

## MEDIA PACK

# The Freedom from Torture Garden: A Sanctuary for Survivors

Designed by John Warland and Emma O'Connell



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Funded by Project Giving Back

*“Horticultural therapy can be a lifeline to people who have survived unimaginable trauma and torture. Our garden at Chelsea will celebrate how gardening has helped people to rebuild their lives.”*

# Leading human rights charity Freedom from Torture launch debut garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024

- Debut garden for UK-based charity who provide therapeutic care for survivors of torture
- Inspired by horticultural therapy and designed as a sanctuary space that offers survivors ‘a horticultural hug’
- Design duo are first timer Emma O’Connell and 6-time gold medal winner John Warland
- Plants grown by Beth Chatto’s Nursery are “survivors of the plant world”
- Sunken seating area surrounds hand-crafted wood fire oven which will be used a social and cooking space
- Curvaceous willow walls by sculptor Tom Hare

Leading human rights charity [Freedom from Torture](#) will make their RHS Chelsea Flower Show debut this May with a garden designed to provide a healing sanctuary featuring edible planting and a communal bread oven. Founded in 1985, Freedom from Torture is the only UK-registered charity providing therapeutic care for survivors of torture.

The garden is one of 15 charity gardens for RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024 being funded by [Project Giving Back](#). It will be a chance to reach new audiences as well as showcasing Freedom from Torture’s ground-breaking horticultural therapy programme, explore the healing properties of gardening and celebrate the transformative impact it can make.

## **Design-duo John Warland and Emma O’Connell**

The Freedom from Torture Garden will be the first collaboration between 6-time RHS gold medal winning conceptual artist John Warland and award-winning garden designer Emma O’Connell. Bold sculptural willow forms and thought-provoking organic design by Warland, will be complemented by O’Connell’s naturalistic planting style and exquisite architectural detailing.

The garden has been designed in collaboration with survivors to provide a place of sanctuary and healing, where horticultural therapy calms, heals and restores on their journey to recovery. Designed with no straight lines, sinuous willow waves and rippling water rills subtly divide the space and envelop the visitor.

The naturalistic planting has been designed to stimulate happier memories of homelands, whilst the edible and medicinal produce will provide nourishment for both body and soul. Crafting places of rest and meditation amongst nature either alone or seated around the communal bread oven will bring survivors together to share stories and forge new friendships.

### **Sonya Sceats, Chief Executive at Freedom from Torture:**

*“Through the heart-warming work of our garden therapy group, we know how life-changing reconnecting with nature can be for our clients. Planting seeds from their home country can be a way of bringing their loved ones closer to them, and we see such a positive impact that fresh air and regular outdoor exercise on their physical health. It’s a wonderful way for survivors to build relationships with others who may have endured similar experiences and overcome social isolation.*

*“We’re absolutely thrilled that for the first-time we can bring our ground-breaking horticultural therapy programme to new audiences at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2024.”*

### **Borry Jarju, Service User Engagement Coordinator, Freedom from Torture:**

*“I know first-hand how important being in nature can be for recovery.. Our clients are so excited to have the chance to work in the garden when it’s rebuilt at the London centre. They are looking forward to being able to harvest the fruit and vegetables, to bake bread in the communal oven and to have a place of sanctuary, healing, and peace.”*

### **Planting inspired and supported by Beth Chatto’s Plants and Gardens**

The planting in the Freedom from Torture Garden is inspired by, and supported by the legendary plantswoman Beth Chatto whose prescient themes include employing survivors of the plant world: drought tolerant plants, adapted to low fertility soils; self-sustaining self-seeders and long-lived, tough woody plants.

### **Julia Boulton CEO, Beth Chatto’s Plants and Gardens:**

*“Growing for an RHS Chelsea show garden is an enormous step for us and one that we don’t take lightly. It is crucial for us to work with designers who love plants and are sensitive to their needs. The message behind the Freedom from Torture garden - survivors in hostile environments- reflects our philosophy of growing suitable plants in arid, low fertility soils.*

*It is important for us to work with those who understand our approach to growing- accepting that we would not force plants or artificially hold them back. So, when Emma and John approached us with a request to work together on the Freedom from Torture garden with full understanding of our ethos - we knew it was the perfect match.”*

A Chelsea first-time exhibitor, Emma O’Connell grew up close to Beth Chatto’s Gardens. The Freedom from Torture show garden for Chelsea marks the fulfilment of a lifelong dream to partner with her plant heroine’s nursery, using plants adapted to, and in harmony with their local conditions.

