

Five go mad at Chelsea

Jane Perrone grills Chelsea's top designers on their show gardens and the big trends emerging from the world's most famous flower show. Portraits by David Yeo

TOM STUART-SMITH

The multi-Chelsea gold medal-winning designer's garden for Laurent-Perrier centres around a copper pavilion overlooking a pool. A grove of the coppery-barked *Betula nigra*, hedges of cloud-pruned box and spring woodland plants complete the naturalistic look.

What are the big trends to watch for this year?

Long-term trends such as sustainability and greater naturalism.

How can visitors take home the Chelsea look?

The point of the garden I'm making is everything can be reused - the pavilion is going to another garden afterwards.

Most desirable plant this year?

Cenolophium denudatum (pictured, below right): it's like a very sophisticated cow parsley, with beautiful, glossy leaves, and it's truly perennial.

Can you garden without designing, or design without being a gardener?

I think you can garden without designing, but I've never tried it. Some gardeners are collectors - for them it's all about growing things, whether cabbages or prize auriculas. And you can design without being a gardener - Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe wasn't a qualified gardener, and he was one of the greatest designers of the 20th century.

What's your own garden like?

It's very different from those I make for other people. It's a personal expression about that particular place, a pretty, green country garden.

What should we be doing in our gardens now?

Most of us will be weeding frantically. I love weeding - it's the most pleasurable activity in the garden. And probably planting out some of the annuals and half-hardies - dahlias, nicotiana and sweet peas.

Top Chelsea survival tip?

Take a hip flask of whisky.

