



CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW SPECIAL

GARDENS

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Chelsea preview

Your guide to the best gardens, plants and products

How to create beautifully planted pots

Great ideas for perfect borders

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editor's letter



Having had the privilege of sitting on the Chelsea Flower Show selection panel, I've been eager to share my favourite garden designs with you for months. This issue we highlight the work of some of most accomplished designers and give in-depth interviews with Cleve West and

Luciano Giubbilei. So who will win the much coveted title Best in Show? With so many excellent contenders this year, I suspect it'll be a close call. As fabulous as the show gardens are, for me the heart of the show is the Great Pavilion. The nurseries' displays are breathtaking and there are always exciting new plants and forgotten favourites to look out for. On page 44, my colleague Sorrel Everton offers her insights into the best nurseries to head for. I'll be sending Tweets from the show, so if you want to find out all the latest news, then sign up to GdnsIllustrated at twitter.com. In addition to our Chelsea coverage, we feature four incredibly beautiful gardens, including Melpash Court in Dorset, with cleverly planted herbaceous borders, and a small woodland garden in North London designed by Jinny Blom. I'm thrilled that Jinny has also created three fabulous planting schemes for pots exclusively for GARDENS ILLUSTRATED. Turn to page 60 to find out more. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet



We preview a selection of this year's Chelsea show gardens, plants and products. Coverage begins on page 31.



Give your pots a fresh new look with garden designer Jinny Blom's guide to planting containers on page 60.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS



FERGUS GARRETT
Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.



CAROL KLEIN
Plantswoman and presenter of BBC Gardeners' World.



ROY LANCASTER
Plantsman, planthunter and regular BBC broadcaster.



ALYS FOWLER
Kew-trained gardener, author and television presenter.



DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

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COVER IMAGE

Holm oak border
photographed by Jason
Ingram. Turn to page 54 to
read about this romantic
English garden at Melpash
Court in Dorset.

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This wild and self-sustaining garden is an unusually soft contrast to the modern glass and steel extension it envelops on this Gothic cottage in North London.

In brief

WHAT Private garden to 19th-century red-brick cottage with new glass extension.

WHERE North London.

SOIL London clay improved with compost.

SIZE A triangular plot, about 48m x 36m x 33m.

CONDITIONS Sheltered, south-facing site.

SPECIAL FEATURES Light woodland and grassy glades planted with airy perennials that screen the house and create a sense of depth from inside the glass extension.

GARDEN PLAN See page 85.

Urban glade

Birches and soft, airy perennials fill this Jinny Blom-designed London garden with movement and height

WORDS ANNIE GATTI PHOTOGRAPHS NICOLA BROWNE



Ancient and modern architecture meet for lunch under the shade of the Catalpa on the poured concrete terrace. Simple and easily available furniture is nice and relaxed.



Even though the street is only metres away there is no sense of where the garden ends through the interlinking grassy glades.

The entrance to the Primrose Hill family home of Charles and Seema Perez is a surprise. Instead of the clipped formality of neighbouring front gardens, here is a wooden gate set in a high brick wall, which opens on to a flight of steps. At the top you emerge on to a stone path and instantly are transported to a woodland edge, a place of trees and grassy glades, of unkempt box, hazel bushes and tussocks of the grass *Anemanthele lessoniana*. Dancing flower heads of airy plants such as *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went', *Cephalaria dipsacoides* and *Persicaria amplexicaulis* Taurus (= 'Blotau') make you think of meadows. In the distance, beyond a grassy circle ringed with silver birch, is the red-brick façade and porticoed entrance of the 19th-century cottage that is home to Charles and Seema and their three young children.

The path turns sharply left towards the house, its angularity softened by cushioning mounds of the clover *Trifolium repens* 'William', but ahead two other routes lure you further down the garden. A bark

track climbs up through an archway of multi-stem birch and along the perimeter wall to form a secret passageway where rosemary bushes mingle with the grasses *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *caerulea* 'Edith Dudszus' and *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldschleier'. Below it is a second glade, enclosed by more birches and a swishing understorey of grasses and perennials. It is here that you see clearly, for the first time, the glass and metal contemporary living space, linked to the main house by a glass hallway, that juts angularly into the original garden.

When designer Jinny Blom first saw the awkward triangular plot it was a wasteland of compacted soil that sloped up to the main perimeter wall where three mature sycamores, an oak and a melancholy looking hawthorn provided the only screening from the houses opposite. The glass extension needed an outlook that would be private but not rob the interior of light, and be robust enough to cope with games of chase and ball. The budget was tight and the clients hoped to hold their wedding in the garden in six months' time.

