

PRESS RELEASE

**'Muscular Dystrophy UK – Forest Bathing Garden' by award-winning designer Ula Maria
announced as a Show Garden at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show**

Show Garden Number: Main Avenue MA327



Illustration Shows: The 'Muscular Dystrophy UK – Forest Bathing Garden' designed by Ula Maria will be showcased as a Show Garden at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Sponsored by Project Giving Back

Muscular Dystrophy UK, the leading charity supporting more than 110,000 people living with one of over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions, is delighted to announce they will be unveiling a Show Garden at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show generously sponsored by unique grant-making charity Project Giving Back.

Designed by the RHS 'Young Designer of the Year' (2017), Ula Maria, the 'Muscular Dystrophy UK – Forest Bathing Garden' will offer an accessible, immersive forest bathing experience to Muscular Dystrophy UK patients, their families, clinicians, and the wider community. Forest bathing, otherwise known as *Shinrin-yoku*, is an ancient Japanese practice of spending time in the forest and soaking up its atmosphere through the senses. The garden seeks to create a sheltered space for its visitors – to give comfort and clarity, reconnect with oneself and nature, or accommodate conversation with others.

It will be first displayed at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, from 20–25th May 2024, before being relocated to a UK location that benefits the muscle wasting and weakening community.

Design Brief Inspiration The design process evolved from the personal experiences and stories that people from the Muscular Dystrophy UK community shared with Ula during their initial conversations. She was particularly inspired by Martin's story, a 49-year-old man diagnosed in his 20s, who shared how he felt immediately after receiving his diagnosis. Martin said, *"I remember returning to my car at the hospital, just sitting in silence contemplating how my life might change, with my wife sat next to me, wondering how it would impact my role as a husband and father."* Listening to Martin's story, Ula hopes to create a garden that will showcase how an outdoor space can provide a safe, sanctuary-like environment to support patients in the future during their most challenging times and beyond.

The Design Ula envisioned an ethereal, therapeutic and accessible garden that would create a sense of being immersed in nature, thus providing a juxtaposition to a clinical environment. Having read many medical studies about the positive physical and mental health effects of forest bathing, Ula's vision is to create an experiential space, inspired by this ancient Japanese practice.

The 'Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Garden' will have more than 50 birch trees planted in the garden to achieve a birch grove atmosphere, providing dappled shade and thus enhancing the experience of forest bathing. The birch trees will be underplanted with woodland edge style plants, varying from deep shade corners to more open, sunnier woodland glades. The experience will be enriched by 4,000 plants, the majority of which have been selected for their beautiful foliage, creating a green tapestry that is rich in texture, with an occasional burst of colour.

Visitors will access the garden through an accessible path that follows a slow-moving naturalised water stream running through the central garden axis and welcoming not only people but wildlife into the garden too.

At the heart of the garden is a central meeting hub with informal seating and sculptural knapped flint walls that will provide a sheltered space for people to meet. The random knapped flint pattern was chosen by Ula for the construction of the feature wall due to its beautiful texture and form that is reminiscent of muscle cells. It will become a vital visual aid to illustrate what Muscular Dystrophy is and the effect it has on one's muscles to garden visitors.

A key feature of the garden is a large bungaroosh-style wall, which will be made using modular steelwork sections filled with a mix of reclaimed and recycled materials such as large stone blocks, slate tiles, and bricks. This building technique was chosen to showcase how a beautiful and contemporary-looking garden structure can be created using a variety of reclaimed materials. The hard material palette mostly consists of naturally occurring materials: stone, timber and clay, enhancing the experience of forest bathing.

Designer Ula Maria said *"This garden is all about connections: whether to oneself, nature, or others. It is meant to serve as a sanctuary whilst offering an immersive forest bathing experience. It is my hope that this garden will increase awareness of how places that are inspired by the people who inhabit them can have a meaningful effect on communities such as Muscular Dystrophy UK".*

Catherine Woodhead, Chief Executive of Muscular Dystrophy UK said: *"Thanks to the generous sponsorship from Project Giving Back, we are absolutely delighted to have a garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024. We want more people to know about Muscular Dystrophy and what it's like to live with a muscle-wasting or weakening condition. Part of the challenge of a diagnosis is that no one has heard of it, you know no-one living with it and you have to explain it to everyone from family, friends, teachers, colleagues and even GPs. This opportunity will change that. It will allow us to reach people who have never heard of the condition, give our community a voice and raise awareness of the work of the charity."*

Relocation journey after the RHS Chelsea Flower Show The relocation destination for the 'Muscular Dystrophy UK - Forest Bathing Garden' after the RHS Chelsea Flower Show is in the final stages of planning. The garden will be going to a location that benefits the muscle wasting and weakening community. Keep up to date with its relocation journey on our website: www.muscular dystrophyuk.org/Chelsea

Key Trees, Shrubs & Plants (A full plant list is available upon request)

Betula pendula (Silver Birch Trees) – Chosen to create a fully immersive and magical forest-bathing experience by providing a light, dappled canopy with its elegant, drooping branches.

