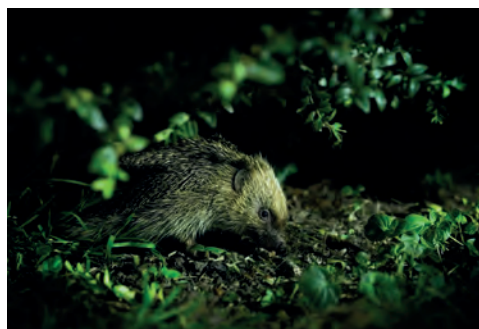
Dave says he needed to make just a few minor adjustments to the original design, such as moving the entrance to make it more accessible, and incorporating two *Betula jacquemontii* trees that were already growing on the site. There were a few plants going spare once the garden was rebuilt, and these have been relocated to other areas of the Hospital grounds. [davegreen.co.uk](http://davegreen.co.uk)

## 'GO WILD FOR HEDGEHOGS' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Garden and landscape designers are being urged to consider hedgehogs in their plans, with the launch of the new Go WILD for Hedgehogs campaign from Hedgehog Street, run by wildlife charities People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS).

Pre-registered SGLD member and nature-led designer Laura Burt recommends a range of initiatives to help boost numbers of this threatened, much-loved mammal. 'Key features to include are wild, undisturbed patches to encourage hedgehogs' natural prey,' she says, 'and to provide them with hibernation sites; a pond with sloping sides or saucer of water, especially in hot weather, if a pond isn't possible; and the banning of all slug pellet use.'

Hedgehog Street is also asking gardeners to upload photographs of sightings to its website and to record the location of undisturbed, untrimmed areas in their properties, to help the charity identify the locations of current hedgehog havens. For advice and to upload pictures, visit [hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org).



### WHAT'S ON

12 NOVEMBER

**NEW** SGLD CPD: *BITESIZE PLANTING: CHOOSING PLANTS FOR POND SIDES, STREAM BANKS AND BOGS*

Garden designer Anna Ribbo will lead this online session for designers wishing to increase their knowledge of wetland plants and the wildlife habitats they create. She will look at a range of plants that can cope with damp (but not permanently waterlogged) soils.

13 AND 14 NOVEMBER

SGLD CPD: *AN INTRODUCTION TO PROCREATE*

SGLD Friend John Wood's two-day online course will reveal the benefits of using Procreate, a powerful and intuitive digital drawing program. Procreate allows users to sketch in pencil, draw in ink, or paint in watercolour in ways that closely mimic traditional techniques, but with the ease and flexibility of digital technology.

14 NOVEMBER

LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE AWARDS CEREMONY

The Landscape Institute will announce the winners of its annual awards at The Brewery in London, with the evening hosted by TV presenter, gardener and writer Frances Tophill. [awards.landscapeinstitute.org](http://awards.landscapeinstitute.org)

15 NOVEMBER

NEW RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

This free event organised by The Gardens Trust provides a platform for researchers and scholars to share new and unpublished interdisciplinary research relating to garden history, providing designers with the latest, cutting-edge research. [thegardenstrust.org](http://thegardenstrust.org)

26 NOVEMBER

TALK: *HUMPHRY REPTON AND THE REGENCY GARDEN*

Garden historian and lecturer Laura Mayer will trace Repton's career, from its Picturesque beginnings to the progressive Gardenesque style in this online course organised by the Cambridge University Botanic Gardens. Bookings close on 19 November 2025. [botanic.cam.ac.uk](http://botanic.cam.ac.uk)





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MEMBER PROJECT

Phil and Jo's design (far right and below) is turning the rather bleak site (right) for the Greenfingers hospice garden into a private, plant-rich retreat where parents can be alone but feel nurtured as they grieve.



WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?

Phil Hirst MSGLD and pre-registered SGLD member Jo Charlton tell **Zia Allaway** how they transformed their design for the Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice into a show garden for RHS Wentworth Woodhouse 2025

**P**hil Hirst MSGLD worked as a chartered accountant for more than 20 years before pursuing his love of gardens and design. In 2003, he graduated with a diploma in garden design from the KLC School of Design and then worked part time as a designer before setting up his own studio in 2014. Pre-registered SGLD member Jo Charlton worked as a 3D designer and silversmith after leaving college. She later went on to study horticulture and garden design before opening her design studio in 2015.

How did the hospice garden project come about?

**PH:** I was initially approached by the charity Greenfingers and asked if I would be interested

in designing a garden for use by bereaved parents during their time at Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice. I asked Jo to collaborate with me as we have been friends for many years and I thought it would be helpful to share ideas for this sensitive project.

What was the brief?

**JC:** The garden is planned for an area outside an end-of-life suite, where parents of critically ill children can stay for up to three months while their child undergoes the final days of palliative care. The suite also includes what is known as a 'cold bedroom', where the parents can be with their child for a few days after their death. The hospice gave us an open brief to design a private space where parents could be alone and find some solace. However, we needed to accommodate the fact

that when the suite is in use, no other visitors are allowed into the garden, which means there would be no maintenance for up to three months at a time.

Tell us about your design response

**PH:** The site was bleak when we first visited and comprised a large expanse of concrete pavers enclosed by a laurel hedge, with a large water feature in the middle. The latter was not only unsuitable, it no longer worked and we could only imagine how awful it would be to look at. We conceived a tranquil, safe space, with curved paths meandering through woodland-edge-style planting that would wrap the parents in nature and hold them for a moment.

**JC:** All the features and furniture in the garden have been designed

with rounded edges, so nothing will jar when you look at the scene. The bespoke timber seats will be protected by a steel and timber canopy, the design of which was inspired by tree trunks and includes a polycarbonate roof to offer shelter on rainy days, while a pebble sculpture and water basin fit together like holding hands. Another smaller seating area will give parents somewhere to be alone, and we have also left gaps in the hedge, to encourage them to look out to the wider landscape and up through the canopy roof.

Why take the garden to an RHS Flower Show?

**PH:** The design had already been signed off and the installation planned when the RHS announced it would put on a show at Wentworth Woodhouse, which is just twenty minutes' drive from the hospice. Neil Sewell, Operations Director for Greenfingers, saw this as a great opportunity to showcase the charity's work, and so, very late in the day, we put in an application to the RHS.

**JC:** It was a great way to increase awareness of Greenfingers and





The trees, hedging and large shrubs, including *Cornus mas*, *Malus* 'White Star', *Prunus serrula* and *Acer tataricum* subsp. *ginnala*, that were needed for the show garden (left and above) have been transplanted to the hospice garden.



Bluebell Wood for little additional expense. As the garden budget had already been approved, it was just the cost of installation at the Show and of relocating the garden afterwards, which was paid for by a generous donor.

#### Was the garden adjusted for the Show?

**PH:** The garden is roughly the same size as the site for a large show garden at that Show, so our plan only needed small adjustments, such as using rather more colourful plants than the quieter palette we plan to use at the hospice. We used self-binding gravel and oak setts for the paths instead of resin-bound gravel, which is a requirement for wheelchairs at the hospice.

#### Was there much waste afterwards?

**JC:** It was a zero-waste show garden and almost everything has been transferred to the hospice site, including the concrete footing for the cantilevered canopy, which was pre-cast so that it could serve its

purpose at both sites. All the plants will find new homes either in the bereaved parents' garden or in another Greenfingers garden at the same hospice, while the oak setts were returned to the supplier.

#### What have been the main challenges?

**PH:** The fact that the garden needed to look good without maintenance for long periods at a time, which required selecting plants that can take care of themselves. Another challenge was ensuring the tall beech hedges, large shrubs and trees needed for the show garden would have sufficient irrigation to establish well. The answer was an automatic drip irrigation system which, in a couple of years, should no longer be required. ●

philhirstgardens.co.uk;  
jocharlton.co.uk

Do you have a project in the pipeline that you could share with *Journal* readers?

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# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT PEAT

Peatlands must be preserved if we want to begin to tackle the environmental issues that we face as a society – and the horticulture industry can lead by example, says **John Wyer FSGLD**



**M**any years ago, when I was on an ecology field trip from university, we visited a peat bog near Manchester. The ecologist was explaining how the ecosystem worked when my attention was caught. 'Beneath you is quite a large body of water, several metres deep.' He pointed to me and a friend. 'You two, jump up and down a bit – but not too much, or you might go through!' As we did as instructed, the ecologist pointed to birch trees that surrounded us sporadically. They were swaying noticeably in time with our jumps. At first fascinated, we soon began to feel a little uneasy at the thought of a layer of moss being the only thing between us and a dark underground lake beneath our feet.

Few of us give a second thought to peat bogs. This is partly because in Britain, these natural features tend to be situated in upland areas that are generally inaccessible and with a wet climate, making them unlikely holiday destinations for most. Perhaps this is just as well because a footprint in a virgin peat bog can take anything from a couple of years to decades to repair itself<sup>1&2</sup>. Had I known that all those years ago, I might have been a little more careful when jumping up and down on one.

However, peat bogs are vitally important. They are a prime example of delivering what are called 'ecosystem services'. Peatlands occupy around 12 per cent of Britain's landmass<sup>3</sup>. This dramatic landscape provides more than a quarter of the country's drinking water<sup>3</sup> and stores a significant amount of carbon, making peatlands an important habitat for both provisioning and regulating ecosystem services in Britain.

Peat is mainly partially decomposed Sphagnum moss, the keystone species of peat bogs. Because of the low pH and wet conditions, the moss never completely decomposes and if there is sufficient rainfall, it becomes the climax species. Over thousands of years, it slowly builds up to form a layer of peat and in the process, sequesters about three tonnes of carbon per hectare per year<sup>4</sup>. Worldwide, Sphagnum is probably the most important genus for carbon sequestration.

Unfortunately, our peatlands are in poor condition. Many have suffered from peat extraction. This action not only releases the carbon in peat that is cut, it prevents further regrowth and stops the sequestering process. It also leads to the peat drying out, leading to further carbon loss, biodiversity damage, and erosion. Currently, only 22 per cent of peatlands are in a near natural or rewetted condition<sup>3</sup>. Altogether pretty disastrous.

Part of the reason for extraction is the very properties that make Sphagnum peat such a wonder material. Initially it was cut for use as fuel – that unburnt carbon giving a slow burn release of energy. However, its ability to absorb and retain water coupled with its ready availability also

made it an ideal component of composts, which led to mass extraction.

All is not lost, though, because although rewetting and regeneration of British peatlands would be expensive (Trenbith and Dutton estimate it would cost between £8 billion and £22 billion to treat all of them) the returns in carbon emission benefits that would be gained are estimated at between five to ten times as much<sup>3</sup>.

But what then of the composts? What are the alternatives, and how good are they? The short answer is that, at the moment, they are not as good as peat. All have advantages and disadvantages. Most are variable in quality, do not retain water as well, and some (such as coir) can sometimes have dubious sustainability credentials themselves.

Year by year, however, the alternatives are improving; blending various readily available materials – such as green waste and wood fibre – can result in more stable, reliable options. Gradually, Britain's horticultural industry is moving towards a peat-free existence.

