



Acer buergerianum specimen tree.
This exact tree has been selected
by Charlotte and Hugo for the
garden. Photo: Harris Bugg Studio

Diary of a Chelsea garden

WORDS: Jane Perrone

A lifelong love of horticulture, which stemmed from his childhood home garden in Musbury, led to Exeter-based HUGO BUGG becoming one of the country's most sought-after, award-winning garden designers. With design partner CHARLOTTE HARRIS, he is making one of the 12 Show Gardens at this year's Chelsea Flower Show

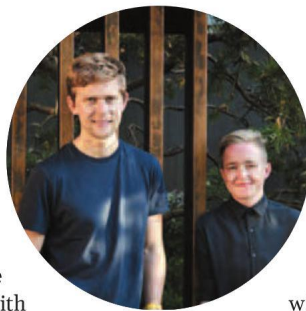
A Chelsea flower show garden may look effortlessly beautiful, but each one takes months of meticulous planning and research: every detail matters.

Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg (pictured) of Exeter and London-based garden designers Harris Bugg Studio are no strangers to the pressures of Chelsea, with five gold medals under their belts, but this year they have the added incentive of knowing that their garden will go on to help thousands of people.

Horatio's Garden will have a second, permanent home at the Princess Royal Spinal Injuries Centre in Sheffield, where it will benefit 360 in-patients and their families every year, along with thousands of outpatients, and the 250 NHS staff who care for them.

After taking centre stage at Main Avenue in the Chelsea showground, an enlarged version of the garden will be rebuilt at the Northern General, which is part of the NHS Sheffield Teaching Hospitals, early next year.

Horatio's Garden Sheffield will be the eighth garden constructed by the charity, set up in 2011 in memory of Horatio Chapple, who was killed in a polar bear attack on an expedition to Svalbard, aged 17. Horatio volunteered at the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury, and had come up with the idea of raising money



for a garden there, so the charity was set up to honour his vision. Each Horatio's Garden is set in an NHS hospital, offering a much-needed accessible and restorative space where people who have been affected by spinal injuries can come to terms with life-changing injuries, experience nature and spend time with loved ones.

This year's Chelsea garden will distil the essence of all these beautiful havens into a single space, showcasing the work of the charity and the incredible legacy of Horatio Chapple. The garden has been funded entirely by Project Giving Back, the grant-making charity that provides funding for gardens for good causes at Chelsea.

'It's a tricky brief, because we want to reflect Horatio's Garden as a charity, but it also is a garden that's going on to a specific place: Sheffield,' explains Charlotte. 'It has to be uncompromisingly beautiful, and also completely accessible.' From the layout and dimensions of paths to the plants and trees, every aspect of the garden must work seamlessly and effortlessly for someone who will experience it in a wheelchair or a hospital bed.

She gives the example of the garden's seating: 'All the furniture is completely flexible and liftable: so the patients can choose exactly where they want to be, and everyone >

A visual for Horatio's Garden
at Chelsea Flower Show 2023
designed by Charlotte Harris
and Hugo Bugg.

Photo: Harris Bugg Studio



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Charlotte Harris

else can join them in that spot. Rather than the other way round where all the seating is fixed and predetermines where wheelchair users can position themselves.’

To make their vision come to life, Harris and Bugg have spent the last year visiting other Horatio’s Gardens, listening to patients, staff and families, as well as walking the local area where the garden will be located, visiting nurseries to source plants, and working with craftspeople. As Hugo says: ‘From the outset we felt strongly that we wanted this process of designing for Horatio’s Garden to be collaborative – our role was to listen to everyone in the Horatio’s Garden family. They are the people who really know what they value in the garden as they use

it every day. So for the first time, this really is a show garden designed by those who will use it.’

And what will the garden look like? The complete opposite of the wipe-clean minimalism of a bustling hospital ward: a nest-like woodland garden room designed with architect Andrew McMullan provides privacy and shelter, a water feature set to wheelchair height brings movement to the garden as well as being a boon for wildlife, a river birch (*Betula nigra*) set into the path offers visitors the chance to stop under its dappled shade and touch its leaves and bark and stone cairns punctuate the space, symbolising wayfinding and the gentle guidance of others who have gone before.

