

A 'gardens for all' celebration

As the nights grow longer and the winds and rain of Storm Ciarán fade, attention will naturally turn to next year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Last week saw charities and the RHS itself announce plans for next year's show gardens, with three in particular grabbing our attention.

The National Trust, Blue Diamond Garden Centres and designer Ann-Marie Powell have joined forces to celebrate 'gardens for all' next summer, with a show garden in honour of Trust founder Octavia Hill, who believed 'green spaces and gardens were vital in everyone's life'. Ms Powell's design will be that of an urban community wildlife garden set on a brownfield site, created with 'wellbeing, biodiversity, sustainability and accessibility firmly in mind'. It will feature a series of 'outdoor sitting rooms', with a relaxed feel and natural planting style, and some 3,600 native and non-native plants will be present.

Next year will also see a world first for Chelsea with a garden designed by children for children being offered up by the RHS, designer Harry Holding and Sulivan Primary School in London. Named the 'RHS No Adults Allowed Garden', the show garden will be a 'fantastical landscape where children can explore the magic of lush woodland, bountiful meadows and a wetland with heightened



The Octavia Hill Garden will honour the National Trust founder at the Chelsea Flower Show

colour and oversized bog plants'. The final destination is a natural den within a pool of water, which will be a sanctuary where children only can 'play, learn and explore the natural world around them'. After the show, the garden will be transported to Sulivan School for future generations to enjoy.

Eight-time RHS Gold medal-winner Tom Stuart-Smith is to return to Chelsea for the first time since 2010, helming the National Garden Scheme's (NGS) effort, sponsored by Project Giving Back. His garden will 'exemplify the joy and associated health and wellbeing benefits of garden visiting that have been at the heart of the NGS since 1927'. Mr Stuart-Smith will showcase a 'juxtaposition and

contrast; simplicity and complexity; the modern and the romantic, forging a connection between people and place'. The garden will have a woodland-edge theme, made up of drought-tolerant woodland plants laid out through an open hazel coppice. A selection of plants have been donated by NGS owners and incorporated into the design, 'exemplifying the spirit of generosity that is woven through the relationship the charity has with its supporters'. The garden will be relocated to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, to become part of the garden of a new Maggie's Centre for people undergoing cancer treatment.

RHS Chelsea will run from May 21–25, 2024 (www.rhs.org.uk). →