

GARDENING

A RARE CHANCE TO ENJOY A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT THE GARDENS IN CHELSEA

Ruth Darrah, Norfolk School of Gardening

It was back to Chelsea at the beginning of this week, by which time the hi-viz jackets and steel toe-capped boots had been replaced by flowery dresses, flamboyant jackets, and a few ill-advised stilettoes.

The magical transformation of the site was complete and the show gardens were unveiled to the press, celebrities, and public.

For a wonderful couple of days, I was part of the team arriving very early to do the watering, and we had the show almost to ourselves (and the BBC crews).

It was the chance to get a close-up look at the gardens, which would then become almost impossible to view as the thousands of ticket holders arrived, jostling six or eight deep for a glimpse of the extraordinary gardens along Main Avenue.

These included the truly incredible Japanese Tea Garden designed by Chelsea veteran Kazuyuki Ishihara.

A creative genius, he brought together stones, running water, mosses, trees, and a small number of carefully selected flowers and ferns with a perfect Japanese teahouse to win not just gold but also best in show, which means his garden was scored highest of all the gardens by the judges.

Mr Ishihara speaks no English but he certainly understood what was happening when Monty Don surprised him with the best in show award.

To say that he and his large Japanese team were delighted was an understatement!

We were also thrilled by the success of the designers connected to our school.

Tom Hoblyn's strikingly beautiful garden for Hospice UK

was awarded silver gilt and Laura and Joe Carey's gem of a Norfolk coast-inspired garden won not only gold but also best in show in the small garden category.

Sam Outing's gorgeous planting designs for the RHS around the Chelsea Flower Show site drew lots of admiring attention and we suspect he will go on to create a show garden himself before too long.

Outside the confines of the show, Laura Strand, one of our current diploma in garden design students, won gold and best in show in Chelsea in Bloom, the prestigious floral art show which sees the restaurants and shops around Chelsea dress their windows and pavements with stunning flower and plant arrangements.

Laura was responsible for creating the display for jewellers Jessica McCormack where she works as design director.

Many of our courses are now fully booked, but these are a few which have some spaces available.

Let us know if you'd like to join us:

- Border Design - 4th & 18th June
- Advanced Practical Gardening - 11th June
- Basic Bricklaying - 12th June
- Developing an Annual Maintenance Plan - 25th June
- Summer Pruning - 26th June
- Introduction to Garden Design - 11th September
- Certificate in Practical Horticulture - 12th September

Contact us via www.norfolkschoolofgardening.co.uk or follow us on Instagram or Facebook.



Chelsea 2025 with Tom Hoblyn and Sam Outing

Images: NORFOLK SCHOOL OF GARDENING

PLANT OF THE WEEK

Betula nigra, or river birch, seemed to be the number one tree of choice in the Chelsea show gardens this week.

It has a shaggy, ruffled bark which displays an array of colours and makes for brilliant year-round interest.

Creamy-grey and cinnamon brown base tones are highlighted with hints of pinky-orange, purple, and gold.

Grown as either single or multi-