***The pioneering motto of ‘right plant, right place’ will see a naturalistic plant palette adapted to survive in the most hostile of environments.***

## **Sustainability and relocation after Chelsea**

The garden will champion intelligent use of water through the use of traditional olla pots, and material sustainability in its use of organic willow, not using cement, not contributing to landfill waste and sourcing all stone from the UK.

From Chelsea, the garden will be immediately rebuilt at the Freedom from Torture HQ in Finsbury Park, North London. It will become a working garden and the curvaceous and immersive space will allow clients to engage in therapy one-to-one, with family, or in a group. Clients will be able to use the garden to harvest edible produce, utilise the bread oven, find peace and relaxation after a difficult therapy session or simply enjoy the quiet oasis it provides from London life outside.

### **Notes to Editors:**

**Press enquiries:** Rachel Fitzgerald PR      rachelmakes@gmail.com 07976 474194

### **Designers:**

John Warland  
Emma O'Connell

[www.senselessactsofbeauty.com](http://www.senselessactsofbeauty.com)  
[www.emmaoconnell.com](http://www.emmaoconnell.com)

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[vbuckle@freedomfromtorture.org](mailto:vbuckle@freedomfromtorture.org)

Project Giving Back

[givingback.org.uk](http://givingback.org.uk)

### **Partners and suppliers**

Beth Chatto's Plants and Gardens

[bethchatto.co.uk](http://bethchatto.co.uk)

Main Contractor: Living Landscapes

[livinglandscapesuk.com](http://livinglandscapesuk.com)

Willow Weaving: Tom Hare

[tomhare.net](http://tomhare.net)

Wood-fired oven: Bushman Ovens

[bushshmanwoodfiredovens.co.uk](http://bushshmanwoodfiredovens.co.uk)

Specimen Plants

[provendernurseries.co.uk](http://provendernurseries.co.uk)  
[kelways.co.uk](http://kelways.co.uk)  
[classicroses.co.uk](http://classicroses.co.uk)

Mosaic

[maggiehowarth.co.uk](http://maggiehowarth.co.uk)

Wood

[reclaimeddesign.co.uk](http://reclaimeddesign.co.uk)

Lighting

[landscapeplus.com](http://landscapeplus.com)

Stone

[allgreen.uk](http://allgreen.uk)

Ground Screws

[nomoredigging.co.uk](http://nomoredigging.co.uk)

Structural Ceramics

[torcpots.com](http://torcpots.com)

Clay Ollas

[haithewaiteceramics.com](http://haithewaiteceramics.com)

Perimeter

clay-works.com

Tools and Fine Apparel

niwaki.com

Rehydration

vitacoco.co.uk

Logistical Support

theplantman.co

Printed Design

pearlfisher.com

## Press pictures

Press pictures are available to download from the link below. More will be added to this link over the course of the show:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1s6kWIN3D0chKo9ihFNvGrw7vw6skWx->



## Freedom from Torture Garden: Full plant list

### Trees

*Arbutus unedo*  
*Eucalyptus coccifera*  
*Ficus caria*  
*Pinus mugo* 'Mops'  
*Pistacia lentiscus*  
*Punica granatum*

### Shrubs

*Artemisia abrotanum*  
*Atriplex halimus*  
*Ballota pseudodictamnus*  
*Cistus x laxus* 'Snow White'  
*Cistus x argenteus* 'Silver Pink'  
*Cistus x hybridus*  
*Cistus x purpureus*  
*Helianthemum* 'Rodanthe Carneum'  
*Helianthemum* 'The Bride'  
*Indigofera heterantha*  
*Lavandula dentata*  
*Lotus hirsutus*  
*Origanum* 'Kent Beauty'  
*Origanum vulgare* 'Compactum'  
*Phillyrea angustifolia*  
*Phlomis italica* 'Marina'  
*Salvia officinalis* 'Berggarten'  
*Salvia rosmarinus*  
*Santolina chamaecyparissus*  
*Teucrium marum*  
*Teucrium ackermanni*  
*Thymus serpyllum* var. *albus*

### Roses

*Rosa* 'The Garland'  
*Rosa elegantula persetosia*  
*Rosa x odorata* 'Mutabilis'  
*Rosa sancta*  
*Rosa watsoniana*