Part of the problem remains that most plug production happens outside the country, and many European nurseries still use peat abundantly. In a bid to exert some pressure, I recently questioned our plant suppliers. Out of eight, only one, which specialises in field-grown stock, was working completely peat free. Six were on track to become peat free at some point. Only one was doing nothing about it. Perhaps part of the answer is to plant more bare-root or field-grown stock?

Of the environmental problems facing our society now (flooding, climate change, biodiversity loss, drinking water shortages) peat bogs have a vital role to play. We need to stop denuding them and start restoring them, and that process starts in the horticulture industry. ●

Share your garden and landscape-related talking points via [gdj@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk](mailto:gdj@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk)



## JOHN WYER FSGLD

graduated from Manchester Metropolitan University with a post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture in 1983 and co-founded Bowles & Wyer in 1993. His extensive design portfolio spans private gardens to large-scale development projects, and many have won awards. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers (SGLD) in 2011, and a Fellow of the Landscape Institute in 2020. As well as continuing to take a lead role in Bowles & Wyer, and to serve as Vice-Chair and Treasurer of the SGLD, he lectures in Britain and abroad and writes a monthly blog that explores the design process and role of landscape and maintenance. [bowleswyer.co.uk](http://bowleswyer.co.uk)

## FOOTNOTES

1 'It takes 25 years for a footprint to disappear' – The secret, beguiling magic of Britain's bogs, *The Guardian*, Alys Fowler, 22 June 2025, [theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/22/uk-bogs-peatlands-birth-conservation-britain-bogs](https://theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/22/uk-bogs-peatlands-birth-conservation-britain-bogs)

2 'Observations on a peat bog's ability to withstand increasing public pressure', FM Slater and ADQ Agnew, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 11, Issue 1, January 1977, pages 21–7, [science.sciencemag.org/science/article/abs/pii/000632077900234#?text=Abstract&url=https://doi.org/10.1016/0006-3207\(77\)90023-4](https://science.sciencemag.org/science/article/abs/pii/000632077900234#?text=Abstract&url=https://doi.org/10.1016/0006-3207(77)90023-4)

3 *UK Natural Capital for Peatlands*, Hazel Trenbith and Adam Dutton, Office for National Statistics 2017, [circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/4c9f023f-64d5-41e6-af91-0f1560b0ee20/UK-2017-Peatlands.pdf](https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/4c9f023f-64d5-41e6-af91-0f1560b0ee20/UK-2017-Peatlands.pdf)

4 [beadamoss.com](https://beadamoss.com)

A FOOTPRINT IN  
A VIRGIN PEAT  
BOG CAN TAKE  
ANYTHING FROM A  
COUPLE OF YEARS  
TO DECADES TO  
REPAIR ITSELF.





A brick rill lined with gravel runs through the main terrace, taking overflow rainwater from both the galvanised rain planter and water butts that are situated beside the house and fed by water chains that channel rainwater down from the roof.







# RAIN AND SHINE

A garden by landscape architect and pre-registered SGLD member Sally Bower, designed to encourage wildlife and incorporating management of roof rainwater run-off, proved triumphant in the Design for the Environment category of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers' 2025 Awards

WORDS: PHILIP CLAYTON

If recent years are anything to go by, periods of drought and high rainfall are the new normal. Gardeners are realising they must adapt and are also often concerned about threats to wildlife. Many designers, including Merseyside-based pre-registered SGLD member Sally Bower, believe gardens could be part of a solution.

The story of Sally's SGD 2025 Award-winning garden began in early 2022, when she visited prospective clients on the coast north of Liverpool. The dormer bungalow in which the family lived had been their home for several years, but the almost square rear garden was an unremarkable lawn with a few inherited shrubs.

'It was a blank canvas with one marvellous feature that

the clients loved,' Sally recalls. 'Beyond the picket fence at the end of the garden there are fabulous borrowed views into a mixed wood, where a colony of red squirrels lives. You can see them jumping from tree to tree, just as you might in the Lake District.'

The clients wanted a wildlife-friendly garden with a large pond, a space which would retain that feel of the wood coming into the garden, that blurring of the boundary. Sally spent a while developing the brief, learning that, among other things, they also wanted a terrace and space in which they could grow produce.

The back of the house faces south and gets plenty of sun, but much of the garden is in shade, which influences where plants, particularly vegetables and fruit, can →





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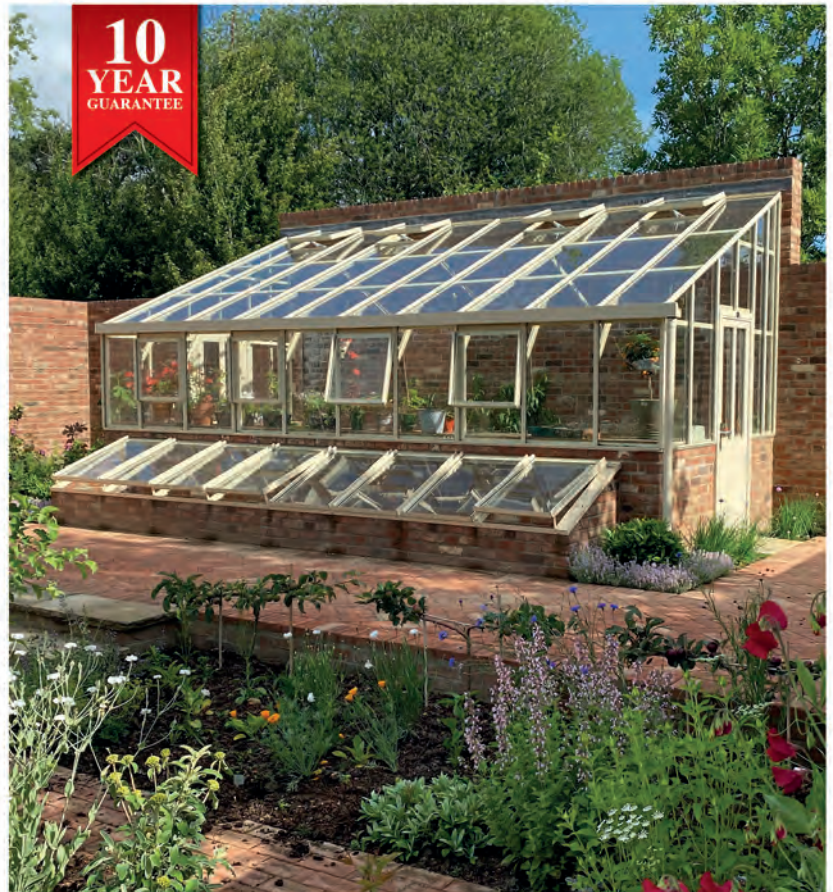


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### WHO'S WHO

Contractor, Bespoke Outdoor Spaces, [bespokeoutdoorspaces.com](http://bespokeoutdoorspaces.com)

Key nurseries, Viridis Plants, [viridisplants.co.uk](http://viridisplants.co.uk); Lanes & Brentwood Moss Nurseries, [laneslandscapes.co.uk](http://laneslandscapes.co.uk)

Hard landscaping, London Stone, [londonstone.co.uk](http://londonstone.co.uk)

Pond liner, Butyl Products, [butylproducts.co.uk](http://butylproducts.co.uk)

The overall design of the garden was shaped by taking the rain from the house, into the garden. Existing concrete slabs were used in functional areas while new Dutch clay bricks were used on the terrace around the house. The raised beds that flank the steps outside the kitchen are planted with herbs and have edges wide enough to sit on.



be grown. On inspection, Sally discovered downpipes ran straight into the free-draining sandy soil. 'I realised that after heavy rain, you could have a lot of water around the foundations of the house – a potential problem.'

Her overall design was therefore shaped by the need to take the rain into the garden so it could also feed the pond. 'To maximise space, I twisted the layout forty-five degrees, to provide longer axes. The geometry gets looser towards the wooded area at the bottom, with multiple routes to explore and move around the garden.'

The main paving is new Dutch clay bricks laid in a herringbone pattern to match parquet flooring indoors and raised wooden beds by the kitchen are planted with Mediterranean herbs and vegetables. An existing dining area was retained, the adjacent fence planted with espalier cherries and apples, and privacy was assured by *Akebia quinata* (chocolate vine) planted so that it scrambles up steel mesh reinforcement which doubles as trellising.

The garden's centrepiece, set just below the terrace, is a 19.8-foot-wide (six metre) pond. Grass flows in at one side, while deadwood and native plants such as *Caltha palustris* (kingcup) soften the edges. Also around the margins are impressive, locally sourced reclaimed boulders of sandstone, the same red stone that was used to build Liverpool's Anglican cathedral. →



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## 'I REALISED THAT THIS PROJECT WAS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A RAIN GARDEN MYSELF.'

### Going with the flow

This project was Sally's first rain garden, but she was well prepared. 'I'd attended incredibly informative online workshops run by Wendy Allen, a garden consultant based in Wiltshire and essentially the guru of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in a garden context, and I realised that this project was a perfect opportunity to create a rain garden myself.'

Her design sees rainwater from the roof of the house travel to the pond via two routes. Water from one side of the building cascades down a rain chain and into a rain planter, a repurposed cattle trough inspired by Wendy's own designs. That planter slowly drains via a deliberately leaking pipe into a (usually) dry stream created using a butyl liner and pebbles. The water then passes into a rill beside the terrace.

On the other side of the house, the run-off is funnelled into two water butts before overflowing into the same rill. The rill feeds the pond and any overflow from that runs into a shallow, planted depression – 'a dry rain garden' – where it finally percolates into the ground.

Elements of sustainability are threaded throughout the garden. 'My ethos is to be regenerative, working with what you have but trying to enhance it. So much was reused,' says Sally. Many existing plants were retained – Sally likes to mix native with cultivated plants to create →



Above left: the edible mini forest runs along the boundary fence, opposite the terraced herb planters, with planting that includes alpine strawberries, rhubarb, an apple tree and chocolate vine as well as vegetables. Some space was left free to grow annual vegetables such as squash, chard and beans. Above right: deadwood was used throughout the garden, to form log walls, refuges, niches and perch points.