Charlotte and Hugo's

CHELSEA DIARY

FEBRUARY 2022

Success! Project Giving Back, a charity that provides grants to charities to build Chelsea gardens to help them share their message, confirms we are one of just 15 charity/designer combinations from an original application volume of 200 to receive a grant to build a garden at Chelsea. The grant pays for every element of this garden and so every penny given to the charity goes directly to where it is needed – spinal injury patients.

MARCH 2022

Neither of us are wheelchair users, and this is one of the reasons why we are starting an extensive process of patient consultation on all the decisions surrounding the garden. We want to ensure our design really represents wheelchair users and those having experienced traumatic spinal injuries and in long-term healthcare settings. So we are planning visits to the existing Horatio's Gardens in spinal injury units all over the country, as well as the Sheffield unit where this garden is destined for its legacy life during the next few months. The show garden is just an eighth of the space of the eventual garden at Sheffield, so we want to know what they want to include and what to leave out of it. Most patients tell us about the need to escape the clinical environment of the ward, and the need for privacy - to make phone calls, speak to loved ones, or just be by themselves.

MAY 2022

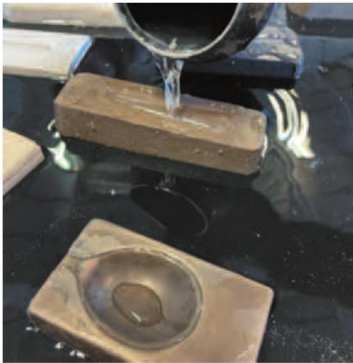
The only way to guarantee what will look good in May is to look in May! So, a whole 12 months before the show, we are visiting plant and tree nurseries of all shapes and sizes to ensure what we select has the best chance of looking fantastic at Chelsea next year.



Charlotte and Hugo inspect casts made of historic Sheffield cutlery pieces, which will be used in the water feature. Photo: Harris Bugg Studio

JULY 2022

We visit Kelham Island Museum, one of Sheffield's many amazing museums which focusses on the rich industrial heritage of the city of steel. We see so many details here which will inspire our design, including our water table which features the historic dies used to cast cutlery pieces. And archive footage of birch branches being thrown onto hot rolled steel to burn off the impurities helps us choose to include river birch (*Betula nigra*) in the garden. >



Practising the flow of water over the cutlery blocks for the water feature. Photo: Harris Bugg Studio

OCTOBER 2022

Patients told us about the calming influence of water in Horatio's Gardens, so we really wanted to include a water feature, which we're working on with Studio Ewing. After our visit to Kelham Island Museum, we borrowed some reliefs used in the manufacture of cutlery from manufacturers Chimo Sheffield. Now our job is to place the cutlery blocks we've had cast onto the triangular water table, so that the water will flow out from the centre and wash around each piece before dropping down a hidden side. The height of the water table will mean everyone can interact with it, as well as reading the dedication to Horatio Chapple which will run around the edge.

NOVEMBER 2022

Poured concrete and resin-bound gravel were the obvious choice for wheelchair-friendly smooth paths in the garden, but they are not great for the environment, so we need to find another way. We've been developing an entirely new surface material, created from cement-free concrete with the aggregate made from crushed waste. It is then polished to bring out the aesthetic finish to a terrazzo, and is also permeable. We travel to the Isle of Skye in Scotland to visit our collaborator Joel at Skye Stone Studio to look at prototypes, nuancing the mix of the colours and sizes of the waste aggregate before it goes into full production with specialist cement-free concrete fabricators.