### Climbers

*Jasminium officinales*  
*Lonicera belgica*  
*Vitis vinifera*

### Herbaceous and Grasses

*Amaranthus caudatus*  
*Allium sicutum*

### Herbaceous and Grasses cont.

*Anthericum liliago* 'Major'  
*Arundo donax*  
*Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra*  
*Baptisia* 'Pink Truffles'  
*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *cicla* var. *flavescens*  
*Cerithe major purpurascens*  
*Cicer arietinum*  
*Cuminum cyminum*  
*Cynara cardunculus*  
*Deschampsia cepitosa*  
*Erodium* 'County Park'  
*Erodium acaule*  
*Euphorbia epithimoides*  
*Euphorbia myrsinites*  
*Euphorbia seguieriana*  
*Festuca amthystina*  
*Foeniculum vulgare*  
*Foeniculum vulgare* 'Pupureum'  
*Frankenia thymifolia*  
*Hyssopus officinalis*  
*Iris pallida* subsp. *pallida*  
*Linaria* 'Peachy'  
*Marrubium libanoticum*  
*Nigella damascena*  
*Nigella sativa*  
*Panicum* 'Sea Mist'  
*Papaver somniferum*  
*Phuopsis stylosa*  
*Salvia argentea*  
*Salvia sclarea* var. *turkestanica* 'Vatican Pink'  
*Sesamum indicum*  
*Solanum melongena*  
*Stipa tenuissima*  
*Teucrium x lucidrys*  
*Thymus longicaulis*  
*Tulbaghia violacea*  
*Verbascum bombyciferum*  
*Verbascum olympicum* f. *album*

### Bulbs

*Gladiolus communis byzantinum*  
*Ixia* 'Eos'  
*Ixia mixed*  
*Tulipa bataliniii* 'Honky Tonk'  
*Tulipa cretica* 'Hilde'

# A SANCTUARY FOR SURVIVORS

*The Freedom from Torture Garden has been designed as a naturalistic space where horticultural therapy will help to heal and restore survivors of torture on their journey to recovery.*

*Sculptural streams of willow create organic spaces for rest and reflection, with the communal bread oven bringing people together to share their stories and build new friendships.*

*A sinuous water rill flows through the garden to provide irrigation for the naturalistic planting, whilst edible produce stimulates happier memories of home, nourishing both body and soul.*

## WAVES OF WILLOW

Streams of Salix divide the space and offer organic places for refuge, rest and meditation.

## SLOW RELEASE

Using a millennia-old irrigation technique, olla pots are sunk into the soil, allowing water to drain gradually through unglazed porous clay.

## FEATURE PLANTS:

- *Arbutus unedo* (Strawberry tree)
- *Atriplex hortensis var. rubra* (Red orache)
- *Cicer arietinum* (Chickpea)
- *Ficus carica* (Fig Tree)
- *Lavandula dentata* (French lavender)
- *Nigella sativa* (Black cumin)
- *Papaver somniferum* (Breadseed poppy)
- *Pistacia lentiscus* (Mastic tree)
- *Punica granatum* (Pomegranate)
- *Rosa sancta* (Shrub rose)



Scan the QR code for the full plant list and to find out more about the garden

## ANCIENT TREES

The signature trees include a fig - one of the world's oldest cultivated fruits. The root system seeks out hidden groundwater allowing it to thrive in dry and rocky landscapes.

