

# BY DESIGN

Discover the inspiring spaces, and the people behind them, that scooped the coveted top spots at this year's Society of Garden Designers Awards



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Robert Myers won the Large Residential Landscapes & Gardens category with this bold design, featuring linear planting beds of perennials with calamagrostis.

**E**arlier this year, the winners of the 2024 Society of Garden Designers Awards were announced. Among the varied gardens scooping one of these coveted accolades were plenty of plots that were filled with truly inspirational planting. Here we delve into the planting plans and designs of some of the winning gardens to discover the must-have plants that made these designs such deserving award winners.

Stefano Marinaz won the Medium Residential Landscapes & Gardens award for his nature-friendly design at Church Barn.



### New beginnings at Church Barn

The owners of this timbered barn had initially called in Stefano Marinaz and his team to revamp the planting beds at the front of their house. A parking area for cars was duly moved a little further away to give the entrance its own courtyard enveloped in pretty planting. But while he was embroiled in this project, Stefano also saw potential in the expanse of plain grass that comprised the rest of the garden.

As a result, the monocultural lawn has since been replaced with a matrix of perennials punctuated by grasses such as *Sesleria autumnalis* and *Sporobolus heterolepis* and multi-stemmed trees including amelanchier and *Clerodendrum trichotomum*. Carved into it are gravelled areas for benches and a fire pit. Wood piles have been built to encourage wildlife, and thanks to the dense planting that has replaced the expanse of mown grass, this garden achieved the top spot in the Design for the Environment category, as well as winning the Medium Residential Landscapes & Gardens award. Stefano also scooped the Judges' Award.



*Echinacea 'Hula Dancer'*



*Sesleria autumnalis*



*Phlomis russeliana*



*Rosa rugosa*

### Windmill Bank's pretty planting

Exuberant borders, vibrant colours and an area for entertaining enclosed with planting were key to the brief Nic Howard received for this West Sussex garden. Flowers in shades of purple feature heavily, chosen not only for aesthetic reasons, but also because bees find flowers in shades of violet-blue more attractive due to their trichromatic vision – flowers in these colours often generate higher volumes of nectar than others as a result.

Nic combined perennials such as *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' with the catmints *Nepeta x faassenii* 'Junior Walker' and *N. grandiflora* 'Summer Magic', blue-flowered geraniums including 'Orion' and the drumsticks of alliums. They're joined by roses, including *Rosa* 'Ballerina' and 'Princess Alexandra of Kent', which have the prettiest pink flowers. Evergreens such as *Teucrium x lucidrys* and *Hebe rakaiensis* ensure there'll be something of interest all year, while a host of grasses including *Stipa gigantea*, arching green *Hakonechloa macra* and upright *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus' will reach their seasonal peak in autumn, along with late-flowering *Hylotelephium* 'Red Cauli'.

Elsewhere in the garden, silvery-grey tones were added with *Ballota pseudodictamnus* planted alongside *Stachys byzantina* and *Erigeron karvinskianus*. Lots of new trees were introduced, including *Acer campestre*, *Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia' and *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer', completely transforming the garden, which was largely lawn before. Praising the garden's traditional approach and considered, cohesive design, the SGD judges handed Nic the award for Planting Design.



*Salvia 'Caradonna'*



*Rosa 'Ballerina'*



### Transformation at Masseria Pistola

Adam Hunt and Lulu Urquhart won the award for International Commercial or Community Landscapes & Gardens for their garden at Masseria Pistola in Italy's Puglia. The region is afflicted with the disease *Xylella fastidiosa*, so the pair had to refer to a large and increasing list of government-banned plants that have the potential to host the disease, such as olives, nerines and lavender.

Instead, the duo combined classical Mediterranean and English country styles by using plants such as silver-leaved *Artemisia ludoviciana* 'Silver Queen', *Santolina chamaecyparissus*, ballota, cistus, oreganos and thymes for their ability to thrive in Puglia's warm summers and frosty winters. Soft grasses in the mix include *Stipa gigantea*, *S. tenuifolia* and pink-plumed *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, while perennials such as *Oenothera lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies', *Phlomis purpurea*, *Salvia* 'Bee's Bliss' and *Kniphofia* 'Green Jade' help deliver long-lasting floral interest.

IMAGES: ALISTER THORPE; GAP/MARTIN HUGHES-JONES/ROBERT MABIC; SHUTTERSTOCK; MARIANNE MAJERUS; JASON INGRAM



## A jewel in the heart of the city

Designer George Cullis turned a small courtyard in Chelsea into a lush oasis, winning the Garden Jewel category in the process. The garden was dominated by high fences on either side and a tall wall at the rear, but George refocused the eye by filling the space with lush green leaves: a tranquil setting in which his client wanted to take afternoon tea.

A crab apple, *Malus* 'Evereste', hides much of the rear wall, while a *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Galissonniere Praecox' is positioned closer to the house, giving a view of its glossy green leaves all year round. In generous planting beds, George overcame largely shady conditions by using a range of shade-loving shrubs, perennials and ferns. Evergreen shrubs such as *Prunus laurocerasus* 'Otto Luyken', *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis* and *Pittosporum tenuifolium* retain their lovely foliage throughout the winter. Shade-loving grasses like *Hakonechloa macra* and *Sesleria autumnalis* deliver texture, while perennials such as *Helleborus foetidus*, golden-green *Aralia cordata* 'Sun King', *Disporum longistylum* 'Night Heron' and *Rodgersia aesculifolia* with its large, palmate leaves, also boosted the quota of interesting foliage plants. The beautifully leafy, almost tropical-looking fern, *Onoclea sensibilis*, also played a starring role.

