

## Flower Power! The Chelsea Flower Show

Spring is in the air in London, and that signals the start of the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show. Formally called the 'Great Spring Show', it is held at the Royal Hospital grounds in Chelsea where it has been blossoming for over a hundred years. The only exception was during World War II when the UK War Office need the land as an anti-aircraft site.

Gardeners, horticulturists (a grown-up word for experts in gardens and their management) and artists create the most spectacular and innovative gardens during the show. Today the show attracts more than 150,000 visitors every year! The guests always include members of the royal family; in fact, it is said to be one of the outings (of the many hundreds she has to attend) that the Queen really looks forward too. Many celebrities from actors, to politicians to celebrity chefs also make a beeline for the show.



The 2019 Winner! Credit: rhs.org.uk

The more 'grassroots' part of the show includes the sale of plants and often, new varieties are 'launched' at the show. One lucky plant is named **Plant of the Year** - the 2019 winner was the Sedum takesimense ATLANTIS ('Nonsitnal'). Besides this, there are awards for different categories of gardens as well.

The 2019 show had a garden that was co-designed by HRH The Duchess of Cambridge. The 'Back to Nature' theme was translated with a woodland garden filled with fairy tale childhood wonders like a hollow log to climb through, a den, a small tree house and a knot swing.

The Show always has some surprises and fun elements. For instance, gnomes, a British garden favourite, were banned from the show. The ban was lifted in 1913 when gardener David Domoney made gnomes of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge,

William and Kate, when they were expecting their first child.



Credit: telegraph.co.uk

**Here are some of the more wild and wacky designs over the years:**

'The Irish Sky Garden' by Diarmuid Gavin was based on the idea of having a restaurant in the sky (2011).



Credit: Alice's Garden Travel Buzz

Another by Diarmuid Gavin - the 80ft Westland Magical Tower Garden (2012).





Credit: alamy.com

James May's 'Paradise in Plasticine' where he made the entire exhibit in plasticine including an apple tree, fish in a stream, and many different coloured roses (2009).



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Phillip Johnson's display with 300,000 crocheted poppies (2016).



Credit: rhs.org.uk

A mini cooper garden including a floral driver! (2012).



Credit: getty images

The Cardiff Council's rugby player really brought a kick to the show (2008).



Credit: getty images

Perhaps the most fun, the moving garden of 2016!



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