Melica altissima 'Alba' (Siberian melic) – Graceful, ornamental grass that will create softness and continuity between sunny and shady spots of the garden.

Boehmeria platanifolia – Originates from China and Japan and is a non-stinging nettle relative which has impressive green foliage to bring texture and character into the garden.

Geranium sylvaticum 'Mayflower' – Part of the name derives from the Latin word *sylvaticus* which means 'in woods and forests' – chosen to bring a vivid mass of wild growing flowers in the design similar to that of an enchanting woodland.

Fragaria vesca (Wild strawberry) – Ula Maria’s signature is to infuse a discreet personal favourite from her childhood memories into each of her designs. The *Fragaria vesca* was chosen to ignite fond memories of picking wild strawberries from the meadows near her childhood home in rural Lithuania and is one of the edible plants available to visitors in the garden once relocated.

For more press information contact: Joy Baker, Baker PR Tel: 07810 442659 Email: joy@bakerpr.co.uk

Notes to editors:

About Muscular Dystrophy UK

- We’re the leading charity for over 110,000 people in the UK living with one of over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions
- We share expert advice and support to people living with muscle wasting and muscle weakening conditions so they can live well now.
- We fund groundbreaking research to understand the different conditions better and to lead us to new treatments.
- We work with the NHS towards universal access to specialist healthcare.
- Together, we campaign for people’s rights, better understanding, accessibility, and access to treatments.
- We’ve already made advances that would have been unthinkable just 10 years ago, and we’re determined to go even further and faster.
- We support people with muscle weakening and wasting conditions through every stage of their life. From the point of diagnosis to living the best life possible.
- Together we are stronger. Together we are Muscular Dystrophy UK. Join us.
- Learn more at muscular dystrophyuk.org

About muscle-wasting conditions

- Living with a muscle wasting and weakening condition can be exhausting, stressful and lonely. With endless medical appointments, physiotherapy, treatments, and respiratory support.
- Progressive conditions get worse over time. They can cause difficulty walking. Trouble swallowing. Breathing complications. Pain. Heart problems and failure. Life can be more challenging. Or cut short.

About Ula Maria Lithuanian-born Ula Maria, aged 31, is a renowned garden and landscape designer based in London who specialises in creating distinctive outdoor spaces for private and commercial clients in the UK and overseas.



After winning RHS ‘Young Designer of the Year’ in 2017, Ula Maria set up her own studio with a focus on creating emotive garden spaces. She is inspired by her childhood spent in her family’s countryside home, surrounded by a rural Lithuanian landscape with its wildflower meadows, pine forests, wild streams, and rivers. Ula’s favourite gardens are those infused with ideas about time memories, and connections.

Ula’s design ethos is creating gardens in an authentic and organic way. She believes that most effortless-looking spaces are often a result of a complex design process where every detail has been carefully considered and intricate ideas refined to their purest expressions. Ula finds such spaces to be a combination of

embracing the genius loci whilst incorporating glimpses into one’s formative landscape, where the garden has a deep-rooted connection to the surrounding context but tells a story of its current owner at the same time.

Ula attended the School of Fine Arts in Lithuania which influenced the use of composition, colour, and texture in her work. Ula moved to England in 2008 to study 3D Design and thereafter gained a BA(Hons) and MA degrees in Landscape Architecture at Birmingham City University. Having previously designed gardens seen at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show and RHS Tatton Flower Show, the ‘Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Garden’ will be Ula Maria’s first garden design at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Learn more about Ula Maria at www.ulamaria.com

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. 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. PGB will fund a total of 15 gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2024 and intends to fund up to 60 gardens at the show from 2022 - 2026. Find out more at www.givingback.org.uk

Further Information

Sponsor: Project Giving Back

Designer: Ula Maria

Contractors: Crocus

Trees & Plants supplied by: Deepdale & Kelways

Follow our garden journey on the following Social Media accounts:

Muscular Dystrophy UK - Instagram @muscular dystrophyuk Facebook @MuscularDystrophyUK Twitter

@MDUK_News Linked In @ MuscularDystrophyUK

Ula Maria - Instagram @ulamariastudio

Project Giving Back - Instagram @project.giving.back Facebook @project.giving.back Twitter @ProjGivingBack