Key plants

Five hard-working planting options that look lovely over a long season



Betula pendula

Silver birch is a pioneer tree so it is a good choice for a difficult site. It has a light canopy and holds its leaves, which turn buttery yellow in autumn, late in the year.



Trifolium repens 'William'

The dark leaves of this ornamental clover take the tone of the planting down. It makes a striking edging plant but needs plenty of space.



Cephalaria dipsacoides

The tiny flower heads of this tall scabious create a wonderfully pixillating effect at about 1.8m. The seedheads turn black, providing a monochromatic element in winter.



Persicaria amplexicaulis Taurus (= 'Blotau')

The deep red spires of this sturdy perennial appear in midsummer and continue until late autumn.

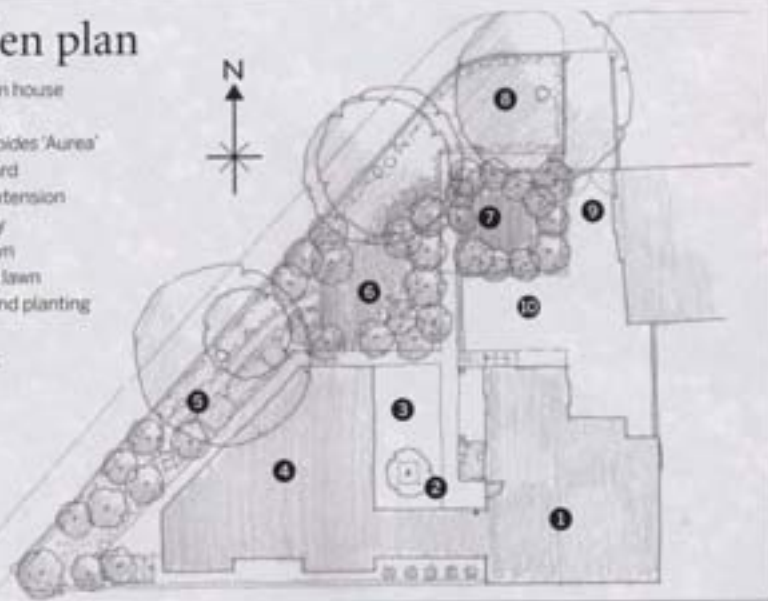


Anemanthele lessoniana

This robust grass provides a weeping shape that helps to soften the edges of the beds.

Garden plan

- 1 Victorian house
- 2 *Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea'
- 3 Courtyard
- 4 Glass extension
- 5 Pathway
- 6 First lawn
- 7 Second lawn
- 8 Woodland planting
- 9 Drive
- 10 Parking



"I thought, there are two ways of screening such a huge glass room: get curtains or make a wood." She proposed the latter. At the end of the garden, along the perimeter wall, she introduced an avenue of *Robinia pseudoacacia* – "a fantastic urban tree, very light and very sculptural which screens without hogging the light" – and, at each corner, a *Magnolia grandiflora* to lend glamour and scent. Closer to the house she used *Betula pendula* and in the narrowest corner, where the extension is closest to the road, a bank of tree ferns and myrtles.

Woodland inspiration

One of Jinny's inspirations for the garden was her great uncle's garden in Shropshire, where she remembers running through the woods on soft, pine-needle paths. "I wanted to make subsidiary paths through the garden, like animal tracks, especially for the children, plenty of nooks and crannies so that everyone can be accommodated. The grown-up element allows them to sit in the house and have this lovely

view or go out for a coffee and sit in the grove or on the terrace under the golden Indian bean tree [*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea']."

The ten-year-old *Catalpa*, which forms a natural parasol for outdoor meals, was the biggest extravagance but Seema is thrilled with the choice. "I just love this tree so much for its big flat leaves, the shade it casts over the courtyard and the shapes it makes, reflected through the glass."

One of the cleverest effects of Jinny's design is to give a real feeling of depth from inside the living space. This is achieved by combining the strong verticals of the single-stem birches with the transparency of the key layering plants such as *Cephalaria dipsacoides*, *Foeniculum vulgare* and *Molinia* 'Edith Dudszus'. "It's beautiful on sunny days," explains Seema, "but there's something entirely amazing on really stormy days when you're sitting on the sofa and see the movement, the wildness." □

• Jinny Blom chooses plant combinations for pots on page 60.