**SALLY BOWER**  
CMLI, PRE-REGISTERED  
SGLD MEMBER

is a chartered  
landscape architect

and garden designer working in the north of England for more than 25 years. With a background in mathematics and design, she focuses on creating regenerative landscapes for people and wildlife. In 2022, following an RHS Bursary-funded study tour, her report on brownfield and gravel gardens titled 'Nature rising from the Rubble' won the main RHS prize and she wrote about her findings in the April 2023 issue of *Garden Design Journal*. [sallybower.co.uk](http://sallybower.co.uk)

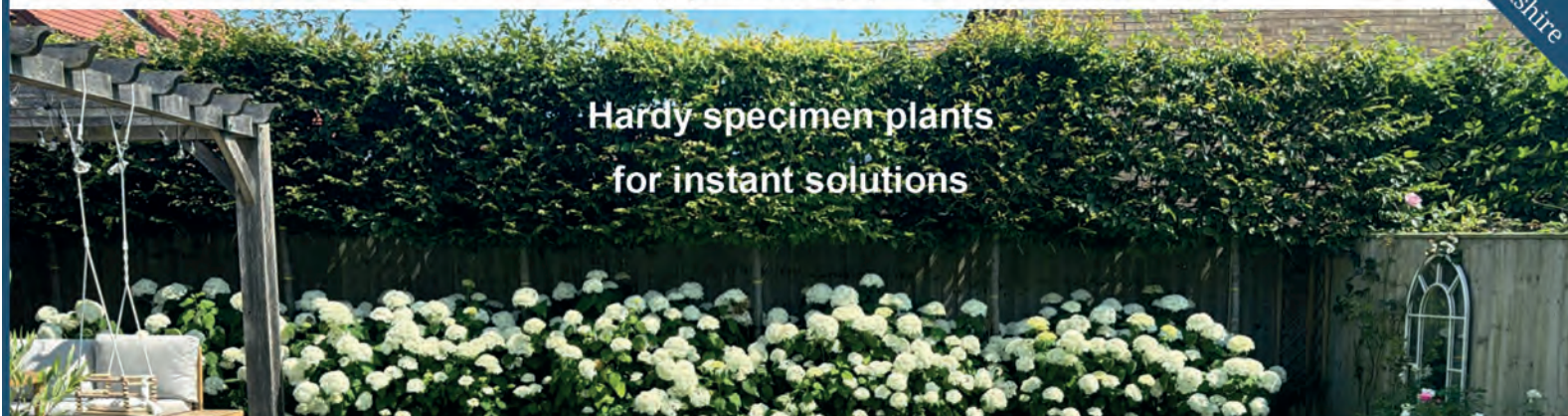




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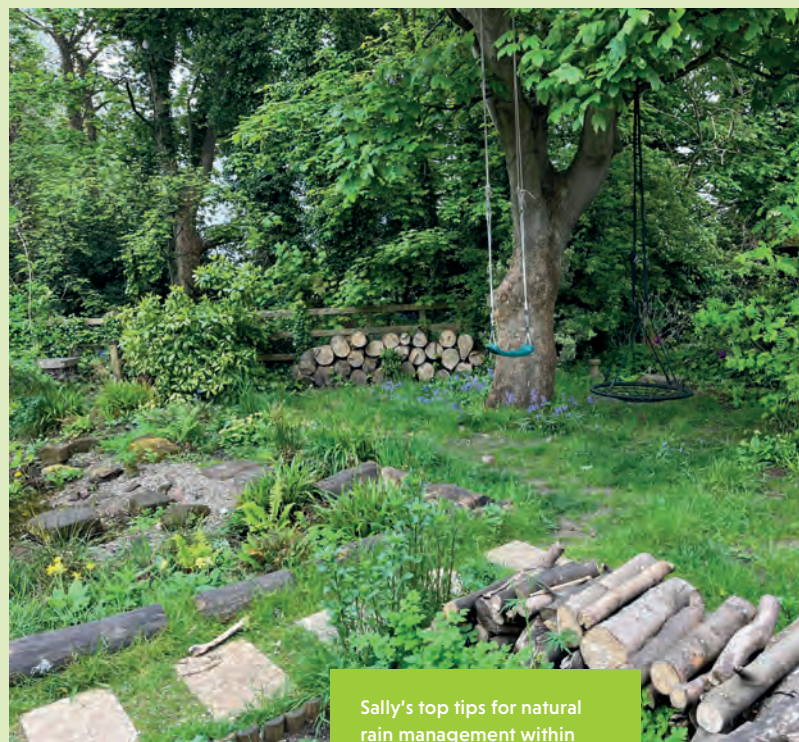
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'ALL GARDEN DESIGNERS SHOULD BE LEARNING HOW TO DEAL BEST WITH WHAT IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT AND INCREASINGLY VALUABLE RESOURCE.'



**Sally's top tips for natural rain management within a garden**

- 1 Learn all you can and visit existing projects. I recommend courses by Wendy Allen, [wendyallendesigns.co.uk](http://wendyallendesigns.co.uk);
- 2 Be inspired by the natural landscape. Aim to slow the flow of rainwater run-off and allow it to pass into the ground;
- 3 Tackle the first flush of rain as well as larger storm events;
- 4 Explore how you can weave rain playfully into a design.

See pages 26 and 32 of this issue for further insights.

micro-habitats such as the species-rich lawn that attracts pollinators – and log walls were created through careful management of existing trees. Even off-cuts of brick from the making of the terrace were put to good use by the owners, who have used them to fill a gabion and topped it with off-cuts of wood, to make a bench that is also a micro-habitat for wildlife.

Other lovely details include steps on one side of the terrace that have been made extra deep so they can also double as seating. Elsewhere, simple wooden arches frame the planting and create views within views.

Work was complete by spring 2023. The pond filled naturally with rainwater and within a year, water fleas (indicators of good quality freshwater) had appeared; soon afterwards hedgehogs were spotted drinking from the edge, another ringing endorsement for Sally's design.

In hindsight, the designer feels the biggest challenge was finding a building contractor for what was a slightly unusual project. 'I always think a successful build comes from a balance of passions – the designer's, the client's and also the contractor's.' The fact the project was considered unusual however is something she feels must change. 'I think all garden designers should be learning how to deal best with what is such an important and increasingly valuable resource. In this day and age, no one should be treating water as a problem.' ●



The natural pond includes shallow edges and a 'beach' at one end and reclaimed local Merseyside sandstone stepping stones at the other. Any overflow runs into the rain garden, which is edged with logs of sycamore – one of the existing trees was dying so it was felled and the logs were also used to form the walls of the compost bin. Grass is kept long and toads now reside in the garden.



## FOCUS ON: DESIGNING WATER-WISE GARDENS

How to deploy green roofs, water butts, attenuation ponds and swales, rain chains, rills, and more to create gardens that are dynamic, accessible and useable

**F**igures from the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) show that by 2050, changes to our climate will lead to a situation where one in four properties in England are in areas at risk of flooding from one or a combination of sources, those being rivers, the sea, or surface water<sup>1</sup>.

Add to that the current government's plan to build 1.5 million new homes by 2030, on green belt land if necessary, and the need to integrate effective systems of managing water run-off within residential gardens, especially those in towns and cities, has never been more important.

High design standards for using plants and hard materials as part of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) practices have been set through the work of garden designer and SGLD Friend Wendy Allen, an experienced practitioner of creative biodiverse rain garden and rain planter design, by sustainable landscape designer and pre-registered SGLD member Sally Bower (see page 19), and by Sue Illman, a past President of the Landscape Institute and keen advocate for SuDS. And of course, leading the way in the public realm is Grey to Green in Sheffield, which was designed by Professor Nigel Dunnett in response, in part, to floods that affected the Castlegate area of the city in June 2007.

At this year's BBC *Gardeners' World* Live, at the NEC Birmingham, there was another prime example of how residential gardens can look stylish and be a delightful outdoor space

for humans and a habitat for wildlife, all the while working as a sponge that slows the flow of rainwater, and conserves and uses it effectively within that environment.

Winner of a Platinum medal, Best Large Show Garden and Best Construction, the **Where There's Water, There's Life** garden was created by Rachel Bailey MSGLD and her studio, in collaboration with Design It Landscapes and the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL). We asked Rachel to tell us about the water-management solutions she used in the garden.

'We filled it with planting, but to make it dynamic, accessible and usable, we put in a raised boardwalk to cross not just the planting but the pond as well, all the way to the pergola,' she says. 'That way, if there was a deluge one day and brilliant sunshine the next, you would still be able get from A to B and enjoy the garden without walking on the soil and destroying its structure, which would still be holding the rainwater.'

### Capture and storage

With wildlife in mind, the roof of the pergola was planted up as a green roof. 'We planted it up but not comprehensively; we also worked in patches of bare sand for wildlife. Together, the plants and substrate slowed the flow of rainwater before it was channelled down a rain chain and into a water tank,' Rachel explains.

The tank was linked to an overflow so that a heavy flow of water would run into the rill and any run-off from that would run into a rock-filled

attenuation pond. 'It would look like a dry bed most of the time but in the event of a really heavy storm, the overflow would trickle into the real pond and from there into the rain beds, where the water would be slowly absorbed into the soil.'

### Soil and plant provenance

Rather than provide a list of plants that might then be taken as definitive for any water-management garden, Rachel says plant selection must always be site specific.

'Work with whatever soil or substrate you find on the site; the only bad soil is soil that is badly compacted, in which case, de-compact it, but in all cases, work with what you have. If you have no soil, you might bring in a different kind of substrate (crushed demolition or recycled sand topped with gravel, for instance). Otherwise, get a spade into what exists and find out how much moisture is there and at what depths; understand the soil and the habitat conditions and find plants to suit.'

As the climate changes, she continues, the need to consider plant provenance will be increasingly important. 'A lot of plants currently available at nurseries will have been propagated from a few select plants or seeds from a specific geographic region. This is great if it matches the conditions of your site, even with the extreme weather we're experiencing. If not, this doesn't make for climate-resilient plants.

'You need to look at the provenance of the plant or the seed; look at where it originated from as it'll have adapted to those local conditions; you can then match →



'THE NEED FOR GARDENS TO BE ABLE TO SLOW THE FLOW OF RAINWATER HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT.'



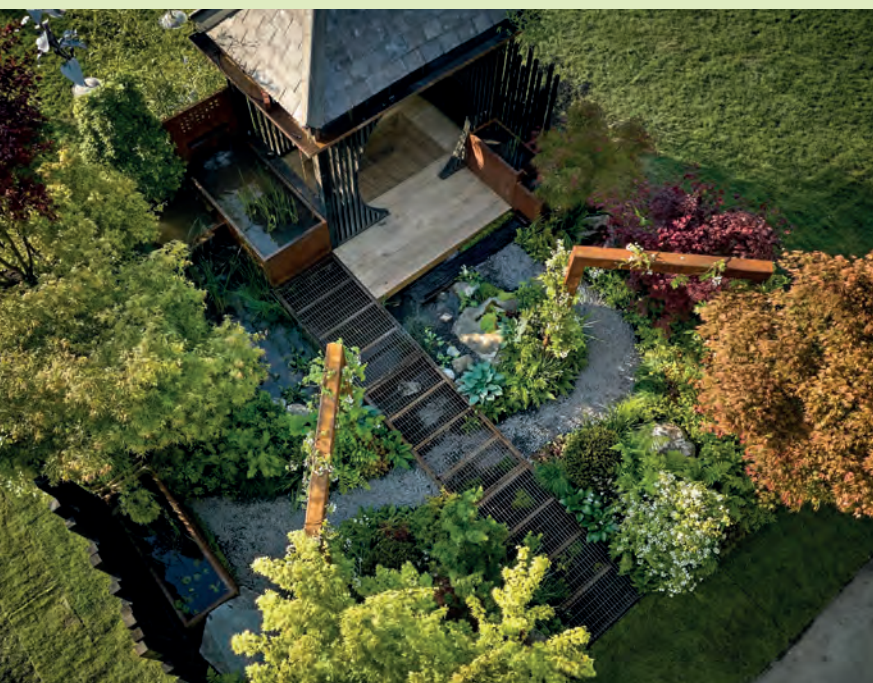




The pergola's green roof in Rachel's Where There's Water, There's Life show garden (pictured), which was designed to mark the Association of Professional Landscapers' 30th anniversary year, had a sand substrate that, together with the plants, helped to slow the rainfall as it journeyed via a rain chain down to a water tank and from there, via a rill, to a pond. The attenuation pond in front of the pergola was built to hold an additional 285.9 gallons (1,300 litres) of water.







