



Best in Show at Chelsea won by The Telegraph charity Horatio's Garden

Garden designed with wheelchair access in mind and to be enjoyed by patients recovering from spinal injuries

By Emma Gatten, ENVIRONMENT EDITOR

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The best in show at [this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show](#) is a garden designed for a spinal injuries charity previously backed by Telegraph readers.

[Horatio's Garden](#), which designs outdoor spaces for spinal injury units across the country, picked up Best in Show award on Tuesday for Chelsea's first wheelchair accessible garden.

The charity was set up by the family of Horatio Chapple who died in a polar bear attack in Svalbard aged just 17, in honour of his volunteer work at a spinal injury unit.

In 2015, [Horatio's Garden](#) was backed by [Telegraph readers](#) in its Christmas appeal, when the charity was still in its early years and had completed just one garden.

'Pipe dream'

Commenting after the Best in Show winner was announced on Tuesday, Horatio's mother Olivia Chapple said it was the realisation of a "pipe dream".

“We’ve always had a dream to be here,” she said. “Because we try to create gardens that are mini Chelsea gardens in hospitals and we look after them really, really well. So that people always feel that they're being appreciated.”



Designers Hugo Bugg and Charlotte Harris who won Best In Show for Horatio's Garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show | CREDIT: James Manning/PA Wire

She added that the support of Telegraph readers had been instrumental in helping the charity get early recognition and funding for its work.

“Being the Telegraph's Christmas charity in 2015 had the most enormous impact for us,” she said. “We've just been overwhelmed by readers' interest and support and understanding of our work.”

Telegraph readers gave £250,000 to the Christmas appeal, which was used to help fund the charity’s third garden at [National Spinal Injuries Centre in Stoke Mandeville Hospital](#).

Mrs Chapple said the impact of the campaign had lived on, with many donors committing to the charity long-term.

“If you're in hospital, even for a short time it is very hard to be in a Formica world,” she said. “If you're in hospital for six months or a year it is incredibly difficult. These gardens are really vital for people finding a new way to live after spinal injury.”

The winning garden, designed by Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg, features several mature trees that provide visual interest for patients that are lying down, alongside evergreen shrubs and perennials, picked to remain attractive all year round, as well as planting at different eyesight levels.

A wide garden path specifically designed for wheelchair and bed users, and porous to stop puddles developing, was made from cement-free concrete. The garden includes a pod-like structure made from wood, with a bed for patients to seek respite.



Horatio's Garden was designed for wheelchair access and for those with spinal injuries lying down | CREDIT: Clara Molden for The Daily Telegraph

“What particularly stood out about Horatio's Garden was how the design had been driven by the end user, to be experienced by spinal injury patients from a bed or wheelchair,” said Marie-Louise Agius, the RHS chair of show garden judging.

“The garden is uplifting, beautiful and considered, and for someone who has had a life-altering spinal injury it will provide them with a wonderful sanctuary. The brief and the garden was delivered at an exceptional level.”

Weeds debate

Despite weeds dominating chatter around this year's event, they were relatively absent from the show's top winners. A third of this year's show competition entrants used weeds, but only one of them was a gold-medal winner, Cleve West's garden for homeless charity Centrepont.

Each show garden is given points based on specific criteria and how well they fit their own brief submitted when they apply to take part in the event. Gardens are awarded either gold, silver-gilt, silver or bronze, based on how many points they tally up. The garden with the highest points is awarded Best in Show.

Allon Hoskin, the RHS chair of show garden assessors, said the gardens are marked without consideration for trends.

"There's no bias towards it because of anything that's going on in the outside world or any sort of zeitgeist or any sort of sustainability drives," he said. "If it's in the brief, it's in the brief."

Ms Agius added: "We are not influenced. It's all on its own merits. So it doesn't get swayed at all, whatever noise is happening outside."

The judges said the increasing eco-focus of gardens at the annual show was simply because that is the direction the industry is moving.

The RHS is developing sustainability criteria for future shows that could see gardens assessed on how eco-friendly they were.

“As the gardens change, the criteria may need to be refined,” said Mr Hoskin.