



The garden's sustainable credentials will be further aided by the fact that 50 per cent of the steel used to make the pavilion frame is recycled, and the screens have been made from recycled acrylic rather than virgin acrylic. 'The panes are softly tinted to complement the colour palette of my plants,' says Jo, 'and the idea is that they'll open and close like the petals of a flower.'

The structure has been pre-built off site over a period of five weeks and soon it will be taken apart in four main sections in preparation for the build, at the showground first and then immediately after the Show, at the prison, with both builds being done by Ryan Alexander Associates.

'We anticipate the garden will be ready for use by mid-July,' Jo concludes, 'and the aim is that the plants will increase biodiversity, encourage wildlife and provide essential contact with nature for the women prisoners.'

Site planting

Pre-registered SGLD Graduate member Sam Outing has only recently completed his diploma at the Norfolk School of Garden Design, where he was awarded a Special Commendation for his work, but he has already won what surely many budding garden designers dream of: an invitation from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to design and project manage all its **site planting** at RHS Chelsea this year.

'I'm still pinching myself that I've got this amazing opportunity,' he says. 'The RHS got in touch with me following a recommendation by Thomas Hoblyn, a guest tutor at the Norfolk School, and I was invited to submit a proposal for the project. I really didn't think I'd get the role – I've only been working as a designer for eighteen months – but I felt it would be a great exercise to go through the process and while, in the grand scale of things at Chelsea, I'm starting at the bottom, it's a dream to be involved.'

Sam is creating planting schemes for two very different locations. One for the large, sweeping borders beneath the trees in the Ranelagh Gardens area, and the other for the RHS containers and planters around the rest of the showground and for the RHS Experience stand inside the Great Pavilion.

'The conditions in the Ranelagh Gardens are deciduous, with lots of dappled shade, and the soil is pretty dry so, although I shan't precisely finalise which plants go where until we're working on site, I'm using matrix planting and focusing on foliage plants, grasses, heuchera, *Digitalis*, *Nepeta* and geraniums to lift the existing shrubs and to create an elegant but muted effect.'

'I want the planting to have impact (there'll be pops of colour but I'm not packing the borders full – the effect will be what I call a curated naturalism) but I also want it to merge into the background so the visitors just wander through the experience, getting hits of inspiration as it leads them to the show gardens, which of course are the main focus.'

By way of contrast, Sam's container-based planting will also be matrix based but much more densely packed and full of zingy colour, dynamic and eye-catching.

'To pull both schemes together, I'm working with FORM Plants to make sure all the plants, around two thousand of them and all being grown in peat-free compost, are highly seasonal and that there are lots of pollinator-friendly plants, even inside the Pavilion.' →

The plants going to the prison garden will include, the *Journal* can reveal, *Rosa* 'Emma Bridgewater', *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing', *Aquilegia vulgaris* 'Ruby Port', *Deutzia x hybrida* 'Strawberry Fields', *Geranium phaeum* 'Lily Lovell', *Geranium nodosum* 'Clos de Coudray', *Geranium* 'Dreamland', *Geum* 'Bell Bank', *Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow', *Nepeta grandiflora* 'Dawn to Dusk', *Papaver* 'Patty's Plum', *Papaver dubium* subsp. *lecoqii* 'Albiflorum', *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape', *Thalictrum delavayi* 'Ankum', *Valeriana officinalis*, and *Verbascum* 'Cotswold Beauty'.

Jo has also given me more details about the 'glass' building that has been designed by Hollaway Studio (hollawaystudio.co.uk), which will be a place where the women using the garden can gather for meetings, train and plan for their futures.

Architect Alex Richards and his team have designed an elliptical form, with a roof that 'floats' above translucent screens on pivots instead of solid walls, and rain water will be channelled down through the framework, into a sustainable drainage system that will feed a water rill.

The pavilion floor will be lined with unwanted stone from a small, family-owned quarry here in Britain – 'We've prioritised using small, British businesses over large organisations,' says Jo, 'and all the stone is by-product or waste – the rill and riverbed features, for instance, are lined with waste from stone tumbling – and lime mortar will be used throughout'; any remnants of the pavilion paving will be used to form small areas of character around the plot.'

With four Gold and five Silver-Gilt RHS Chelsea medals to her name, as well as being a member of the RHS Show Gardens Selection Panel and an RHS Shows Judge, **The Glasshouse** is in eminent and expert hands with **Jo Thompson FSGLD** as its choice of designer to create its eponymous Project Giving Back-funded garden for a plot along Main Avenue at this year's Show.

The not-for-profit social enterprise provides horticultural training and employment opportunities for women in prison and newly released, and after the Show, Jo's Chelsea garden will be rebuilt within the grounds of a women's prison in the south-east of England.

To do so inevitably comes with a multitude of considerations, such as access, hours and tools so, understandably, the finer details of the relocated garden are currently being finalised. However, Jo tells me, 'The soil at the prison site is chalk so my plant choices have to be chalk friendly, and because the aspect there is a little more open and sunny, we'll have fewer shade plants.'

'The sensory element [of both the show and the relocated gardens] is key to the design so we will keep as many of the key colour plants in, as well as scented roses,' she continues, 'and we'll include self-seeders, to move through the garden year after year.'

Clockwise, from far left: Jo Thompson FSGLD's concept for The Glasshouse garden, and at the nursery, checking her plants, all for Chelsea 2025; construction test for Hollaway Studio's pavilion, ahead of build-up at the Show; moodboards being made by women of The Glasshouse; checking the colour tints applied to the pavilion's acrylic screens; and stone details for the floor.

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ELSEWHERE II

ing design are, of course, at the heart of RHS Chelsea. **Arabella St John Parker** FSGLD designers taking part this year, to about their plans