This page: John worked with Weather It to fabricate the extra-wide guttering that ran around the roof of the tea house in his show garden. The swale was lined with Geotextile, and shards of Welsh slate and gravel were arranged within the rill, to slow the flow of water and entrance the eye of the watcher as it wiggled and flowed.



those conditions to your site. We just need nurseries to catch up and to sell plants with known and differing provenances so we can select the best plants for our sites.'

Pre-registered SGLD member John Howlett's Gold-medal-winning show garden, **The Rain Garden**, at the RHS Malvern Show this year, is another exciting example of water-management garden design.

Having caught the attention of the Show judges and visitors, John's design for a townhouse garden has now been adapted and rebuilt for a rather different group of people, on a site in east London where flooding is a regular occurrence, and the designer is optimistic his design will be put through its paces and not found wanting.

'I decided to donate the garden to a school that's a stone's throw from the Walthamstow wetlands – they're visible from the garden so you have this natural, very connected borrowed landscape,' says John. 'Following the successful completion of the build sponsored by Flood Re, the garden will provide improved water management, increased biodiversity, and some much-needed shade for the school. I also hope the mental health benefits for the children will be significant.'

He adds: 'I've noticed increased chatter about the effect of climate change and of building work on the risks of urban flooding where I live in east London; it's a traumatic event when your home floods and if you can take a bit of pressure off the local drainage system by designing gardens in a way that mitigates that, that has to be a good thing – it's not just about individual gardens but creating a network of gardens that can help.'

While creating a resolutely functional water-management garden was key to John's show garden, he was also determined it should look beautiful. 'I wanted to embrace nature, to channel it by filling the garden with plants and a swale, to create as large a permeable surface as possible.'

'I also wanted to use the water and the garden features to add to the audio-visual sensory experience of being in the space...to see the water and watch where it was going instead of hiding it away, and to allow nature

**'I WANTED TO EMBRACE NATURE, TO CHANNEL IT, BY FILLING THE GARDEN WITH PLANTS AND A SWALE TO CREATE AS LARGE A PERMEABLE SURFACE AS POSSIBLE.'**

to engulf the space with simple features such as the Corten steel grid walkways that allow the plants to grow through them. For me, that's great design – simple and minimal, doing exactly what it needs to do and allowing you to instantly be part of nature as you use the space.'

#### Structural control

In the show garden, the Welsh slate-tiled roof of the Japanese-inspired tea house was edged with extra-wide gutters to cope with extra-heavy downpours and instead of downpipes, rain chains were used to channel the rainwater down into a series of troughs connected by blade waterspouts.

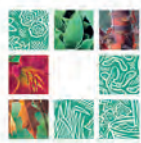
'In normal conditions, the run-off would be stored in those troughs and used to irrigate the garden but in the event of heavy storms, they would overflow. So, at the end of the troughs, we had a large swale on one side,' says John, 'and a rill on the other that was filled with Welsh slate. Between these two features, the water would be slowed and dissipate, taking pressure off the mains water system.'

Acers were arranged around the sides of the show garden, to give it a sense of enclosure. To ensure they had sufficient free-draining soil at their feet, John raised the root balls on mounds of gravel and put soil over that. 'It created an undulating surface that looked beautiful and also allowed for a greater range of biodiverse plants,' he explains, and he has replicated the treatment for the Acers at the garden's permanent location in Walthamstow.

#### Plant selection

Closer to the swale, John has used water- or bog-tolerant plants but →





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# OUTDOOR KITCHEN INSTALL, DAY 2



"We built all this to fit with our perfect family day, where we have a day out on Windermere with the kids in wetsuits, and you can come up here, get in the hot tub while we're cooking a barbeque. And so we'd almost planned the choreography of an entertaining lake day where the barbeque fits right in the middle of that... And when it came to fitting the kitchen – it was half a day's work for your guys – it was fantastic... It was the icing on the cake"

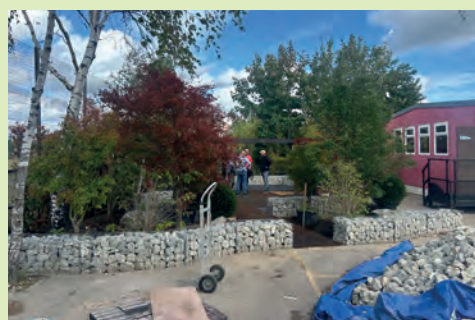
All-weather aluminium kitchen. All smiles at Town Head Estate, Windermere.

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Relocating John's show garden: the tarmac covering the playground was so thick that diggers, not hand tools, were needed to remove it before work could begin. The schoolchildren have already discovered the joys of spotting insects in the gabion wall (below) which not only doubles as seating, it forms a narrow gateway, to slow the children down as they enter the garden.



around the outside of the garden, the selection was chosen to create a shady woodland effect.

'I didn't want the planting to look fussy. I wanted monochromatic greens, with a bit of white and bronze running through that. It has evergreen structure and a real sense of fullness, but the deciduous nature of the beech and some of the Acers is that they will lose their leaves. There will be seasonal change, and I think that's nice to see.'

#### Swales and soakaways

'In general, the simplicity of a soakaway is great but in this garden, I wanted to see the rainwater, to see where it was going and to interact with it, which is why a swale is such a lovely thing. It changes with the weather and if you plant it right, you have that extra level of biodiversity in

terms of planting and habitats in your garden. If you hide that, you miss out on something quite beautiful really.'

Because the adapted version of the show garden is for use by schoolchildren (it will be a playground as well as somewhere for outdoor lessons), the tea house has been reused elsewhere on the Walthamstow site and a more practical Japanese-style pergola covered by wisteria has taken its place as The Rain Garden's main structure.

Without a roof, however, John had nothing to which he could attach the extra-wide guttering. 'The four troughs, full of water, would also have been a health and safety concern,' says John, 'so I've repurposed three of them as raised planters, with holes in the bottom so they'll absorb some of the rainwater. The fourth trough, however, the largest, has been kept

as a natural rainwater pond and the contents can be used to water the garden but we've had to put a grille over the top to make it child safe.'

The arches have made the trip, and the Corten steel walkways have been considerably extended, as has the swale beneath it. 'It's even more like a dry riverbed with lots of rocks, and ferns planted into it,' says John, 'and not only is it permeable, it'll be really exciting for the children who'll be able to see the plants growing through the grilles and watch the water whenever it appears.'

'I don't want to belittle the effect of flooding but there are solutions that have beauty as well as function and which add something to a garden.' ●

#### ENDNOTE

1 [gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024](https://gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024)

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

Wendy Allen,  
[wendyallendesigns.co.uk](https://wendyallendesigns.co.uk)

Sally Bower,  
[sallybower.co.uk](https://sallybower.co.uk)

CW Studio, led by pre-registered SGLD member Carolyn Willitts, CYCLOPS Southern Gateway, [cwstudio.co.uk/projects/cyclops-southern](https://cwstudio.co.uk/projects/cyclops-southern)

Ciria, [ciria.org](https://ciria.org), the construction industry research and information association; among other things, it provides guidance such as *C821a Taking action: Reducing the risk of flooding for your community by maintaining drainage, watercourses and flood defences*

Green Tech's Mono Pluvia, a water-management system for urban environments, [green-tech.co.uk/tree-and-planter-irrigation-systems/tree-and-plant-watering-systems/mona-tree-irrigation/mona-pluvia](https://green-tech.co.uk/tree-and-planter-irrigation-systems/tree-and-plant-watering-systems/mona-tree-irrigation/mona-pluvia)

Grey to Green, Sheffield, [greytogreen.org.uk/innovation](https://greytogreen.org.uk/innovation)

Illman Young, [illman-young.com/project-type/suds](https://illman-young.com/project-type/suds)

John Howlett,  
[johnhowlettstudio.co.uk](https://johnhowlettstudio.co.uk)

Rachel Bailey Studio,  
[rachelbaileystudio.co.uk](https://rachelbaileystudio.co.uk)

Rainwater harvesting systems; SGLD Affiliated Business Partners August Ponds, [augustponds.com](https://augustponds.com); and ACO Technologies, [aco.co.uk](https://aco.co.uk); non-SGLD member Watermatic, [watermaticirrigationsolutions.co.uk](https://watermaticirrigationsolutions.co.uk)

Susdrain, [susdrain.org](https://susdrain.org), arm of the construction industry research and information association that provides a range of resources for anyone involved in delivering sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

Weather It, [weather-it.co.uk](https://weather-it.co.uk)





Regulations set by regional town halls in Spain dictate not only what percentage of a site can be impermeable but how much can be lawn and ornamental landscaping. Balancing water consumption with temperature radiation and the need for permeable surfaces is key to all Gonzalo's projects, which include Jardín de los Paseos (main picture) and Ático en El Viso, a roof garden in Madrid (above right).





# LESSONS ON RAIN FROM SPAIN

**A** couple of weeks before it officially drew to a close, the Meteorological Office announced that this year's summer in Britain was likely to have been one of the warmest on British record, and that the season's rainfall was tracking below average.

Almost immediately afterwards, our summer was blown away by a succession of thunderstorms, gales and heavy rain, and across the country, trees, shrubs and plants that had prematurely 'gone over' due to the heat were suddenly flush with new, green growth.

These provisional new heat and rainfall records followed what the Met Office has already confirmed has been England's driest spring in more than 100 years, and the driest January to July period since 1929. The conditions are mainly due, it says, to persistent →

Gonzalo Morillo MSGLD designs resilient, weather-wise gardens that stand the test of time. **Arabella St John Parker** finds out more

PHOTOGRAPHS: SILVIA CERRADA



high-pressure systems that often originate from the Azores or mainland Europe.

Global weather patterns are changing fast and the Met Office has forecast that those experienced here in Britain will soon resemble those of a Mediterranean country. The Society of Garden + Landscape Designers (SGLD) declares in its Environmental Action Plan that planted landscapes 'can help us to adapt to and mitigate climate change'.

'To do this,' writes the SGLD's lead for Sustainability, Rachel Bailey, in her Foreword to the Plan, 'will require fundamental changes to the way we approach design and build landscapes and gardens so they have a positive impact on the environment. This will require resources and training and better evidence to guide decision making.'

There are invaluable lessons, experiences and insights that can be learned from designers and landscapers working outside Britain. Among those is Gonzalo Morillo MSGLD, whose projects in Spain, as well as in Greece and Italy, involve him designing gardens for hot, dry summers and wet winters.

'Gardens are the place where my clients hide from the heat and the noise of the everyday,' he says. 'For we Spaniards, a garden is a place of comfort, somewhere we can refresh and relax, an idyll where we can grow our family – family is very, very important in Spain – and for that, the garden must be green.'