Practising the creation of the stone cairns with Bert Noble of Noble Stonework. Photo: Harris Bugg Studio

JANUARY 2023

Lydia and Bert Noble are a sibling stonemason team based on a farm about half an hour outside Sheffield, and we are working with them on the stone cairns for the garden. They come from 200 years of family tradition working with stone and have been walling for as long as they can walk. They are total geniuses with stone. We go to their farm to see lots of different versions of the cairns, using different stones, roughness and designs. We want to talk about accessibility at Chelsea, because patients and families tell us it's a subject they often find hard to talk about. And yet either we ourselves will be disabled or we will care for someone with a disability or know someone disabled at some point in our lives. That's why this garden is so relevant.

MARCH 2023

The garden will be home to a living art installation that celebrates the thousands of lives Horatio's Garden touches: individual thumb marks in clay are being gathered from patients, NHS staff, gardeners, volunteers from all over the country as well as all those helping to create the garden at Chelsea. These will be hung all over the walls inside of the woodland room, a nod to the hallmarks Sheffield is famous for. It will give a sense of the Horatio's Garden community and the way its gardens are the work of many hands. We spend a brilliant day with ceramicist Vinicius Les collecting thumbprints, including the charity's founder Dr Olivia Chapple and its patron HRH Princess Eugenie of York.



Hugo casts his thumbprint along with Olivia Chapple of Horatio's Garden and former patients Pia Gupta and Miriam Barker. Photo: Horatio's Garden

6 TOP PLANTS FROM THE GARDEN



PHOTO: MARIANNE MALIERIS GARDEN IMAGES

ARUNCUS 'HORATIO'

This goat's beard is a clump-forming perennial up to 1.2m tall with finely-divided mid-green leaves that develop red tones in the autumn. Upright stems bear plumes of tiny cream-white flowers in early-midsummer which gradually turn brown.

ACER BUERGERIANUM

This maple is a small, bushy tree with three lobed leaves, with the central lobe being the longest and giving rise to the common name of trident maple. The yellow green small flowers, appear before the leaves in early spring. The leaves are bronze in spring, later becoming deep green with a grey underside in summer and then turn red and orange in autumn. Mature trees develop an attractive red-brown flaking bark.



PHOTO: MARIANNE MALIERIS GARDEN IMAGES

IRIS SIBIRICA 'SILVER EDGE'

The Siberian iris, 'Silver Edge' is a clump-forming perennial with narrow foliage and stems to 1m, bearing up to 4 flowers with rich blue standards finely edged white, and deeper blue falls with a dark violet tinge, edged with white, and yellowish white at the base.

THALICTRUM 'BLACK STOCKINGS'

The meadow rue, 'Black Stockings' is a tall, herbaceous perennial with lacy foliage and upright, near-black stems to 2m bearing generous sprays of fluffy, bright purplish-pink flowers in mid- to late summer.

ROSA MUTABILIS

The tea rose 'Mutabilis' is a small shrub of open, lax growth, with purplish young foliage and almost thornless stems. Single flowers 6cm in width open buff-yellow, ageing to pink and crimson.

LILIUM MARTAGON

This lily is a bulbous perennial producing star-shaped flowers, tangerine-orange in colour, with up to 30 flowers on tall stems reaching up to 1-1.2m and flowering in early to mid summer. ●

Descriptions taken from the RHS

SOME OF HARRIS BUGG STUDIO'S FAVOURITE SUPPLIERS

Kelways

Located at Langport in Somerset, this is one of the oldest nurseries in the UK, known for its specialisms of peonies and roses.

kelways.co.uk

Big Hedge

This Cheshire-based company that works nationwide specialises in ready-grown hedges and topiary: they are supplying the garden's mixed native boundary hedging.

bighedgeco.com

New Wood Trees

An artisan tree nursery situated in south Devon, specialising in field-grown multi-stems.

newwoodtrees.co.uk

Junker's Nursery

Specialist grower of hardy shrubs and trees including *Magnolia*, *Cornus*, *Acer* and *Daphne* based near Taunton. Visitors by appointment.

junkers.co.uk

Hill House Nursery

Lovely small nursery near Ashburton with a great tearoom and lovely cut flower field next door.

hillhousenursery.com