LinkedIn @Project Giving Back

ŪLA MARIA STUDIO



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**For press information about the 'Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Garden' designed by Ula Maria for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024 please contact: Joy Baker, Baker PR
joy@bakerpr.co.uk 07810 442659**

PLANT LIST

'Muscular Dystrophy UK – Forest Bathing Garden'

Show Garden designed by Ula Maria – 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show (MA327)

Trees

Betula pendula
Betula albosinensis 'Fascination'
Alnus glutinosa
Crataegus varieties

Hedges

Taxus baccata

Herbaceous/Shrubs*

Actaea simplex 'Brunette'	Dryopteris affinis	Omphaloides verna 'Alba'
Actaea pachypoda 'Misty Blue'	Dryopteris filix-mas	Paeonia emodi 'Late Windflower'
Anemonella thalictroides 'Rosea'	Dryopteris wallichiana	Peltoboykinia watanabei
Anthriscus sylvestris 'Ravenswing'	Epimedium 'Amber Queen'	Podophyllum hexandrum
Aquilegia canadensis	Fragaria vesca	Polygonatum 'Betburg'
Aquilegia 'Chocolate Soldier'	Geranium sylvaticum 'Ice Blue'	Polygonatum falcatum variegatum
Aquilegia vulgaris 'Niveum'	Geranium sylvatica 'Mayflower'	Polystichum munitum
Aquilegia 'White Barlow'	Geum rivale 'Leonard's Variety'	Polystichum setiferum 'Herrenhausen'
Aquilegia 'Black Barlow'	Glaucidium palmatum	Primula japonica 'Postford White'
Asarum caudatum	Hesperis matronalis var. albiflora	Ranunculus acris citrinus
Begonia emeiensis	Iris sibirica 'Perry's Blue'	Rodgersia aesculifolia
Blechnum spicant	Iris sibirica 'Dreaming Yellow'	Rodgersia podophylla 'Braunlaub'
Boehmeria platanifolia	Iris sibirica 'Peacock Paprikash'	Rodgersia henricii
Boehmeria sieboldiana	Iris sibirica 'Persimon'	Rodgersia pinnata 'Elegans'
Briza media	Iris sibirica 'Silver Edge'	Rosa 'Kew Gardens'
Brunnera 'Betty Bowring'	Lamium orvala	Saruma henryi
Brunnera macrophylla	Lamium orvala 'Album'	Semiaquilegia adoxoides
Caulophyllum thalictroides	Lilium martagon	Silene fimbriata
Cenolophium denudatum	Lilium martagon 'Claude Shride'	Tellima grandiflora
Cornus canadensis	Luzula nivea	Tellima grandiflora rubra
Darmera peltata	Maianthemum bifolium	Thalictrum 'Black Stockings'
Dicentra formosa	Molopospermum peloponnesiacum	Trollius x cultorum 'Alabastor'
Digitalis lutea	Monarda bradburiana	Valeriana officinalis
Digitalis grandiflora	Omphaloides cappadochia	Valeriana pyrenaica
Dodecatheon meadia	'Cherry Ingram'	

**list is subject to small changes*

About Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK)

- We're the leading charity for more than 110,000 people in the UK living with one of over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions
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About muscle wasting conditions

- Living with a muscle wasting and weakening condition can be exhausting, stressful and lonely. With endless medical appointments, physiotherapy, treatments, and respiratory support.
- Progressive conditions get worse over time. They can cause difficulty walking. Trouble swallowing. Breathing complications. Pain. Heart problems and failure. Life can be more challenging. Or cut short.



Catherine Woodhead – CEO at Muscular Dystrophy UK Catherine joined Muscular Dystrophy UK in August 2016 as Director of Development and was appointed Chief Executive in September 2018.

Catherine's vision is a world where everyone affected by muscle wasting and weakening conditions can get the healthcare, support and treatments needed to feel stronger both mentally and physically. She has led the charity at a time when more treatments are becoming available for some types of muscular dystrophy. When she joined there was just one treatment available there are now ten.

These advances will result in each generation of people living with a form of Muscular Dystrophy having a better quality of life than the one before through the charity's commitment and community empowerment. An example of this is that in the 1960s, boys who would have been diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy had a life expectancy of around 20 years, but thanks to the continuing research and information about how to live well, boys today are often living into their thirties and forties.

Catherine says "We know that every day counts, and only by working together can we accelerate treatments for people with muscle wasting conditions. I am proud to lead our team to deliver faster access to treatments, drive change for better care, and support to enable individuals and their families to stay active, independent and connected. Thank you to everyone who supports us as donors, supporters and volunteers who make every day count."