As far removed, then, from any natural Spanish landscape that is shaped by hot, dry conditions as you could imagine. 'It's very difficult to make people understand the naturalistic style here,' says Gonzalo. 'They don't understand that their wish for a green garden is a contradiction.'

While, in his view, public comprehension of the changes that he and his team are seeing in Spain's weather patterns is still behind the curve, when it comes to creating gardens and landscapes at least, adjustments towards more sustainable design are being made at a regulatory level.

Aside from the list of invasive plants that cannot be used, while there are no rules generally regarding planting, there are regulations that state what percentages of land can be given over to impermeable areas, to lawn, and to ornamental landscaping. They also declare how much must be preserved as *campo* (natural or wild landscape).

'The laws are set by our regional town halls and are quite restrictive,' Gonzalo explains. 'For example, in one area where I and my team work, only twenty per cent of a total plot can be lawn, and you have to capture water run-off and hold it in a recovery tank. Also, the term *campo* is so broad in meaning that there's often lot of to-ing and fro-ing with the town hall to get a clearer definition.'



**'FOR WE SPANIARDS,  
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In some places, including Madrid, there is also a rule that affects trees. 'If you cut down or take out a tree, you have to replace it with one tree for every year of the age of the tree that has been removed,' Gonzalo explains. So, if the tree removed was 40 years old, 40 new trees must be planted.

The reason for the restrictions is not so much because of water consumption – 'there's no limit to the amount of water you can use here, as long as you pay for it' – but because of the increased likelihood of water run-off and soil erosion.

'Torrential rains have always been a feature of the Mediterranean climate,' says Gonzalo. 'We normally have huge, huge storms in September and October and in Madrid, for instance, where the soil is mainly clay, we suffer more from rotten roots than from not having water. We haven't had a drought this year and I don't think we're getting less rain overall, but the pattern of rainfall is changing and because we have very bad soil in Spain – there's lots of clay and lime but you'll never find loam – we need to be better at harvesting and using water, and at preserving it for long periods.'

Indeed, Gonzalo believes that working with the soil and the topography of every site is more important perhaps than trying to always use endemic plants. Using the right





Structural plants such as *Phillyrea*, *Myrtus*, *Rhamnus alaternus*, and *Cistus* grow well in Madrid, as do perennials such as *Stachys byzantina*, *Nepeta x faassenii*, *Ballota acetabulosa*, *Phlomis*, and *Calamintha nepeta*.

**'I'VE BEEN WORKING  
WITH ENDEMIC  
SPECIES ALL MY  
CAREER.'**



water management tools in the right situations is also essential. 'Each project is different and it's important to always start from scratch; soil analysis, SuDS, permeable areas, slopes, structures – be site specific every single time, otherwise you'll be wasting money.'

#### Green and shady

In Madrid, where temperatures can easily reach 95°F (35°C) and rise as high as 104°F (40°C) during the day in the summer, shade is essential and nowhere more so than on the roof of a townhouse such as his Ático en El Viso project.

'I always try to make these spaces as green as possible,' says Gonzalo. 'We need to balance water consumption with temperature radiation and the need for permeable surfaces and in my opinion, the latter is more important so we aim to use highly efficient irrigation systems and planting such as macrothermal grasses that need very little watering.'

Structural Mediterranean plants such as *Phillyrea*, *Myrtus*, *Rhamnus alaternus*, *Cistus*, sometimes *Buxus*, and *Arbutus* – 'those are our core plants, and we like to use them because they grow properly and make a good hedge design' – are softened with an even split of perennials and grasses and planted in a soil depth of 20cm.

'We've used technical paving, so it floats and there's considerable capacity for a heavy rainfall, and the lighter growing medium, which is better suited to rooftop gardens where weight is a key concern, drains better per cubic metre than that which we'd use in a garden at ground level.'

Meanwhile, the drainage system is in the form of a drip watering system using Geotextile fabric, which makes the garden environment quite humid. 'We've found this works very well in this kind of garden, rather than having grid dripping systems,' says Gonzalo.

'The maintenance of such a garden is high – it has to be looked after every week – but the effort is worthwhile to achieve a cool shady area.'

#### Working with the land

As a forestry engineer by training, and a passionate lover of nature and the environment by inclination, Gonzalo's design style is first and foremost naturalistic. 'I've been working with endemic species all my career and when someone talks about using them in a garden, it is entirely logical to me; my approach to design is always to work with the ecosystem in which I find myself. It's very intuitive.'

It is particularly telling in Jardín de los Paseos, a garden that he and his team created for a sloping site measuring →



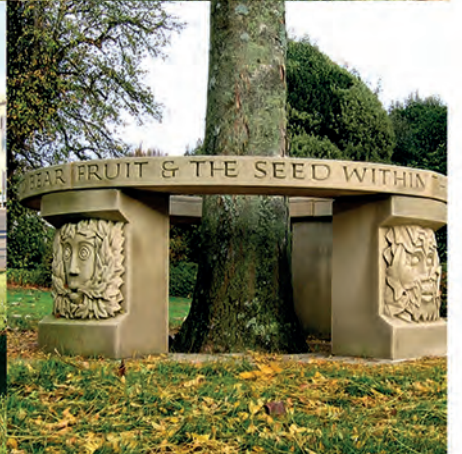
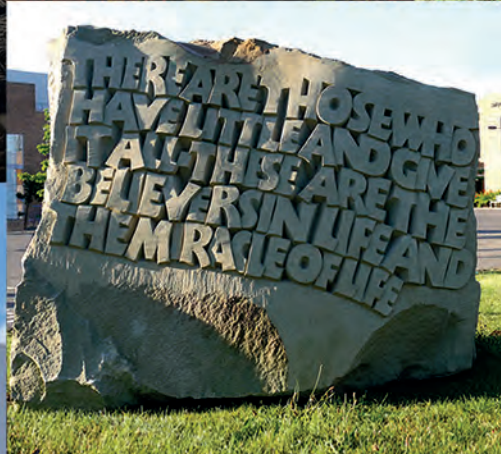
#### GONZALO MORILLO MSGLD

gained a degree in forestry engineering and on graduation, took up an opportunity to work for a studio in Belgium where he learned about garden design. On his return to Spain, he joined Fernando Caruncho's studio where he worked for seven years as project manager and developer on projects around the world. In 2011 he took the decision to study for his MA at the School of Architecture in Madrid. At the same time, he launched his own studio which has since become Locus Landscape, in partnership with Luisa Olazabal and Louis Ojeda, and he and his team work on private, corporate and residential projects throughout Spain, including the Balearic Islands, and in locations including Paraguay and Italy. [locuslandscape.com](http://locuslandscape.com)





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## WHERE PLANTS ORIGINATE FROM IS AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION.

flowering meadow and run a single grass path through the trees to a raised seating platform that he designed to stand in the middle of the wood.

'As we didn't want the meadow to look yellow in July, we worked with Pictorial Meadows to create a seed mix using adapted ornamentals and we did install an irrigation system so there can be one watering in July, and two in August, to ensure the flowering extends throughout the summer.

'To emphasise the sense of space, and the views of the woodland, I created the lawn, which covers just five hundred square metres and is perfectly in proportion with the house, the pool and the background of pine trees and holm oaks,' explains Gonzalo.

In the areas where there is more sun, the designer has planted endemic species such as *Phillyrea*, *Arbutus*, and *Cistus*, with ornamental grasses, salvias, cypresses, and lavenders.

'There are some pear trees and *Acer campestre* and some perennials and all the new planting is arranged in beds around the lawn and down the slope towards the house, to take advantage of the run-off from the lawn's irrigation system.'

Water run-off from a small stream that traverses this garden and pools in a depression where, before Gonzalo arrived, there was no drainage, is also now effectively managed to both the designer's and regulatory standards.

Three underground water tanks capture the run-off, with two open tanks filling the third impervious one, which is the long-term storage tank used to irrigate the garden via a drip system. 'The system is connected to the mains, just in case, but there hasn't been an extreme drought in the five or so years since the garden was finished so no supplementation has been necessary so far.'

### Designing for the future

While Gonzalo is confident that gardens created by Locus Landscape will still be functioning in 50 or more years' time, he is realistic about the planting. 'There are always new species coming in, especially now we're thinking more about creating naturalistic gardens, and there are species I'd change (*Buxus*, for instance) and some I'd use more – we didn't have *Cistus x heterocalyx* ten years ago but I use it a lot now.'

He and his team are using a lot of adapted ornamentals from places with even drier climates, such as California, and he reveals that he is also working with Cultidelta, a nursery in the north-east of Spain that is cultivating forms of endemic plants from Cyprus and Greece. 'Things are moving very fast here in Spain and we need to keep up.' ●

#### ENDNOTE

1 Madrid usually has 60 rainy days per year, with most rain falling in October; [worlddata.info/europe/spain/climate-madrid.php](http://worlddata.info/europe/spain/climate-madrid.php)



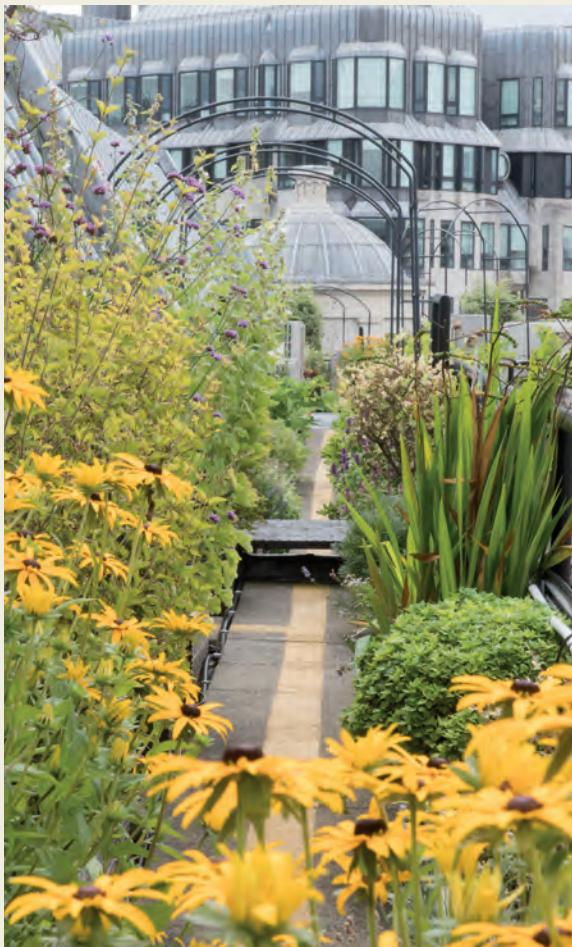
107,639 square feet (10,000 sq m) and situated on the outskirts of Madrid. As well as answering his client's brief for some lawn, a swimming pool and seating areas close to the Modernist-style house, Gonzalo wanted to find a way to preserve an existing woodland of holm oaks. 'It had been growing there for many years and I wanted very much to preserve all that beauty,' he recalls.

His solution was to create a narrative for the woodland and to treat it, and the house, as 'full areas' in his design and to counterbalance these with voids – that is, the lawn and swimming pool.

