

Digital press kit

St James's Piccadilly to 'Imagine the World to be Different' as the only church in recent years with a show garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Pioneering a vision of change at RHS Chelsea Flower Show



The garden (Imagine the world to be different). Illustration credit - Robert Myers Associates

<https://www.sjp.org.uk/chelsea>

Please see press release below.

For further press releases, bios and imagery please visit [this link](#) which includes:

- Press releases including details of the garden's environmental qualities as well as partnerships and collaborations (these include bios)
- Final plant list
- A digital copy of the brochure
- Imagery including images of the church and gardens and images of spokespeople - ***this link will be updated with imagery from show week***
- A digital copy of The Wren Project brochure

You can also follow the garden's journey on social media. The garden is designed by award-winning landscape architect @RobertMyersAssociates, brought to life by @stewartlandscape and sponsored by @project.giving.back. Featuring plants from @hortus_loci and @deepdaletrees and a bespoke counselling cabin by @morison_studio. With special thanks

to @pjce_consulting, @limegreenproducts, @waterartisans @hgmatthews1923, @mbhplc and Carbon8

If you are interested in interview or require further information, please contact Four agency:

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PRESS RELEASE

St James's Piccadilly's 'Imagine the World to be Different' show garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show

<https://www.sjp.org.uk>

- The Project Giving Back sponsored garden has been designed by award winning landscape architect, Robert Myers, as part of the church's transformational '[Wren Project](#)'
- It will be a restorative space where visitors emerge ready to cherish the earth and change the world
- St James's is open to everyone of all faiths and none. It has a legacy of advocating for positive change, with a history of firsts and radical action. St James's needs to raise at least £20 million for its transformational Wren Project, increasing its social and environmental impact for the future.
- The show garden pays homage to the revitalising influence of urban green spaces, symbolising a message of hope and recovery while igniting the imagination of future generations to envision a different world

[Imagery can be downloaded here](#)

St James's Piccadilly, a beacon of both historic beauty and progressive values in central London, is set to become the first place of worship to have a show garden at RHS Chelsea Flower show in recent years as it unveils its garden at the 2024 show.

Under the theme 'Imagine the World to be Different,' this unique garden, sponsored by grant-making charity Project Giving Back and designed by award-winning landscape architect Robert Myers, seeks to inspire visitors to cherish the earth and embrace transformative change.

The show garden's design will be the basis of a restored, accessible garden at St James's in Piccadilly. Around 400,000 people currently seek tranquillity and inspiration in the church, courtyard, and garden each year. As well as welcoming people in, however, St James's

reaches out: to people going through homelessness, to refugees and asylum-seekers; to those persecuted because of their sexuality or gender identity. The Chelsea garden will support efforts to raise £20m for The Wren Project, a scheme to rejuvenate the historic, Wren-designed church and particularly to restore its garden, in order to accommodate and amplify St James's extensive social outreach and environmental work.

Robert Myers, a six-time RHS Chelsea Flower Show gold medalist, brings his expertise to create this restorative space. His work reflects his passion for culturally sensitive sites, including masterplans for prominent locations including Exeter Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral, St Mary's Islington, Southwark Cathedral, and The Backs and Trinity College in Cambridge.

St James's has a reputation for being a force for good, a pioneering 'church of firsts'. It was the first historic church to install photovoltaic panels, and the first central London church to hold funerals and memorials of men who died from AIDS. The Rector, Rev'd Lucy Winkett, was one of the first generation of women to be ordained priest in the Church of England.

Myers' show garden will also include a counselling cabin, designed by artist Ivan Morison, referencing the counselling project in the St James's church garden which has offered a safe and private space for around 5,000 hours of free drop-in counselling every year since 1982. Run in partnership with the Centre for Counselling & Psychotherapy Education, a seven-day-a-week listening service is offered by volunteers undergoing professional accredited training.

Designer Robert Myers said:

"My design for the St James's, Piccadilly Garden explores ideas around gathering, refuge, and the importance of restorative green spaces in the city, celebrating the history, social impact and environmental commitments of the church."

The Rector, The Reverend Lucy Winkett said:

"As we begin a major £20million restoration of St James's, its courtyard and garden, the 2024 Chelsea garden provides for us an opportunity to share the history of this unique place, and the stories of the extraordinary people associated with it who imagined the world to be different and worked to make it so. Our vision today is of a revitalised church building, garden and courtyard, a place for everyone of all faiths and none. Woven through the garden will be the story of visionaries at St James's, including the 18th century abolitionist Ottobah Cugoano and artists Mary Delany, Mary Beale and William Blake."

The garden design

The show garden pays homage to the revitalising influence of urban green spaces, symbolising a message of hope and recovery while igniting the imagination of future generations to envision a different world.

Upon entering through an archway reminiscent of the proposed gateways leading to the churchyard at St James's Piccadilly, visitors will step into a contemplative haven. Here, nature takes centre stage with a lush, biodiverse planting scheme.

This tranquil, introspective space uplifts the spirit, serving as a sanctuary for urban dwellers and city wildlife. It beckons visitors to sit, stroll, and immerse themselves in the sensory delights of dappled shade, multi-layered verdant landscapes, and soothing water features.

The garden proudly exhibits a diverse selection of climate-resilient trees, offering a place of restoration for those searching for peace and inspiration. A circular, sculptural stone counselling hut is thoughtfully placed among the foliage, providing a secure setting for exchanging ideas and shared experiences.