Rob Burley – Director of Care, Campaigns and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK

Rob joined Muscular Dystrophy UK in 2018 and has spent 18 years in the charity sector with a strong focus on delivering health and disability improvements. Rob leads our support services, policy work, as well as our involvement as co-chair of the 'Changing Places' toilets UK consortium which campaigns for fully accessible toilet facilities to be made more widely for disabled people to live a better life.

Rob says "Muscular Dystrophy UK's mix of research, campaigning and direct support mean that we deliver real improvements for individuals living with muscle wasting conditions. I hugely value the unique relationship we hold with the neuromuscular clinical community and the connections we build with our amazing community of supporters."



Debbie Hoods – Head of Philanthropy, Partnerships & Ambassador Engagement at Muscular Dystrophy UK

Debbie Hoods has worked at Muscular Dystrophy UK for over eight years. She currently heads up the Philanthropy and Partnerships team which involves building and maintaining relationships with key supporters, corporate partners and ambassadors.

The above representatives from Muscular Dystrophy UK are available for interviews at their Forest Bathing Show garden designed by Ula Maria located at MA327 at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show from the 20-25 May 2023.

For more information or to arrange an interview with the above spokespeople from Muscular Dystrophy UK contact: Joy Baker, Baker PR 07810 442659 joy@bakerpr.co.uk



Josie Chubb from East Sussex is a fun-loving, artistic seven-year-old who loves school, swimming, playing with her little brother and all things pink!

Josie has lived with [Ullrich congenital muscular dystrophy \(UCMD\)](#) since birth, but her mum Charlotte says Josie doesn't consider her disability a limitation saying, "If something's in her way, she becomes even more determined and says, "I'll just do it the Josie way!"

Her parent's experience with the condition started when Josie was about 18 months old in 2018 as they noticed she had reached most of her milestones, but her walking hadn't progressed. Thinking it might be a balance issue, they enrolled her in ballet classes but noticed that she was still falling and struggling to get up off her feet.

Just before Josie turned two in April 2019, her mum took her to a paediatric physiotherapist who eventually referred them to the Evelina Children's Hospital, in London. After many tests, including a muscle biopsy, the results were all inconclusive. Charlotte recalls "At one medical appointment the phrase "Duchenne" was thrown at us (referring to [Duchenne muscular dystrophy](#)) and as a parent, you automatically start to panic. Although it was really hard to swallow at first, finally having a diagnosis for Josie's condition really helped."

Through Muscular Dystrophy UK's [Information, Advocacy and Care team](#), Josie's parents were able to talk to other parents and peer support groups who understand conditions like Josie's or have even been through it themselves. "I was worried about talking to people about Josie's condition at first, especially other parents. But I found that it really helped. You no longer feel like you're the only person in the world dealing with the situation you're in. Sharing your experiences helps you process a situation which is out of your control and normalizes it for you, too" says Charlotte.

As well as connecting the family with a community of people living with muscle wasting conditions, the service also helps them move forward with their lives supporting them with practical decisions such as car seats, wheelchairs and adaptation support for the home, as well as essential financial advice and allowance support.

The Chubb family wanted to support the charity by raising funds for essential medical research, so they set up a Muscular Dystrophy UK Family Fund called [The Chubb's Crusade – Understanding Ullrich](#). Through this fund, they raise money to help fund research into Ullrich Congenital muscular dystrophy. A small amount from the fund also goes towards helping Josie and supporting her future welfare needs.

Josie was honoured to win '[Fundraiser of the Year' at the 2023 MDUK Presidents Awards](#). Charlotte says "Myself, my husband James, Josie, Harry, and our whole family have loved getting more involved with the charity – and we want to keep helping to raise awareness and funds for the whole Muscular Dystrophy UK cause."

To learn more about Josie click here – [Josie's story](#)

Josie and her family will be representing patients at the Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Show Garden located on Main Avenue, MA327 at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show between the 20–25 May 2024.

To arrange an interview with Josie & her family or for more information contact:
Joy Baker, Baker PR 07810 442659 joy@bakerpr.co.uk



Martin Hywood, aged 49 from Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, was a key influencer in Ula Maria's design of the Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Garden. Listening to Martin's story, Ula has created a garden that will showcase how an outdoor space can provide a safe, sanctuary-like environment to support patients in the future during their most challenging times and beyond.

Martin was diagnosed with Limb-Girdle muscular dystrophy in 1996 when he was in his 20s. He had just started a new job in the motor industry and had also just met his now wife, Michelle. It was devastating news

that Martin had struggled with as he was told by medical staff he would have to change his occupation for his health and welfare.