Inspired by the idea of a herd of sheep wandering through a grove of trees and creating a random network of paths as they graze on the grasses growing in the shade there, the designer has underplanted the oaks with a

Lavenders, *Nepetas*, *Cerastium* and *Perovskia atriplicifolia* are among the planting in the beds at Jardín de los Paseos which have been arranged around the lawn and down towards the house, to take advantage of run-off from the irrigation system.







# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Designing with edible plants can create gardens that are both productive and beautiful, finds **Jane Moore**

**T**here is nothing new about growing fruit and vegetables in a garden. Many gardens feature a dedicated patch – a kitchen garden, perhaps, a handful of fruit trees, or maybe even an orchard. Recently, however, designers have been making these edible elements part of the whole design, incorporating them into the body of the garden rather than segregating them into a separate area.

'I want my gardens to look really beautiful and be productive at the same time,' says forest gardener and permaculture designer Pippa Chapman. 'People often think of permaculture gardens as being full of nettles and rather wild, but as well as being productive, how the plants look is just as important. After all, that's why we love gardening, because plants are beautiful.'

Pippa, who set up a sustainable gardening business, Those Plant People, with her husband Andrew in 2010, is well versed in covering both aspects, melding her fine arts degree with RHS diplomas in horticulture and permaculture design. Her design work is based on creating gardens that are productive, attractive, and sustainable and interest in her approach is spreading at all levels; in March this year, for instance, Pippa gave a talk about designing with plant communities to members of the Society of Garden + Landscape Designers (SGLD) as part of its *Sustainability Bitesize* series.

'There's definitely been a big rise in interest in edible gardening, especially [among those working with] smaller gardens,' she says. 'People are far more interested in my small courtyard food forest garden, which features a lot of beautiful edible plants, than in my larger field-scale

Clockwise from top left: Kristina Clode uses autumn fruiting raspberries in a country garden; Pippa Chapman; an edible herb border is a favourite with Kristina; Coutts Skyline Garden in London, by Urban Organic; giving it statuesque structure with angelica and bronze fennel; edible and medicinal herbs in the RHS Healer's Hollow garden, by pre-registered SGLD member Jude Yeo and non-member Emily Grayshaw.

forest garden, for instance, because they can relate it to their own gardens.'

Kristina Clode MSGLD, winner of the SGLD's Design for the Environment Award in 2021 and 2022, agrees that clients are increasingly keen to have edible elements within their gardens and that space can be a factor in driving the design.

'People who live in a city often have a smaller garden and don't have space for a dedicated vegetable garden, or the time to devote to it, but they still want the option of having a few edibles to pick,' she says. 'The obvious thing is to incorporate herbs into the design; they work so well in a gravel garden and with other plants, as they're so ornamental in their own right.'

Besides the usual suspects such as lavender, rosemary, and thyme, some of Kristina's favourite herbs to use are valerian and angelica which, as she says, are 'massively statuesque' in the border. She is also keen on planting trained fruit trees such as espaliers or cordons at the back of a border, as well as stepover varieties at the front.

'These forms are ideal for a smaller garden, and so many are available already trained, so you don't need to be a master pruner to manage them,' she adds.

## Edible hedging

In addition, Kristina often finds that planting a mixed edible hedge is the easiest way to incorporate low-maintenance productive plants as part of an ornamental scheme. Her newly completed design for the Iris Garden at the National Trust's Nunnington Hall, near York, features a low-growing edible hedge containing red, black, and white currants, as well as gooseberry and compact *Rosa spinosissima*.

'Having a mixed hedge as part of a garden is one of the best things you can do for wildlife,' she says. 'Even a mixed hedge of native plants can include a lot of edibles such as sloe, damson, elderberry, and crab apple.'

Kristina also advocates placing obelisks in the border to grow climbing annuals such as beans or sweet peas. This gives the gardener a dedicated space for these plants, offering the opportunity to grow different crops each year and allowing for experimentation from climbing gourds to French beans such as Borlotti, Lablab, or French beans.

'It's an easy space to mark and save, and the bare obelisk will still look great in the winter, whereas a lot of vegetables go over and leave bare ground, which doesn't look good.'

Both Pippa and Kristina advise experimenting with different varieties, gleaned information from other gardens, books, and seed companies (see box). Besides the tried-and-tested herbs and fruit, perennial →



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## USEFUL RESOURCES

Alexandra Noble Garden Design, alexandranoble.com

*Around the World in 80 Plants: An edible perennial vegetable adventure for temperate climes*, by Stephen Barstow (Permanent Publications)

British Academy of Garden Design blog: *Edible landscaping in modern garden design*, gardendesignacademy.co.uk/blog

Charles Dowding, charlesdowding.co.uk

*Incredible Edible Seeds to Solutions: The power of small actions*, by Pam Warhurst CBE and Anne Sikking (SP Square CIC)

Kristina Clode MSGLD, kristinacodegardendesign.co.uk

Pippa Chapman, thoseplantpeople.com

*Permaculture Planting Designs: A handbook for creating a thriving, abundant garden*, by Pippa Chapman (Permanent Publications)

Sustainability Bitesize webinars, Society of Garden + Landscape Designers, sgld.org.uk – 'Events'

*The Plant Lover's Backyard Forest Garden*, by Pippa Chapman, (Permanent Publications)

*The best crops to grow in shade*, by Natalie Ashbee, rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/grow-your-own/crops-for-shade

For unusual plant varieties, try Incredible Vegetables, incrediblevegetables.co.uk; Cultivariable, cultivariable.com; Pennard Plants, pennardplants.com

Urban Organic, a team of growers that works with restaurants, businesses, schools and community groups to create edible gardens, urban-organic.co.uk



Clockwise from far left: Pippa's mixed border includes fennel and bergamot; kale makes a splash alongside lavender, *Coleus*, petunias and more, but it can be smelly so perhaps plant away from windows and doors; Harry Holding's edimental garden for RHS Chelsea 2023.



**'IT'S BEST TO START WITH ONE OR TWO VARIETIES AND USE THINGS THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY WANT TO EAT.'**

vegetables such as kale, rhubarb, asparagus, and alliums can offer both edible and ornamental additions to the garden. 'Some clients are happier than others for you to try out ideas,' says Pippa. 'It's best to start with one or two varieties and to use things that people actually want to eat.'

#### Reap the benefits

Pippa is keen on the allium family, especially the everlasting onion, which produces small, clustered bunches of onions where the bulbs are like small shallots and the tops can be used like spring onions. Another favourite is the tree onion, which Pippa describes as 'quirky and architectural' and looking good underplanted with flowering plants, while the bulbils can be roasted like a head of garlic.

'*Allium moly* has the most delicious flowers of all the alliums, both in terms of their flavour and their looks,' she says. 'We're growing them more and more because they're lovely to look at and to eat, too.'

Other steadfast favourites are the more unusual perennial kales, including 'Daubenton Panache', a variety with a variegated margin which Pippa plants into borders

as it stands out among other plants, adding a splash of brightness. Fortunately, it is also less attractive to pigeons than most kales.

Kristina points out that as well as unwelcome attention from pigeons and white butterfly caterpillars, the cabbage-like smell of kale might necessitate planting it away from doors or windows. She advocates evaluating each plant for its worth in every aspect, whether ornamental or edible, before incorporating it into a scheme.

'From a design point of view, it matters more that it's the right plant with the longest season of interest,' she says. 'If they're edible too, then that's a bonus.'

For both designers, the key thing is to use a combination of plants, adding in some perennial edible elements, whether shrubs, trees, or herbaceous plants, where they work with the design and depending on the enthusiasm of the client.

The first step can be as simple as sowing a few seeds: 'Nasturtium, borage, *Calendula*, *Amaranthus*, *Zinnia* – the choice of edible annuals is huge,' says Kristina. 'There's nothing better for adding a splash of colour and ringing the changes in a garden than annuals.' ●





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## THE SGLD COUNCIL

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SGLD COUNCIL?

The Society of Garden + Landscape Designers is an active incorporated company\* governed by its Articles of Association. Its Council exists to support the Society's members, and to uphold good design and good practice in design.

### CAN ANY SGLD MEMBER STAND FOR A PLACE ON THE COUNCIL?

The Articles of Association stipulates that the Council can be formed of a total of ten officers who are registered directors of the Society, and all of them must be either full MSGLDs or pre-registered members. The Chair and Treasurer are statutory, paid positions, the rest are according to need and are voluntary. There can also be as many Reporting to Council officers as the Council wants and the people in those voluntary positions do not need to be members of the Society\*\*.

### ARE THERE ANY OTHER SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS?

Each role will have defined expectations so, for example, a knowledge of education within the field of garden and landscape design is extremely important for the Council Lead for Education, while an understanding of how cluster groups work, and what support is available, is essential to be the National and International Co-ordinator for Cluster Groups. People tend to apply for specific positions on Council because they have an existing interest in that type of role and a natural wish to offer the benefit of their experience. The roles, all of which are voluntary, can be developed by each incumbent.

### HOW CAN MEMBERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STANDING FOR, AND SERVING ON, COUNCIL AND PUT FORWARD IDEAS FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION?

When someone stands down, or their three-year tenure is coming to an end, the Articles of Association require the Council to notify the Society's membership that the role is open for application. Generally, though, existing Council members consistently keep their eyes and ears open for any Society member who is interested in a particular role and welcomes and encourages people to get in touch – all contact details are on the website.

[sgld.org.uk](http://sgld.org.uk) – 'About'

\* Incorporated on 10 November 2004.

\*\* The current SGLD Council comprises: Chair, Vice-Chair/Treasurer, an Ambassador, and Leads for SGLD Awards, Technical, Sustainability, CPD, Garden Design Journal, and Symposium & Marketing. The Reporting to Council Leads are currently for Accreditation; Diversity & Inclusion; and Sponsorship, Education & Membership. Office support is provided by Association Management Services.

## MEET THE COUNCIL



he Society of Garden + Landscape Designers (SGLD, or Society of Garden Designers as it was then)

was formed in 1981, to support

and promote the work of garden designers (as opposed to landscape architects or gardeners).

Today, that mission remains the same and the Society continues to be run by its garden and landscape designer members, through its Council.

The make-up of that august group, and its responsibilities, are governed by the Society's formal Articles of Association and values but who

are the people who sit on the Council and what do they do, and can anyone become a part of the group?

We have already met the present Chair, Andrew Duff MSGLD, Vice-Chair and Treasurer John Wyer FSGLD, Chair of the SGLD Awards Lynne Marcus FSGLD and the Council's lead for Continuing Professional Development, Joanna Archer MSGLD. Here, we meet Rachel Bailey MSGLD, the Council's lead for Sustainability, and pre-registered SGLD member Christina Sullivan, Council lead for *Garden Design Journal*.

### COUNCIL ROLE: LEAD FOR SUSTAINABILITY

**Rachel Bailey MSGLD** obtained her BSc in Zoology in 1997 and PhD in Environmental Toxicology in 2001. She completed her diploma in applied permaculture in 2013 before training as a garden designer at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. She set up her studio in 2015, took on her first designer employee in 2021 and now employs a team of three designers and a part-time office manager. Rachel is also a fully accredited Building with Nature Assessor.

