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The DOSE OF DOPAMINE Issue

HOMES ■ FOOD ■ CULTURE ■ PEOPLE ■ WELLBEING ■ STYLE

THE CHELSEA EDIT

Tales from the Riverbank Garden by
Susie Kennedy and Kate Henning
Picture: RHS Josh Kemp-Smith

With RHS Badminton and RHS Sandringham around the corner, show season is in full swing. Velvet's Melanie Taylor shares a roundup of the outdoor living trends that caught her eye at this year's Chelsea – all of which can be used at home

WWhether you battle the crowds or get up close and personal with the gardens on TV, RHS Chelsea and local shows and fairs

are bursting with inspiration. Designers, growers and trade exhibitors offer plenty of ideas to transform our outdoor space.

Flexible gardens designed for modern living

With the cost-of-living crisis and house prices climbing further out of reach, modern living, especially in cities like Cambridge, is becoming increasingly transient and mobile. Sponsored by Hamptons and built by Garden Club London, *The Transient Garden* by Rebecca Lloyd Jones showcased flexible, practical ideas for renters wanting an urban oasis that can move with them.

With lightweight and modular components, vertical and container planting and folding furniture, Rebecca's garden showed how it's still possible to create a relaxing garden and a connection to nature on a balcony or any small or temporary space.

Create your own Chelsea-style wellness retreat

Designed by Angus Thompson, *The Asthma + Lung UK Breathing Space Garden*, sponsored by Project Giving Back, invites us to slow down and breathe. Inspired by the Japanese concepts of *yohaku no bi* and *ma*, the beauty of empty space and time, the garden, with its floating platform, asks us to embrace stillness and simplicity.



The Asthma + Lung UK Breathing Space Garden by Angus Thompson

Picture: RHS Neil Hepworth

Replicate this in your garden with a yoga deck or quiet corner in which to sit and enjoy nature's restorative healing powers. If you don't have outside space, group your houseplants together to create a sanctuary cocooned in green.

Switch off to get hands on

The Cleary Gottlieb: Time for Creativity Garden by Christina Cobb encouraged visitors to step away from technology and to reconnect with creative hobbies and crafts displayed in a walk-through glasshouse.

It's unsurprising to learn that the average person in the UK spends up to five hours a day on their phone. Christina's beautifully planted, serene garden was the perfect

antidote. Creating a distraction-free space shows us the impact hobbies have on relaxation and our ability to recentre ourselves.

Go bold with colour

In contrast to the calming, almost soporific effect of the verdant gardens, the balcony and container gardens lit up the shady Serpentine Walk. *The Seasalt Painted Garden*, designed by Lynn James, was a riot of colour. It featured brightly painted, repurposed filing cabinets packed with playful plants.

The cheerful oranges of the Californian poppies *Eschscholzia californica* 'Orange King' contrasted with the vibrant pinks of *Geranium* 'Patricia', *Salvia greggii* 'Mirage Hot Pink' and the rich, dark, velvety tones of the *Pelargonium* 'Lord Bute'. Consider recreating this bold look by painting fences and pergolas and using a colour wheel to select a planting palette that pops.

Plant resiliently

With increasingly longer, wetter winters and higher summer temperatures, water-conscious gardening is vitally important. Resilient planting is key – plants that have adapted to survive the vagaries of our weather; to cope with both drought conditions and potential flooding. *Glaucus* Mediterranean plants like *Artemisia* and *Santolina* that have physically adapted to reflect intense sunlight can be planted alongside native plants already adapted to our local environment. Look at how the *Buddleja*, Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) and



Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) grow on roadside verges, thriving in harsh conditions, yet providing a rich habitat for butterflies and bees. This year, Chelsea moved away from swathes of impenetrable hard landscaping towards permeable, broken paving, interspersed with gravel and planting to allow water run-off. Designers championed recycled materials and industrial by-products like the low-carbon Clamcrete on *The Eden Project: Bring Me Sunshine Garden* by designer Harry Holding and architect Alex Michaelis. Dense planting took centre stage – easily replicated at home to keep the weeds down, stabilise the soil, slow the flow of rainwater, and allowing the broader leaved plants to create shade for delicate others. Water management became visual features with decorative rain chains, rills and water blades making a splash. My favourite was the magnificently tactile curves of the carved Accoya wood 'hand-rill' guiderail in *A Garden for Every Parkinson's Journey* by Arit Anderson.

Take a dip

Stapleford-based The Dipping Tank Company not only exhibited at RHS Chelsea this year, but one of their splendid rainwater harvesting dipping tanks featured on *The Tales From The Riverbank Balcony Garden* by Susie Kennedy and Kate Henning, which showcased traditional craftsmanship. More aesthetically pleasing than a water butt, their stylish contemporary tanks make light work of

filling your watering can. Proudly made in the UK by craftsmen with a passion for detail, the Dipping Tank Company was a finalist in the RHS Chelsea Sustainable Garden Product of the Year Award last year and won the Best New Product Award two years running at the Garden Press Event. The tanks are made from lightweight, rust-proof aluminium and are available 'off the shelf' or custom-made and tailored to your requirements using their bespoke service. They're beautiful planted up with aquatic and moisture-loving plants and will attract wildlife into the garden. Easily connected to your gutter downpipe using a converter, water can also run directly into the tank from your greenhouse gutter. With different fascias including corten steel and bug hotels, and available in a range of widths that can connect together, the tanks can even be used as a raised pond. Additional accessories such as planting shelves, living walls and water blades can turn your dipping tank into a striking water feature suitable for any sized garden – thedippingtankcompany.co.uk

Alfresco evolution

Outdoor kitchens, firepits and stoves remain popular garden features for those who love alfresco living. Famed for its heritage British engineering, the stylish Pollen range from Hunter Stoves really stood out at the Garden Press Event. Named for its modern shape, the multifunctional Hex Smokeless Fire Pit transforms from a chic daytime table into a firepit at night. Available in two sizes,



and five high-temperature, self-cured paint colours, this wood-burning firepit is the perfect choice for both contemporary and traditional gardens.

For those who want outdoor living all year round, the Pollen by Hunter Stoves Hive Outdoor Stove is a super-stylish way to enhance your outdoor space. The premium four-sided heater uses Cyclone Air technology to ensure crystal-clear, soot-free glass every time and offer a panoramic view of the flames. Like the Hex, it's available in five fashionable colours – pollenfire.co.uk

Zest Outdoor Living has created a clever addition to their sustainable timber Terraza Outdoor Kitchen Range which has modular interchangeable units to suit any space. Featuring a raised bar unit with two highchairs, the Terraza Outdoor Kitchen Island Set has a brushed stainless-steel worktop for food preparation and serving, with practical shelved storage underneath. It's perfect for creating a social hub whilst you have one eye on the barbecue – zestoutdoorliving.co.uk

When furnishing their outside rooms, my clients are moving away from synthetic materials. Instead the modern outdoor space is defined by the same sustainable, natural woods and textiles we love indoors. It's a deliberate shift towards eco-conscious design that brings genuine personality to our gardens and one that I celebrate.

More at hazelwoodplantscapes.co.uk