

Welsh Rugby legend Gareth Thomas CBE and Tackle HIV campaign announce show garden to feature at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025

Gareth Thomas CBE and the Tackle HIV campaign have announced that the Tackle HIV Challenging Stigma Garden will be exhibited at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. Tackle HIV, which is funded and supported by ViiV Healthcare, with Terrence Higgins Trust as the charity partner, aims to improve public awareness and understanding of HIV and break down the stigma around it. The campaign is supported by many from across the sport and celebrity world including Sir Elton John and David Furnish.

Huge advances in innovation since the first case of HIV over 40 years ago mean that people living with HIV who are on effective medication, have a normal life expectancy and cannot pass HIV onto sexual partners.^{1,2,3} Despite this, stigma and discrimination persist. The Tackle HIV garden is a celebration of how far science and medicine have come whilst recognising the challenges that stigma still presents both to those living with HIV and to the global HIV response, and the impact it has on efforts to end the epidemic.

Results of a 2024 Tackle HIV survey, conducted amongst 2082 adults in the UK, demonstrate that misunderstanding and stigma persist despite significant advances in HIV science and medicine:

- 44% of people would not tell their friends and family if they were diagnosed with HIV, stigma being a key reason why.⁴
- Less than half of people surveyed would take an HIV test and 44% said this was because they don't think they are at risk of HIV.⁴ In fact, anyone can acquire HIV; figures show that in 2022 in England and Wales more heterosexual people were diagnosed with HIV than gay men, and globally over half of people living with HIV are female.^{5,6,7}
- 17% of people said they would be terrified if they found out they had HIV as they think it is a death sentence.⁴

Tackle HIV Challenging Stigma Garden

Designed by award-winning garden designer Manoj Malde, the garden reflects the significant advancements made in HIV treatment, prevention and care over the last 40 years. The garden includes the following features:

- Beautiful ethereal sculptures – paying homage to the past, but which are sheer allowing us to look towards a positive future.
- Hexagonal paving that reflects a key chemical structure found within many HIV medications.

- Uplifting and inspirational words etched into the stones, including "Undetectable = Untransmittable" on a bench, conveying a crucial educational message about the empowerment provided by effective HIV treatment.
- A sheltered seating area as a tranquil space for reflection and supportive discussions.
- Red ribbons, a universal symbol of HIV awareness and support, symbolic of boldness, passion, love and community. These flow from the structure that shelters the seating area.
- A bridge over the water symbolising a leap of faith, a desire for change and a move away from HIV stigma, towards a healthy life supported by community.

A wide variety of plants and nature come together to create a colourful, living representation of the diversity within the HIV community and the partnerships underpinning progress made to date

- Multi-stem Zelkova serrata trees symbolise the full and healthy life that people with HIV can now live when on effective medication. The multi-stem aspect of the trees show how we can support each other as a community to remove the stigma of HIV.
- The colour red is also infused throughout the planting using Eschscholzia californica Red Chief that threads through the planting borders, as a reminder that we can all help to remove the stigma of HIV.
- Mixed through the colourful planting is Aralia elata. A prickly plant that reflects the existing stigma of HIV in society

Speaking at the garden's launch Gareth Thomas CBE said *"Since finding out I have HIV I have learnt so much about the virus and how it affects people living with it. As our surveys clearly demonstrate, HIV is still misunderstood and because of that stigma still exists. I have experienced and heard first hand stories of how deeply stigma and self-stigma affect people living with HIV and I am determined to change this. That's why I'm so proud to have the Tackle HIV Challenging Stigma Garden at Chelsea 2025 with support from ViiV Healthcare and to take our educational message to new audiences. I am living with HIV, and I am living a full and normal life. I am taking HIV treatment which is working. As such I cannot pass HIV onto my partner. The garden is a celebration of how far science and medicine have advanced, but also a reminder of the work still to do to ensure public awareness and attitudes catch up."*

UNAIDS has set a goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.⁸ Science has enabled incredible advances in testing, treating and preventing HIV but despite this, people living with, or at risk of HIV still face stigma and discrimination undermining efforts. Without addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, the world will not achieve this goal, and the Tackle HIV campaign promotes better understanding to reduce stigma and motivate everyone to play their part in reaching this target.⁸

Audrey Abernathy, Vice President, Head of External Affairs and Communications, ViiV Healthcare commented *"We are hugely proud of our role in partnering with Gareth on the Tackle HIV campaign. Scientific advancements have transformed the treatment and prevention of HIV, yet stigma persists and not only does it have a huge impact on people living with HIV, it threatens to undermine the progress made. Tackle HIV is an important ongoing partnership that illustrates our commitment to the HIV community and fighting stigma, and the garden is an inspirational visual representation of our work together and the progress made in the HIV response."*

Available for interview

- Gareth Thomas, CBE, Welsh rugby international, former British & Irish Lions captain and HIV advocate
- Audrey Abernathy, Vice President, Head of External Affairs and Communications, ViiV Healthcare
- Manoj Malde, award-winning garden designer
- Richard Angell, CEO, Terrence Higgins Trust

About Tackle HIV

Tackle HIV is led by Gareth Thomas CBE, with funding and support from ViiV Healthcare, and Terrence Higgins Trust as the charity partner. It is supported by Sir Elton John and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and many across the sport and celebrity world. The campaign was established in 2020 to tackle misunderstanding of HIV through public education activities and tackle the stigma around HIV through creating dialogue around HIV and normalising HIV testing. www.tacklehiv.org, @tacklehiv

About ViiV Healthcare

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 by GlaxoSmithKline (LSE: GSK) and Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV and for people who are at risk of becoming infected with HIV. Shionogi joined as shareholders in October 2012. The company's aims are to take a deeper and broader interest in HIV and AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver effective and innovative medicines for HIV treatment and prevention, as well as support communities affected by HIV. For more information on the company, its management, portfolio, pipeline, and commitment, please visit viivhealthcare.com.

About HIV

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. 'Immunodeficiency' refers to the weakening of the immune system by the virus. If left untreated, infection with HIV progresses through a series of stages

leading to late-stage HIV or AIDS.⁹ However HIV is now a manageable chronic disease.¹⁰ HIV medication works by reducing the amount of the virus in the blood so much so that it does not show up in standard blood tests. This means the levels of HIV are so low that the virus cannot be passed on sexually. This is called having an undetectable viral load or being undetectable.¹¹

Garden Designer and Contractor

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