#### When did you join the Council, and why?

I joined Council in October 2021, and I did so because I was invited to become the Society's Sustainability officer. The invitation was made because I was already having conversations with other people in the Society about how we

wanted to develop the subject of 'sustainability' as a topic in the CPD programme and generally increase the awareness and sense of urgency around the issue.

#### What position do you hold and what does it entail?

When I say 'Sustainability', I always actually mean the much wider issues of biodiversity, sustainability, and resource use, but for ease of conversation, I agreed to the job title simply being lead for Sustainability. →

**'SUSTAINABILITY IS MY PASSION AND GUIDING INTEREST IN ALL MY WORK.'**





In 2019, Becca Duncan and I were joint Regional Co-Ordinators (RCOs) of the Society's regional group in Scotland and we had planned to hold a day-long event for the group in May 2020, focusing on Sustainability. Of course, the Covid-19 lockdowns put a stop to that so instead, we set up a series of online talks on the subject and having spread the word, we also had people joining us from America (I had previously joined an online talk that I had heard about through the American Society of Landscape Architects and given by a team member at Pathfinder, which is a carbon calculator for the landscape industry in America, so I invited them to give a talk at our online event).

It was on the back of those regional group talks that I was invited to become lead for Sustainability for the SGLD as a whole; the subject is my passion and guiding interest in my work so even if I had been invited to take on a different role, I would always have ended up focusing on it.

My brief from Council is to improve designers' knowledge around sustainability and biodiversity issues and to show them how they can take this knowledge into their designs and working practices. I am also briefed to lead from the front and direct the Society in making its ethos and working practices more sustainable, and to work on sustainability issues with other professional trade associations across the industry.

#### How have you been developing the role?

The first thing I worked on was an Environmental Action Plan, which is now available on the website for anyone to read. Working on that was as much a personal project as it was one for the benefit of the Society as it helped me focus on what is going on, in general terms, in the fields of sustainability and biodiversity in landscape design, and on what we as a Society were trying to do, and what we want to achieve in that direction. At the same time, the Council had briefed SGLD Ambassador David Stevens FSGLD to develop the Society's Manifesto following the Symposium in 2022, so I also contributed to that.

Another of my early actions was to set up the Sustainability Working Group, to help me develop a CPD-accredited programme that can educate Society members about all aspects of sustainability in their work. The whole subject is constantly changing as new research comes out; there are some black and white details, but most are very nuanced, so rather than creating full-length CPD courses, we decided we could achieve a wider reach if we kept the sessions cheap and to just an hour in length and used each one to dig deeper into the detail of subjects bit by bit. This led to us forming the *Sustainability Bitesize* webinars, which have been going for almost a year now and have proved very popular.

Alongside all of this, I worked with SGLD Co-Chair John Wyer FSGLD to set up various cross-industry meetings to talk about ideas such as carbon calculators; the recently launched 'green' design tool, which we have called elemental, is a direct result of those discussions.

Going forwards, we need to raise awareness of elemental and continue to stress the urgency behind the reason for its existence, and to make sure everyone uses the tool in their work. I am already doing that by giving talks and joining panel sessions at events such as FutureScape but I also want to set up CPD sessions so that all designers know how to use the design tool and that will probably be done through the *Sustainability Bitesize* webinars.

#### How much of your own time do you spend on Council business?

All of the time! If I need to do something for Council, for the industry or for my own work, I prioritise it, regardless. More formally though, there is always half a day set aside in my diary for the monthly Council meeting, a couple of hours each month for cross-industry meetings about elemental, and perhaps another hour for SGLD meetings on the same subject. There is also the time spent preparing for those meetings and working with the working group (pre-registered SGLD members Lucy Conochie, Gini Denison-Pender, and Jane Heather) so all in all, at least two or three days of my time each month is spent on Council-related business. That excludes, though, those many occasions when I represent or take part

## 'I WOULD LIKE TO SEE STUDIOS EMPLOYING A WIDER RANGE OF AGE GROUPS AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS.'

as a member of the SGLD/Council at events such as FutureScape, and Royal Horticultural Society and other cross-industry gatherings.

#### What do you hope to achieve during your tenure and what would you like to be your legacy?

The elemental project has barely begun really, so, as things stand, that is going to be a huge point of focus during the rest of my tenure on Council. Alongside this is the aftercare and development of gardens. This is hugely important on a sustainability level. If gardens are not looked after, they are more likely to be ripped out and started from scratch by successive owners, or by councils of projects in the public realm.

I would like to see the role of aftercare and development in the sustainability of a garden, whether carried out by garden designers in conjunction with gardeners, or by gardeners alone, being more widely recognised. Another thing I would also like to look at while on Council is design studios being made up of more than one person, and of studios employing a wider range of age groups and educational backgrounds, particularly younger people – school-leavers as apprentices, for instance.

As for my legacy, it would be that people have understood the urgent need for a sustainable approach to design and that as a consequence, sustainable design and the use of the elemental design tool have become part of the establishment.

#### Would you encourage all SGLD members to consider serving on Council?

Yes, absolutely. Because then they will see how hard Council works for its members and that it is formed of a diversity of people from across the country. Getting involved is how you effect change.

## COUNCIL ROLE: LEAD FOR GARDEN DESIGN JOURNAL

**CHRISTINA SULLIVAN**, a pre-registered SGLD member, completed her BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science and initially worked in the pharmaceutical industry before moving to work at the Peak District National Park, later studying Garden Design and Plantsmanship at the Duchy College in Cornwall in 2004. Following a career break, in 2020 she set up her own practice, Green Shoots Design.





### When did you join the Council, and why?

I was co-opted to Council in April 2022 as a non-voting member. It was at the invitation of the then Chair Lynne Marcus FSGLD as Patricia Fox MSGLD needed to step down from her Council position as lead for *Garden Design Journal* for family-related reasons, and they hoped I might be willing to succeed her in that post.

I had only been a member of the SGLD for a year or so, and a member of the *Journal's* editorial panel for just a few months, so the whole idea of being on Council was quite daunting. However, Patricia, who was my business mentor at that time, believed I was the right person for the job.

To begin with I attended all the monthly Council meetings and made general contributions to all the matters being discussed. Then, after a few months, I was asked to prepare a document about the *Journal* in its print form, and to consider whether there was a case for it to be made into a digital-only publication, and shortly after having presented it to Council, I was invited to become a co-opted member with full voting rights, for a period of eighteen months. At the end of that period, I have to be re-proposed to Council and a majority vote is required before a new eighteen-month period can begin, and I am fortunate that has happened twice so far.

### What position do you hold and what does it entail?

Attending the Council meetings as lead for the *Journal* means I hear about everything that is going on within the Society as an organisation – its Awards, accreditation, Symposium, membership, marketing and sponsorship. So, I am in the ideal position to gather news and ideas that I can pass on to the magazine's Editor and the editorial panel at our own meetings. The summer after I joined Council, for instance, I was invited to join a working group in a meeting with the Royal

Horticultural Society, to talk about possible partnerships and collaborations which, if they went ahead, would, naturally, need to be given coverage in the *Journal*.

As well as carrying out my own specific role, all members of Council are actively encouraged to contribute to all aspects of its conversations and to bring our experience and expertise to bear in the interests of the Society. As an environmental scientist, therefore, I can offer ideas and insights into the subject of sustainability. I also have experience in sales and as the Society and *Garden Design Journal* are things that we have to promote, or 'sell', not just to SGLD members but to potential members and to other organisations and beyond, I am able to offer that expertise as well.

### How have you been developing the role?

The most important thing is that the *Journal* is something that its readers, and the Society members particularly, want to pick up and read. One of the important and most interesting findings in my initial review of the magazine for Council was that readers really do value the printed version. Designers in particular spend so much time working via a computer that the last thing they want to do when sitting down to read a magazine is to have to look at it online. The feel of the paper and physically turning the pages and experiencing the weight and size of the magazine in their hands is almost a mindful experience.

The priority for me then is that I convey ideas, and requests from Council to the Editor, so that the magazine informs, entertains, and inspires existing and potential new readers all of the time. Finding ways to increase readership numbers is a close second.

Also, through Council, and with the particular help of Rachel Bailey and Andy Barringer, a reporting to Council member for Sponsorship, Education & Membership, we have put in place a list of approved criteria for magazine advertisers that aligns with the Society's sustainability credentials. We have also ensured its production and circulation processes are in line with the Society's Environmental Action Plan.

### How much of your own time do you spend on Council business?

When I was first co-opted, my client work was not too onerous so I was able to dedicate quite a lot of time to Council-related business and in the beginning, I was keen to join working parties such as the Sustainability group and interested in helping with the Symposium. However, as my business has grown, and I have had to juggle caring responsibilities, I have needed to keep my focus solely on the *Journal*. My direct involvement with the magazine involves attending the online editorial panel meetings, which the Editor convenes every three or four months, and looking over the final proofs of each issue before the magazine goes to press.

## 'I CONVEY IDEAS FROM COUNCIL TO THE EDITOR, SO THAT THE MAGAZINE INFORMS, ENTERTAINS, AND INSPIRES.'

I also, of course, maintain regular contact with the Editor over and above those formal occasions. When necessary, I hold meetings with the SGLD Treasurer, John Wyer FSGLD, and the publisher, James Houston, at James Pembroke Media, to discuss financial matters and advertising, and also with the team at Webscribe, which looks after the subscription service.

The work tends to ebb and flow in terms of set time spent but wherever I go, whenever I come into contact with members of the Society or the wider gardening industry, I always make a point of finding out if they are aware of the *Journal* and ask them for their thoughts, and I am always thinking of ideas for articles for publication.

### What do you hope to achieve during your tenure and what would you like to be your legacy?

I would like to see the *Journal* continuing to inspire, inform and educate, and while it is a tricky balance to achieve, that it is as valuable a resource to non-members as it is to members.

### Would you encourage all SGLD members to consider serving on Council?

Definitely. It gives you opportunities to meet people you might not otherwise meet, and experiences and a sense of satisfaction that are of huge benefit to you and your business. And of course, joining Council gives you a voice; being part of top-level conversations and being able to contribute means you can have influence and have an impact on things you care about or are interested in. It is a lot of work, and there are times when it can be overwhelming, but it is still an experience I would urge others to try. ●



Christina Sullivan





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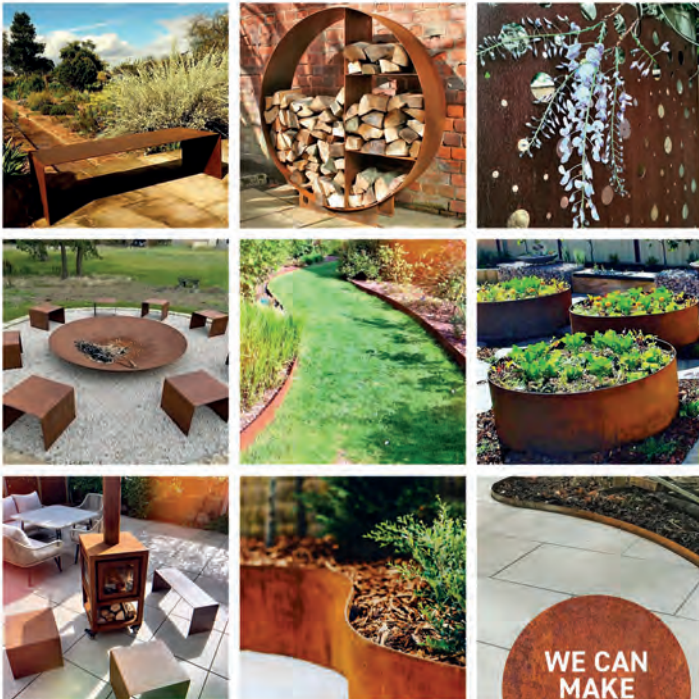


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## COMPOSTING: TIME TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

T

he Society of Garden + Landscape Designers' (SGLD) East Midlands cluster group is putting on an Organic Composting Workshop at Garden Organic in Coventry on Wednesday 5 November 2025, writes East Midlands RCO Susan Young.

