

## FEATURE

# Garden-related firms fly the flag for Norfolk and Suffolk at the Chelsea Flower Show

**Ruth Darrah** puts hopes of rain to one side as she takes a sunny stroll around the displays at The Chelsea Flower Show

**A**ny gardener or farmer will bend your ear right now about how desperate we are for rain and lots of it.

However, I can't deny that it was wonderful to have a sunny few days last week in London for the amazing celebration of all things horticultural which is the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

It was great not to have to pack an umbrella and not to have to dodge the showers and jump the puddles.

I'm sure it meant that a huge amount of water was used in the days leading up to the Show to keep those plants in tip-top condition, but that's another story.

This was a bumper Chelsea for lots of Norfolk and Suffolk businesses and the Norfolk School of Gardening was very proud of their connections to two of the big show gardens and the RHS branded planting across the site.

Three of their guest tutors worked tirelessly in the days, weeks, and months leading up to Chelsea to create two most incredible gardens, both of which had strong roots in Norfolk.

Suffolk-based designer, Tom Hoblyn's Garden of Compassion for Hospice UK was strikingly beautiful, with inspiration taken from Tom's many plant hunting trips to the Mediterranean.

He grew hundreds of the plants himself from seeds he has collected under licence, and also used timber from the Norfolk Broads with reeds harvested in Norfolk.

It was lovely to see so many bees, butterflies, and other insects move into his garden as the plants arrived, and paw prints from local foxes who visited each night.

This was Tom's 10th Chelsea and he says it will be his last.

The garden, for which Tom was awarded a Silver-Gilt medal, will be relocated to St Cuthbert's Hospice in Durham.

The Holt-based duo, Laura and Joe Carey of Carey Garden Design Studio, were also back after their Gold medal winning debut in 2023.

Their Freedom To Flourish garden for Addleshaw Goddard this year was bigger and so much more ambitious.

Inspired by the Norfolk expression 'slow you down', it advocated against

the rising tide of 'being too busy'.

The design explored the mental health benefits of living an unhurried lifestyle, spending time in nature, gardens, and gardening.

With the tidal salt marshes of their local coast at the heart of their design, the Careys included many plants which grow wild in Norfolk, and gabions representing coastal cliffs which were filled with waves of Norfolk reeds and other natural materials.

The water in the centre of the garden was mesmerising, slowly rising and falling as though linked to our coastal tides.

Laura and Joe not only won Gold again but they also took away the award for Garden of the Year in the Small Garden category.

An unbelievable but well-deserved achievement.

Elsewhere in the gardens of the Royal Hospital where the famous red-uniformed Chelsea Pensioners live and which is the home of the Chelsea Flower Show every May, Sam Outing had transformed the beds and borders.

Sam is a recent graduate of the Norfolk School of Gardening's Diploma in Garden Design and now teaches the Introduction to Garden Design and Border Design courses.

He is a talented designer and has been busy working with clients across the region for the past couple of years creating beautiful, sustainable gardens, but this spring he was delighted to be chosen by the RHS to create all of their branded planting in the borders and planters around the Show.

His planting wove its way through the Show, with a focus on pollinator-friendly, high-impact plants which are at their best in late May.

His aim was to give pockets of interest and inspiration for visitors, whilst forming the backdrop to the main event.

He was helped over the past two weeks by several students from the Norfolk School of Gardening which gave them a unique insight into what goes into creating the huge, picture-perfect Chelsea most of us only ever see on TV.

It wasn't just the designers from our region who were busy in the



Chelsea 2025 She Grows Veg with Princess Beatrice

run-up to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

We spotted another of our tutors, Norfolk flower farmer Sarah Hammond of English Peonies, as part of the team on the Farewell Flowers Directory Stand.

Local greenhouse producer, Rhino Greenhouses, created a beautiful stand which was awarded 5 stars and attracted a steady stream of potential customers.

Katie's Garden Plant Centre in Newbourne near Woodbridge clearly relish a challenge.

They grew many of the plants for the Careys' show garden, and their hard work paid off with the judges loving the top quality of their plants.

Norfolk's Carrier Company were selling their sought-after clothes which are worn by many gardeners (and non-gardeners) from Monty Don

to Laura and Joe Carey.

North Norfolk company, Norfolk Garden Furniture also had a stand showcasing their gorgeous range of 19th-century inspired products in a great range of classic and contemporary colours.

And of course, Peter Beales Roses had an amazing display of their roses in the Great Pavilion, with Suffolk veg seed company, She Grows Veg not far away.

Suffolk Hardy Plant Society members were showcasing irises bred by Cedric Morris at Benton End in Hadleigh, Harrod Horticultural exhibited a range of their plant supports and garden furniture while Norfolk Natural Living offered divinely scented skin care and fragrance products.

There is so much enterprise, so much talent, so much enthusiasm for

all things garden-related in this part of the country, which is why it is such wonderful news that the RHS is bringing one of its shows to Norfolk next year.

RHS Tatton Park used to be an annual fixture but this show is now on the move and will come to the royal estate at Sandringham every third year, with the inaugural RHS Sandringham Flower Show taking place in July 2025.

We hope that all of these local designers and businesses, and many more, will be involved.

We certainly hope that the Norfolk School of Gardening will be represented in even more ways than it was this week at Chelsea.

It will be the most fantastic opportunity to celebrate our love for gardening in this beautiful region and we hope to see you there.