



Words: Jackie Bennett Photos: Richard Hanson

# FRESH GARDENS

RHS Chelsea Flower Show's new category encourages designers to put an experimental twist on their submissions



**T**he new category at Chelsea this year was the first time that the premier RHS show has actively encouraged unconventional and experimental designs. Given its own section of the showground, the Fresh area was also given its own identity with eye-catching orange and grey signage and logos by visual artist Jo Chapman, who also designed the steel towers that defined the site.

While not all the gardens were 'conceptual' many were cutting edge in their use of materials or their sustainability. The RHS commissioned Artists in Residence Tony Heywood and Alison Condie who exhibited RHS Glamourlands – the jewel encrusted 'techno-folly' here given a new setting in a rusted metal casing surrounded by wild planting. →



**1. OUT OF THE BLUE**

*The Alan Gardner & Lindum Garden*  
**Designer:** Alan Gardner  
**Award:** BRONZE

Designer Alan Gardner (sporting colour coordinated blue hair himself) always tries to do something different and here he teamed up with wildflower turf growers Lindum to create drought-tolerant planting that could be a roof garden. With decking, wildflowers and zig-zag blue polypropylene string, it was designed to be Zen-like and calming.

**2. CLIMATE CALM GARDEN**

*Southern Water, Thames Water, South East Water, Sutton & East Water garden*  
**Designer:** Nicholas Dexter MSGD  
**Award:** BRONZE

The larger plot gave Nick chance to respond to the challenge of creating a climate change garden. Natural planting and clever use of water channels with a sluice gate were a fun yet workable take on how an urban family might deal with hose pipes bans and limited resources. The planting was designed to tolerate extremes of hot and cold temperatures and to encourage wildlife.

**3. GREEN WITH...**

*The Easigrass Garden*  
**Designer:** Tony Smith  
**Award:** GOLD and BEST IN SHOW

Envy and desire were powerfully captured by Tony Smith, using 72 green Perspex rods and 28 uprights covered in artificial grass. The cage structure represented the trap of desire and enclosed plants that have been historically most desired: tulips, ferns and orchids – all of which have been the subject of man's obsession for possessing and collecting.

**4. THE RAINBOW CHILDREN'S HOSPICE GARDEN**

*Designer:* Chris Gutteridge MSGD ,  
*Second Nature Designs* **Award:** SILVER

This fresh contemporary space lifted the spirits and invited the visitor into the space. Frosted acrylic was used to make screens to filter light and also as a canvas for silhouetted moving images which were projected at the back of the garden – both charming and touching. Chris Gutteridge and his team used four multi-stemmed *Amelanchiers* to give height and enclosure.

**5. PETRA – TRANQUILITY SET IN STONE**

*The Global Stone Paving Garden*  
**Designer:** Benjamin Wincott **Award:** BRONZE

Stone was the key ingredient of this garden which showed a good use of space. It was inspired by the gardens of 'Capability' Brown but given a contemporary twist with three dramatic seats set into the rock. The designer chose natural planting with a wildflower meadow and multi-stemmed trees to represent coppiced woodland.

**6. THE BRADSTONE PANACHE GARDEN**

*Chris Beardshaw Mentoring Scholarship Garden*  
**Designer:** Caroline E Butler (pre-registered SGD member) **Award:** SILVER

Caroline E Butler's garden had a lot of energy with the colourful kite sculpture and curving paths and walls. The garden is the culmination of her year-long 2011 scholarship under the Chris Beardshaw Mentoring Scheme. The Panache product is 80% recycled and the garden put sustainability at its core. →



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“CYCLING ON THE EXERCISE BIKE HELPED PUMP WATER TO THE TOP OF THE LIVING WALLS”

### 7. THE QR CODE GARDEN

Scotscape Ltd in association with Treebox Ltd  
**Designer:** Jade Goto with Green Graphite Ltd  
**Award:** BRONZE

In this garden it was the technology itself that was cutting edge. The designer had created a living wall that could actually be read by a mobile phone, taking the viewer to the website of the Quick Response garden. Sharp and geometric with a restricted palette of black, white and green – it delivered on all counts by being visually interesting and engaging the visitor.

### 8. THE SOFT MACHINE

The Humko Garden  
**Designer:** Tomaz Bavdez (SGD Pre-registered member) **Award:** SILVER GILT AND MOST CREATIVE FRESH GARDEN

Slovenian designer Tomaz Bavdez teamed up with supplier Humko which produced the green wall system. Soft machine is a synonym for the human body and so the body becomes part of the ecosystem (cycling on the exercise bike helped pump water to the top of the living walls). The platforms are water-purifying units while the ground itself and the plants provide more filtration.

### 9. THE RENAULT UK GARDEN

**Designer:** James Basson MSGD of Scape Sarl  
**Award:** SILVER GILT

James Basson, who works out of the South of France, aimed to show that pudding stone, a waste material, could be recycled into a garden. Inspired by a lost valley near Nice, the pillars of stone represent the valley walls, while the cobbled floor indicates a dry river bed. It was one of the gardens that really benefited from being viewed from all sides. ○