

Hampton Court Flower Show 2012: Meet the designers

Whether inspired by austerity, exotic lands or the July 7 bombings, Hampton Court Flower Show 2012 designers are creating gardens to provoke and enthrall.



Paul Hervey-Brookes, designer of the Discover Jordan Garden Photo: MARTIN POPE

12:43PM BST 03 Jul 2012

Good ideas to take home are the stock-in-trade of show garden designers at Hampton Court and this year there are five design categories to watch. New for 2012 is the Low Cost, High Impact section, where designers are challenged to create affordable spaces for recession-hit gardeners. The World of Gardens, also in its first year, offers escapist retreats inspired by foreign lands. And always thought-provoking are the Conceptual gardens, the keynote of Hampton Court. We've picked a few of the most interesting designers to look out for in these categories.

Our First Home, Our First Garden PK75

Designer Nilufer Danis for Landform

Sponsor RHS

Showing what can be achieved on a tight budget with a bit of imagination is Our First Home, Our First Garden by Turkish designer Nilufer Danis. Intended for a young couple in a new home, the garden was

built for £7,000 – the cheapest in the show and no small feat when you consider that some Chelsea show gardens can cost 50 times that.

“The idea is that you don’t need a lot of money to create something striking,” says Nilufer. “You look at all the show gardens and think ‘wow’, but I hope that we’ve still got something which people will look at. It’s also more practical; the reality is that many people don’t have much space at home, so hopefully we’re doing something which can be a real inspiration.”

The garden is just 5m x 8m (16ft x 25ft), or 40 sq m – much smaller than the main show gardens. Nilufer has created a simple design – a sunken seating area, with a chiminea and log store, surrounded by simple planting. Herbaceous perennials are planted in contrasting colours, with blues of *Allium caeruleum* and *Erygium 'Sapphire Blue'* paired with yellows such as *Hemerocallis 'Missouri Beauty'* and *Verbascum bombyciferum*.

Ornamental grasses, such as *Deschampsia 'Pixie Fountain'* and *Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster'*, help create a sensation of light and movement. Three small scarlet crab-apple trees provide a focal point. “We can’t afford anything more expensive,” Nilufer says. “But these help to give the garden a firmer shape.” Year-round structure is provided by evergreen *Pittosporum tobira 'Nanum'*.

“When you’re gardening with a space this small, it’s important not to try to do too much,” she explains. “The garden still needs room to breathe, and to have a sense of openness. One key thing is to use the right size of plants for the space – small plants, and small trees in a small space – to help keep everything in proportion.”

The garden is not only low cost but eco-friendly. “Using recycled materials is a good way of keeping the expense down,” she says. “The seating area and the steps are all made of recycled scaffolding board.

“It’s my first time at Hampton Court, so I’m excited but also very nervous,” says Nilufer, who studied at the University of Greenwich after moving to Britain in 2000. “But even though the summer hasn’t really become summery yet, I hope we have created a garden that a young couple could enjoy. It’s a flexible space – you could sit in it, eat in it, or put candles out and entertain in it. It’s in a contemporary style, but it is also very homely. It’s a show garden, but it’s realistic.”

Ed Cumming

For more information see 01276 856145; landformconsultants.co.uk

Discover Jordan Garden GW3

Designer: Paul Hervey-Brookes

Sponser: Jordan Tourism Board/ Cox and Kings

As the child of parents once posted to the Middle East, and having also studied botany, Paul Hervey-Brookes didn't immediately think "desert" when he was called upon to design a Jordanian garden. In fact, he was already aware that this country has 2,000 native species (that's more than the British Isles) concentrated in less than four per cent of the land.

His garden marks the 200th anniversary of the rediscovery of Petra by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Famous for its rock-cut architecture, carved out of a red sandstone valley, Petra was founded around the sixth century BC and is Jordan's most visited attraction as well as a World Heritage Site. This year is also the 50th anniversary of Lawrence of Arabia, filmed in Wadi Rum which, with its sheer cliffs and red sand, is still the classic vision of the region.

Today, Jordanians are eager to spread the word about other aspects of their country: species-rich areas such as the south-central Dana Nature Reserve, and the newly opened Royal Botanic Garden, 20 minutes from Amman. This is why Paul has been strict about using only Jordanian native plants.

"Some, such as cistus, are quite easy to find," he says. "But I had to plead with some very small nurseries for the most unusual plant, *Onopordum acanthium*, cotton thistle. I saw it growing everywhere in Jordan in March, along with a lot of sea onion (*Urginea maritima*)."

Paul says he has never lost his fascination for seeing plants in their native habitat. "I visited Jordan just before everything was fully out. There is so much detail in the landscape that you'd never appreciate unless you'd been there" he says. "I also love the way that local people treat the 2,000-year-old monuments such as Petra – they still use them for sheltering goats."

Paul's design evokes Jordan's landscape without reproducing it – he uses architectural fragments to move from bright light to shade, and suggest the atmosphere of Petra.

Joanna Fortnam

Cox & Kings organises escorted group and tailor-made tours to Jordan. An eight-day escorted tour is from £1,565pp, incl flights (020 7873 5000; coxandkings.co.uk). Royal Jordanian flies daily from Heathrow to Amman, from £259 incl taxes (08719 112112; rj.com)

For more, see paulherveybrookes.com

Light at the end of the tunnel TH70

Designer: Matthew Childs

London had just been chosen to host the 2012 Olympics, and Matthew Childs was eager to read about it on his way to work. He was so engrossed he missed his stop. “I meant to get off at Paddington but ended up at Edgware Road,” he says. “So I got on to the Circle Line train going in the other direction.”

As the train was pulling out, a fellow passenger, Mohammad Sidique Khan, detonated a home made bomb in a backpack, killing himself and six others.

At first, Matthew thought he was among them. “There was a flash of light,” he says. “My first thought was that the tunnel roof had collapsed and taken my head off my shoulders. I heard people screaming. Then I blacked out and came to in a bombed carriage. My leg was badly fractured, and I lost a lot of blood from my ankle. But I was one of the lucky ones.”

Two years later, a trip to the Chelsea Flower Show prompted a dramatic career change. “I liked the job I had in advertising. But I wandered down Main Avenue and I thought to myself, 'People do this for a living?' ” I took a course at KLC School of Design [he came top of his year], then in 2010 I started my own garden-design business.”

For his first Conceptual show garden called Light at the End of the Tunnel, Matthew has created a space that he hopes tells some of his story. “I haven’t spoken much about the bombings before, but it feels like the right time,” he says. “The starting point for the garden is a traumatic experience, but as you walk through I hope it reflects the journey of recovery that I’ve been on.”

Visitors enter through a rough concrete wall, into a tunnel clad in wood and metal. Here there are shade-tolerant plants, mosses, and ferns such as *Asplenium scolopendrium*. The cladding gradually breaks up, giving a more hopeful feeling, with lighter grasses and perennials. Then at the end, there are six silver birches, with airy plants such as *Gypsophila paniculata* 'Bristol Fairy', and *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'.

Matthew says his garden isn’t political. “My approach has always been how lucky I am to have survived. I’ve never seen the benefit in having negative feelings. I hope the garden marks the end of a chapter in my life.”

EC

For more, see matthewchildsdesign.co.uk

*More from **Hampton Court Flower Show...***