The event is primarily for SGLD members and their guests in this region. It has been tailored to enable attendees to promote the importance of organic composting to their clients, with the aim of encouraging them – and giving them the know-how – to employ it in their gardens. This will maintain the soil health and longevity of the planting designers have specified and included in their schemes.

I warmly encourage you to join me there for what promises to be an interesting and informative day that will enable members to promote the practice of making home-made organic compost to their clients. Garden designers are in a fantastic position to be able to engage with garden owners, and to share knowledge and influence best practice; and this event is a stepping stone to helping the public become more knowledgeable about keeping their garden soil healthy.

SGLD members are permitted to bring one non-member to the event, as a paying guest, and who better to bring along than the gardeners who put in the gardens you design and who go on to maintain them?

To book your place, go to [sgld.org.uk](http://sgld.org.uk) – 'Members' Area/CPD Calendar'

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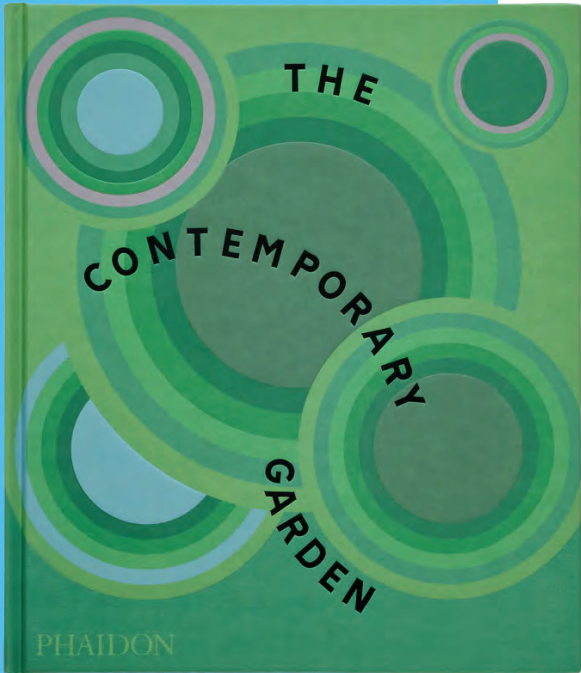
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BOOK OF THE MONTH  
*THE CONTEMPORARY GARDEN*

This is a big book with a whacky cover and 300 large illustrations encapsulating some of the best contemporary gardens from the past 30 years.

Garden designer, lecturer, and co-founder of Garden Masterclass Annie Guilfoyle's engaging introduction reflects on her own development and influences as a designer over the same period, with an awareness of pre-existing trends including the north European New Perennial Movement, the shift to ecology-based teaching in America, and the significant contributions by key designer-authors and plants people around the world.

This shared history provides a background to emerging contemporary themes: changing approaches to the potential of post-industrial land; better skills and understanding of plants, growing media and the interconnectedness of things; and the recognition of the value and role of private and public open/green space for people, as well as biodiversity.

In alphabetical order, the great and the good and the fabulous are showcased in this book, with one photograph per project per page accompanied by a maximum 300-word description. The range of work is huge, and the representation is international. With a number of newer designers and non-designers, it is a welcome move that not just familiar projects and designers are featured.

For instance, new to me and great to see included were DIRT Studio's Core City Park in Detroit; Landscapes of Cohabitation by Doxiadis+, although I would have liked to see a more distant view showing how this garden sits within the surrounding 'wild' landscape; Junya Ishigami + Associates' picture of the Garden Mizuniwa, a landscape installation of trees planted in abstract islands of moss surrounded by sinuous water; and how Tadao Ando created a spectacular and spiritual setting with Hill of the Buddha, where the Buddha's head is set at eye level with the ground.

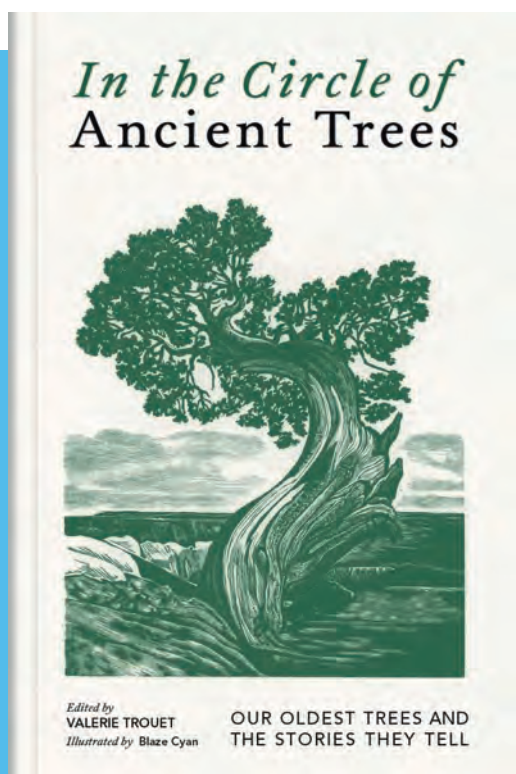
This book is a visual feast and a starting point for the investigation of projects in greater detail elsewhere. While A-Z by name is easy to assemble, it might have offered more interest to organise the contents by themes or decades, to see emerging forms of the contemporary.

The introductory focus on landscape and garden history is an essentially western and predominantly European perspective, undoubtedly the best documented history, but this rather discounts the diverse heritage of many contributors. However, with all the effort, and pleasure, that must have gone into compiling this pictorial directory, I could not work out who might be the target audience.

Reviewed by garden designer Annabel Downs FSGLD.







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## IN THE CIRCLE OF ANCIENT TREES: OUR OLDEST TREES AND THE STORIES THEY TELL

There could not be a more pertinent time for the release of this fresh perspective on the historic relevance of trees. The felling of the 150-year-old sycamore tree that once stood beside Hadrian's Wall, near Crag Lough in Northumberland, and was nicknamed the 'Sycamore Gap tree', has captured the attention of anyone who values the importance of our natural environment. This book – edited by Valerie Trouet, with specially commissioned wood engravings by Blaze Cyan – beautifully reinforces all the reasons why we cherish such trees as timeless monuments.

The introduction brings us briefly into the life of the editor and provides a sense of familiarity with that love of the natural world which, for most us involved in gardens and landscapes, develops from a young age and a family force. While the stories

of the ten majestic trees that Valerie has selected for the book are told by dendrologists, she herself is a dendroclimatologist, which gives us a clue to the project's focus.

The book demonstrates how the impact of the climate upon trees is told through the wood of trees and it is reassuring to read that such studies reveal that the world has never stood still, that fierce natural elements – be they ice, fire, flood, drought, the heat, or the cold – have always raged.

Through the narrative of each chapter, this book captures wonderfully the fragile moment in time in which we live. The first subject, for instance, is a giant redwood, and a study of its wood reveals that in its native Californian habitat, wildfires have been a constant. The fact that this living tree can provide us with a naturalistic perspective on current and

past events is magical. Reading the stories of other trees, among them a cedar, a kauri, a cypress and a pine, we are taken on a journey around the world and discover associated events and portraits of time and place that further highlight the value of these ancient living organisms.

As a reminder that climatic change will always be ahead of us, the book bridges the sciences of the stories with social and historical perspectives, diluting any excessive detail or scientific data. It is particularly thought-provoking reading for the dormant season, when we become more aware of the influence of seasons on our plants – wherever we may be in the world.

**Reviewed by garden designer Marcus Foster MSGLD.**



## A BEACON FOR PUB GARDENS

A naturalistic planting scheme and artful but functional focal points, but no lawn, have turned a pub car park into a magical outdoor dining room called the Hestia

**T**here is a famous precedent for transforming car parks into gardens, but when Tabitha Rigden MSGLD was called in to redesign the outside space at The Plough Shiplake, near Henley-on-Thames, she was presented with rather more logistical requirements than Mrs Beth Chatto ever had to consider. 'My brief was to swap the car park with the existing garden and to create an outdoor kitchen and a dining area that was bigger than the one inside the pub; the number of guests [that could be seated] was just as important as any aesthetic aspiration. The suggestion of creating a pub garden without a lawn may have been too radical for many pub landlords but my client immediately got on board with the idea,' says Tabitha. She succeeded to such an extent that her work here won the New Designer category in the SGD Awards 2025.

### The importance of functionality

'Practicalities were key. We considered health and safety requirements, made sure the waiting staff [would be able to] work efficiently, and provided separate guest and staff access to a large outdoor kitchen and a dining area with space for fifty guests and a communal chef's table,' says Tabitha. 'The real challenge was to fit all this in while still making it feel like a garden.' Her cost-effective and environmentally aware solution was to zone the space using beds of perennials and grasses and 20 mainly native trees to define the routes and screen each table. 'The garden is mostly used from May to October, so I focused the plant palette on the summer season, using *Vinca minor* and other tough ground-covering species to protect the soil over winter.'

### Using existing resources

As a commercial project, cost and sustainability were particular concerns. 'Wherever I could, I worked with what was there and avoided unnecessary hardscaping, which also served to lighten our carbon footprint,' says Tabitha. 'For instance, instead of replacing a dilapidated brick retaining wall, we created a forty-five-degree bank between the new street-level garden and the lower car park, stabilising it with jute netting planted through with a tough matrix of plants including *Euphorbia*, *Deschampsia* and hardy geraniums. At the garden side, the bank was bordered by a clipped yew hedge, which screens out views of the cars, muffles traffic noise and creates a habitat for wildlife.'

### Warmth and comfort

Tabitha took her aesthetic cue from the wood fires over which everything in the outdoor kitchen is cooked. 'To me, a country pub is all about a community gathering around an open fire. Here, I created two fire-themed areas within the garden where patrons can congregate. At the far end, there is secluded bench seating grouped around a large fire bowl and, in the centre, a gas-powered "beacon" positioned to be visible throughout the space. Both pieces were fabricated in Corten steel, chosen for its warm tone.' Tabitha sourced the Selva furniture from Go Modern, and planted bronze fennel, *Stipa gigantea*, and *Molinia* 'Transparent' to echo this warm palette, with splashes of purple from lavender, *Perovskia* and *Salvia* 'Caradonna'.

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