Martin said, "I remember returning to my car at the hospital, just sitting in silence contemplating how my life might change, with my wife Michelle sat next to me, wondering how it would impact my role as a husband and father."

After his diagnosis, Martin left his role in the motor industry and explored a new career path in the pharmaceutical industry so he could get closer to medical research and advances. Now a father to three girls, he was inspired to make a difference for others facing a muscle wasting or weakening condition, so began by launching the 'Move a Mile for Muscles' campaign in 2012 with Muscular Dystrophy UK.

His first walk was one mile which raised £1,000 for Muscular Dystrophy UK and since then he has gained a huge team of support which led to increased awareness and interest on social media with the public hearing his story of diagnosis and what it's like living with the condition. Martin has also produced a star-studded promotional film called '*Muscles Matter*' and raised over £150,000 for vital world-class research into the conditions.

Martin has inspired others by creating a fundraising group called '*Hywood's Heroes*' which is a group of selfless people willing to go above and beyond for others. Today Martin continues to be inspirational to others and grows his ever-expanding team by talking to people and explaining to others how important it is that everyone should know about these rare muscle conditions. His message is simple - everyone should be compassionate and selfless at least just for a little while in their lives.

Martin says: "My diagnosis was horrible, I was surrounded by my whole family and yet I felt like I was the loneliest person in the world, I felt useless and knew, after some time, that I had to do something about this and hoped that what we do now will help others in the future to not go through the pain that we have as a family and that's what we'll keep doing because this group of fantastic people just keeps growing. I have found a massive positive out of something so negative and now I wouldn't change a thing."

After years of fundraising and raising awareness of Muscular Dystrophy in his spare time, Martin left his pharmaceutical job and began a new role as Partnerships and Ambassador Engagement Officer at Muscular Dystrophy UK in 2021 which provides him with the ultimate position to help himself, and over 110,000 people in the UK living with one of over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions.

Listen to Martin talking about his journey and mission to fundraise for Muscular Dystrophy UK here - [Martin Hywood - We Need Hope - Muscles Matter](#)

Martin will be representing patients at the Muscular Dystrophy UK Forest Bathing Show Garden located on Main Avenue, MA327 at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show between the 20-25 May 2024.

To arrange an interview with Martin Hywood or for more information contact:

Joy Baker, Baker PR 07810 442659 joy@bakerpr.co.uk



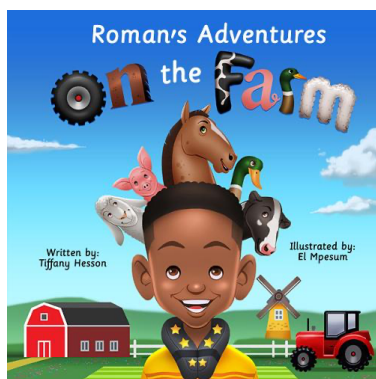
Roman, aged 6 from Birmingham was diagnosed at the age of one with the very rare muscle-wasting condition [LMNA-CMD](#).

His mum Tiffany Hesson recalls *“Getting the news was hard to take for myself and his dad as we didn’t know anything about muscle-wasting conditions before this. Shortly after Roman was diagnosed we went into lockdown, and we found it difficult to get the right clinical support and speak with the relevant departments who could help us.”*

After initially feeling lonely and isolated shortly after Roman’s diagnosis, support and help came from their connection with Muscular Dystrophy UK, where they learnt more about the condition and how they can best support Roman to ‘live a full and independent life”.



Five years after his diagnosis, despite all the challenges he faces, Roman is a boy who is so full of life. He doesn’t let anything hold him back and amazes everyone who meets him. He loves going to school and playing with his friends who understand his additional needs, even at such a young age.



Through her experience, Mum Tiffany has written a children’s book called [‘Roman’s Adventures on the Farm’](#) to help children and their parents learn more about the support Roman needs with his condition. She said, *“I hope this book will help Roman not have to keep explaining his condition and allow him to enjoy life and be the child that he is. Given that muscle-wasting conditions are so rare, we want Roman to know there are other children, adults and families in the Black community who understand what he is going through.”*

In 2021, Tiffany was appointed as Muscular Dystrophy UK’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador to help connect, represent and expand the Black-muscle-wasting community and provide them with support and access to healthcare.

Roman and his mum Tiffany will be representing their community at the ‘Muscular Dystrophy UK - Forest Bathing Garden’ located on Main Avenue, MA327 at the 2024 RHS Chelsea Flower Show Press Day on Monday 20 May 2024.

To arrange an interview with Roman and his mum Tiffany, or for more information contact:

Joy Baker, Baker PR 07810 442659 joy@bakerpr.co.uk