As a nod to the ambience of St James's, the 'borrowed' plane trees adorning the Chelsea show garden are reminiscent of the trees in today's church garden, inviting people to unite and nurture the tradition of 'conversations under trees.'

It celebrates the significance of urban 'pocket parks' in London and other cities, often connected with historic churchyards, some bearing the scars of wartime bombing yet refusing to yield to destruction. These spaces have been reimagined as biodiverse and slightly eclectic garden sanctuaries, representing a harmonious blend of history and ecological vibrancy.

The garden's inspiration extends to the resilient 'pioneer plants' that found a foothold in the ruins of St James's after wartime bombings. These seeds, carried by the wind, represented new hope and growth. Seven such species will feature in the garden, serving as a reminder of nature's resilience and its capacity for regeneration.

The garden will relocate to St James's Piccadilly to create a welcoming and inclusive space for the congregation, local population and visitors, where nature has its proper place in the city, with contemplative green space in the heart of everyday life.

St James's is a historic church looking to the future, advocating for social justice and empowering communities. It is a thoughtful, inclusive, creative space open to all.

-ENDS-

For further information, imagery or interview opportunities, please contact Four:

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Notes to editors

About St James's Piccadilly

As a church St James's seeks to be a welcoming space for people to reflect, create and debate. We offer hospitality and accompaniment to people experiencing homelessness,

living on low incomes, going through the gruelling asylum system or living with fragile mental health. For decades, St James's has spoken out on issues close to its heart, especially those concerning refugees, asylum, LGBTQ+, earth and social justice. The church believes that part of its role in the city is to envision a more just society and a creative, open-hearted community, offering dignity and fulfilment for all regardless of background or belief.

About Robert Myers

Robert Myers MA (Cantab), PGDipLA, CMLI, MSGD, is a chartered landscape architect who collaborates with space and light to create elegant and timeless outdoor spaces, inspired by the characteristics of materials and plants, of history and place. His work explores the relationship between the formal and informal and draws inspiration from both the architectural and natural world.

Robert read geography at Cambridge, exploring and recognising the differences in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments worldwide. He qualified as a landscape architect at the University of Central England and immediately joined Elizabeth Banks Associates (EBA) in 1993, where he led the team that created the new Duke of York's Square, Kings Road, Chelsea (described by architect Richard Rogers as "the first successful square in London designed for public use"), which was followed by further work at Cavalry Square and The Saatchi Gallery. Robert has long-established connections to Cambridge and the University and has drawn up plans for many of the Colleges, including a 50-year landscape strategy for the iconic landscape of The Backs in the centre of the city. Having completed significant works across London and Cambridge, he particularly enjoys working in complex historic landscapes, roof gardens, urban squares and pocket parks. His award-winning practice undertakes commissions from private individuals, rural estates, developers, and institutions such as cathedrals, universities, and schools. He is listed in Country Life's Top 100 and has won many awards, including six gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and the Society of Garden Designers' Grand Award 2017 for the Magic Garden at Hampton Court Palace.

He particularly enjoys the rigour of working in culturally sensitive sites and has drawn up masterplans for Exeter Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral, St. Mary's Islington and Southwark Cathedral, SE1 as well as The Backs and Trinity College in Cambridge.

2003: The Sir Hans Sloane Garden for The Cadogan Estate - Small Garden: GOLD

2006: The Costiera dei Fiori Garden for the Regione Campania, Italy - Small Garden: GOLD

2007: The Fortnum & Mason Garden - Show Garden: GOLD

2008: A Cadogan Garden for The Cadogan Estate - Show Garden: GOLD

2009: The Cancer Research UK Garden - Show Garden: SILVER-GILT

2010: The Cancer Research UK Garden - Show Garden: GOLD

2011: The Cancer Research UK Garden - Show Garden: SILVER-GILT

2013: The Brewin Dolphin Garden – Show Garden: GOLD

2021: The Florence Nightingale Garden for The Burdett Trust – Show Garden: SILVER

About RHS

Since our formation in 1804, the RHS has grown into the UK's leading gardening charity, touching the lives of millions of people. Perhaps the secret to our longevity is that we've never stood still. In the last decade alone we've taken on the largest hands-on project the RHS has ever tackled by opening the new RHS Garden Bridgewater in Salford, Greater Manchester, and invested in the science that underpins all our work by building RHS Hilltop – The Home of Gardening Science.

We have committed to being net positive for nature and people by 2030. We are also committed to being truly inclusive and to reflect all the communities of the UK.

Across our five RHS gardens we welcome more than three million visitors each year to enjoy over 34,000 different cultivated plants. Events such as the world famous RHS Chelsea Flower Show, other national shows, our schools and community work, and partnerships such as Britain in Bloom, all spread the shared joy of gardening to wide-reaching audiences.

Throughout it all we've held true to our charitable core – to encourage and improve the science, art and practice of horticulture – to share the love of gardening and the positive benefits it brings.

For more information visit www.rhs.org.uk.

RHS Registered Charity No. 222879/SC038262

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.

Project Giving Back was established with funding from two private philanthropists who are RHS Life Members and keen gardeners. They wish to remain anonymous. PGB will help UK-based good causes recover from the unprecedented effects of the global pandemic by giving them an opportunity to raise awareness of their work for people, plants and the planet at the high-profile RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Find out more at www.givingback.org.uk