## SURVIVORS OF THE PLANT WORLD

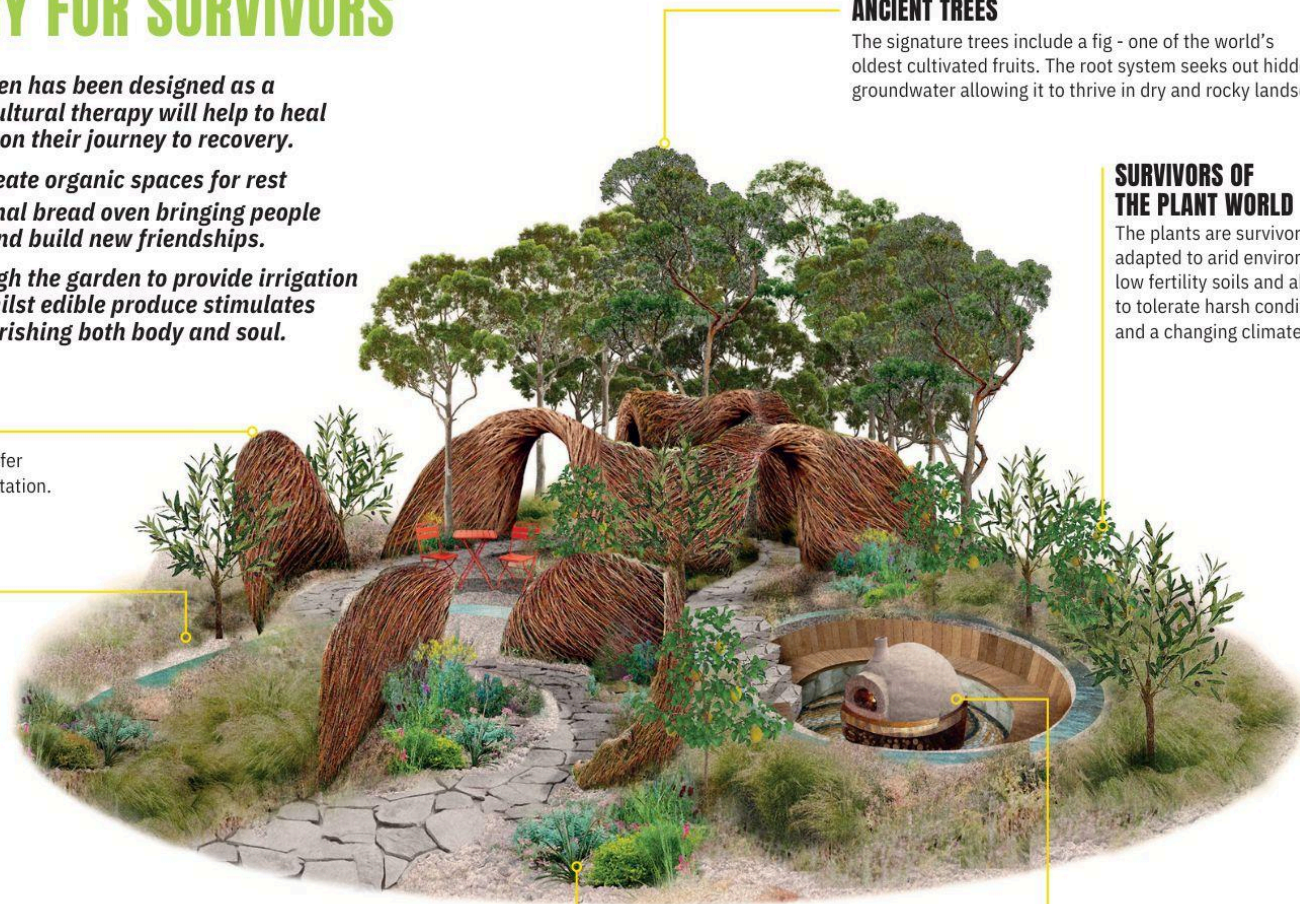
The plants are survivors, adapted to arid environments, low fertility soils and able to tolerate harsh conditions and a changing climate.

## EDIMENTALS

The many edible plants in the garden, including chickpeas, nigella and sesame, have been chosen by survivors either for culinary use or because of a personal connection.

## COMMUNAL COOKING

The handcrafted bread oven forms the heart of the garden, surrounded by a sunken seating area designed for cooking and connecting.



## **About Freedom from Torture**

Freedom from Torture is a registered British charity that supports people who have survived torture to heal, feel safe and strong again. Together with a movement of compassionate people, we speak out to expose torture and defend the rights of survivors, nationally and globally. Freedom from Torture also runs many creative therapy programmes such as cookery, art, gardening, music, and creative writing.

[www.freedomfromtorture.org](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org)

## **About Project Giving Back**

Project Giving Back (PGB) is a unique grant-making charity that provides funding for gardens for good causes at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. PGB was launched in May 2021 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects on UK charitable fundraising – effects that have since been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis. It will fund gardens inspired by a range of good causes at RHS Chelsea Flower Show from 2022 – 2026.

PGB will fund a total of 15 gardens at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2024 and intends to fund up to 60 gardens at the show from 2022 – 2026.

[www.givingback.org.uk](http://www.givingback.org.uk)

## **Contact**

**Press enquiries:** Rachel Fitzgerald PR    [rachelmakes@gmail.com](mailto:rachelmakes@gmail.com) 07976 474194

## **Website**

[www.freedomfromtorture.org/sanctuary-for-survivors-garden-chelsea-flower-show](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/sanctuary-for-survivors-garden-chelsea-flower-show)