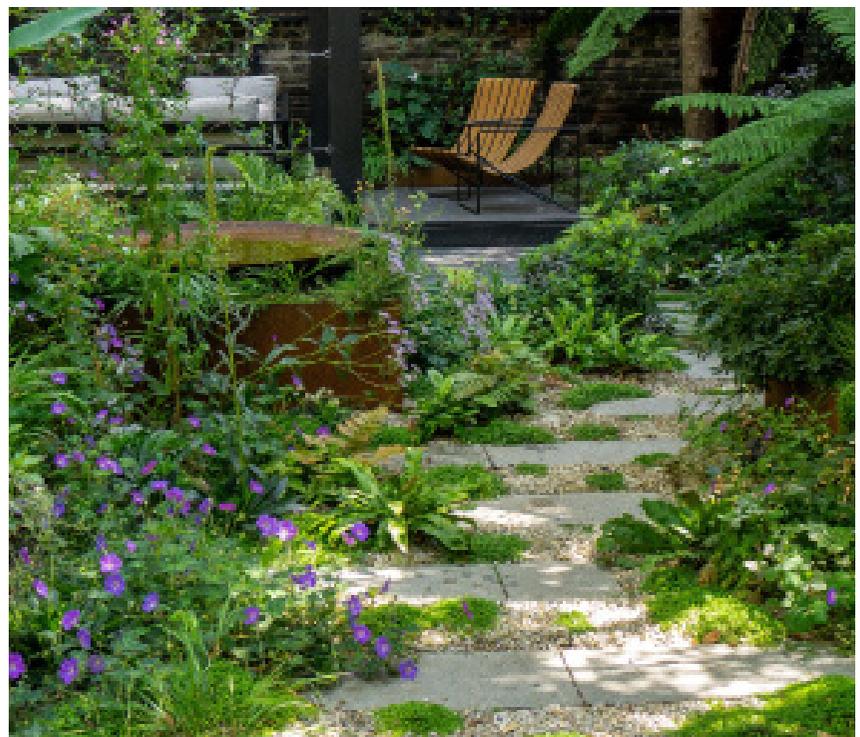
The client wanted white flowers to mirror the neutral interiors of their house, so *Astrantia major* 'Shaggy' has been called into service along with vincas and *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* 'Album'. Although the planting palette is wide and varied with its generous green and evergreen components, it also appears beautifully refined.



## Woodland in miniature

Harry Holding took the award for Big Ideas, Small Budget, with this shady garden in London. Paving set into a gravel path keeps costs low, and looks especially charming studded with the crinkled fronds of hart's tongue ferns, *Asplenium scolopendrium*, and little cushions of mind-your-own-business, *Soleirolia soleirolii*. In a nod to his clients' Antipodean homeland, Harry strategically positioned tree ferns, *Dicksonia antarctica*, so that their large, umbrella-like fronds shield the garden's occupants from view.

Below the tree ferns, shade-loving perennials form a tapestry of woodland-esque planting. Stalwart *Geranium* 'Rozanne' scrambles its way among plants like *Campanula lactiflora*, *Astrantia major*, white *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' and mauve-flowered *Eurybia x herveyi* 'Twilight'. Grassy *Luzula nivea* was also used alongside *Hakonechloa macra*, and among the ferns contributing to the woodland-edge feel was *Dryopteris erythrosora*.





UK/International Roof, Podium or Raised Courtyard Gardens



Fresh Designer Landscapes & Gardens



Hard Landscaping

## A roster of winning gardens

Andy Sturgeon’s extraordinary designs for the roof gardens of Battersea Power Station are more than a match for this extraordinary building, and took the prize for UK/International Roof, Podium, or Raised Courtyard Gardens, as well as being the overall winner of 2024’s Grand Award. The designer also won the Hardscape Design category for his work at Hobbouse Court, the judges describing it as “meticulous, understated and really effective”.

Matt Keightley took the award for UK Commercial or Community Landscapes & Gardens for his design at RHS Wisley’s Wellbeing Garden, which was praised for its strong design aesthetic and accomplished planting. Meanwhile, Adam Vetere won the Small Residential Landscapes & Gardens category with his ingenious design for a garden in a very limited flat space at the top of a very steep site. A skilfully designed cantilevered deck that projected over the slope made the most of the space, and this clever garden was subsequently voted the People’s Choice winner as well.

In the Designer & Landscape Contractor Joint Submission, Matt Nichol and Creative Gardens and Driveways won for their ‘Living the Good Life’ garden that the judges said had a “faultless build”. Emily Crowley-Rowe won the Fresh Designer Landscapes & Gardens category, Jake Sutcliffe and Julia Hill won the Student Design categories, while Paper Landscape Design went to Holly Birtles. ■



UK Commercial or Community Landscapes & Gardens



Small Residential Landscapes & Gardens



Designer & Landscape Contractor Joint Submission