

WaterAid press pack

Chelsea Flower Show 2024

Welcome to The WaterAid Garden.

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WaterAid unveils its spectacular garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show to highlight the power of rainwater in tackling effects of climate change



Download photos: <https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/baf02924-2ab3-4c7a-8f5d-d92fd033f5cf/assetbox.html>

Download footage: A community in Bangladesh benefitting from a rainwater harvesting system. <https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/ad943b33-4406-4a8f-a29f-900f83035a13/assetbox.html>

WaterAid unveils its spectacular show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024 (21 – 25 May), which harnesses the power of rainwater and highlights the importance of sustainable water management to combat the effects of climate change.

The international not-for-profit's garden is supported by the grant-making charity Project Giving Back and is a collaboration between celebrated architect Je Ahn and award-winning landscape designer Tom Massey.

The climate crisis is a water crisis, and a staggering 90% of all natural disasters are water-related, with more frequent and extreme floods polluting water sources and droughts drying up springs. The WaterAid Garden addresses the challenges presented by an ever-changing climate. It focuses on sustainable water management and features a colourful array of plant species designed to deal with varying amounts of rainfall, and materials that are reclaimed and repurposed for a lighter carbon footprint.

The centrepiece of the thought-provoking design is a rainwater-harvesting pavilion inspired by WaterAid's work with communities around the world to develop sustainable water solutions. This structure efficiently harvests rainfall, filtering and storing this precious resource for drinking and irrigating whilst also slowing flow and providing shade.

Designer Tom Massey, said:

"In recent years, British horticulture has felt the effects of extreme weather - including heatwaves, drought and flooding. As our climate changes, water scarcity and insecurity will become more commonplace – here in the UK and around the world. We can all do things to help mitigate climate change, such as improving soil health, planting greenery to provide shade, and, most importantly, managing water sustainably. The WaterAid Garden demonstrates how a resilient and beautiful garden could be achieved whatever the future holds."

A WaterAid survey of 2,000 UK gardeners, revealed that a concerning 4 in 5 UK gardeners (82%) have noticed how hotter summers and prolonged heavy rainfall are affecting their garden, plants and home-grown produce.

Three in five gardeners (60%) are concerned about the impact of climate change on their lawns, plants and home-grown produce. Two-thirds (66%) say excess rainfall has proved an issue, while over a third (38%) have experienced increased heat stress, and 35% have struggled with water shortages.

Co-designer, architect Je Ahn, added:

“The message of our garden is one of hope, showing how resilience and innovation can help us all to adapt and flourish in the face of the climate crisis. We would like the WaterAid Garden to encourage visitors to think about ways to conserve water and incorporate elements of rainwater harvesting into their own gardens.”

All the plants have been chosen to cope with varying amounts of water. They include water violet (*Hottonia palustris*), which can indicate whether a water source is clean or polluted, and alder tree (*Alnus glutinosa*), which has nodules on its roots that can absorb nitrogen and toxic heavy metals from the ground, improving soil health and fertility.

Collecting rain is one of the simplest forms of good quality water supply, but effective storage is often a challenge. WaterAid harnesses a range of simple, affordable rainwater collection methods to bring essential water supplies to households and schools in areas prone to water shortages or water contamination. Rooftop collection means water can be harvested near to home, so women and girls do not need to spend hours walking to collect water, and this technique has inspired the structure Je and Tom have designed for the WaterAid Garden, maximising the surface area for rain to be collected and stored.

Gemma Day, WaterAid’s Global and UK Communications Director said:

“We’re really excited to be working with Tom and Je on our innovative garden design to really demonstrate that the climate crisis is a water crisis.

“One in ten people globally lack clean water, and climate change is making the situation worse, as more frequent flooding affects fragile water sources, while longer droughts dry up springs. At WaterAid, we are supporting communities across the world in areas heavily impacted by climate change, helping to ensure a reliable supply of clean water which, together with decent toilets and good hygiene, protects people from the worst effects of weather extremes.

“Our thought-provoking garden, made possible by Project Giving Back, will be a must-see for all visitors to the Chelsea Flower Show.”

The WaterAid Garden combines Je’s architectural, art and public realm background with Tom’s horticultural and landscape design expertise. This will be Je’s first time exhibiting at Chelsea Flower Show and Tom’s fourth, having previously won gold and silver-gilt medals.

Following the show, the WaterAid Garden will be relocated to a permanent home to inspire a future generation of gardeners about effective rainwater collection and the wise use of water in gardens.

For further information about WaterAid visit www.wateraid.org.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

WaterAid

WaterAid is an international not-for-profit determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. We work alongside communities in 22 countries to secure these three essentials that transform people's lives. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 27.8 million people with good hygiene, 28.5 million people with clean water, 29 million people with decent toilets.

For more information, visit our website wateraid.org/uk, follow us on Twitter [@WaterAidUK](https://twitter.com/WaterAidUK), [@WaterAid](https://twitter.com/WaterAid) or [@WaterAidPress](https://twitter.com/WaterAidPress), or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WaterAid), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wateraid) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/wateraid).

- 2.2 billion people in the world – more than one in four – don't have safe water¹
- Almost 2 billion people in the world – 1 in 4 – lack soap and water for handwashing at home.¹
- More than half a billion people worldwide still share sanitation facilities with other households, often compromising the privacy, dignity and safety of women and girls.¹
- Almost 400,000 children under five die every year due to diseases caused by poor water, sanitation and hygiene. That's more than 1000 children a day, or almost one child every one and a half minutes.²
- Investing in safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services provides up to 21 times more value than it costs.³

^[1] WHO/UNICEF (2023). *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender*. Available at: [who.int/publications/m/item/progress-on-household-drinking-water--sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2022---special-focus-on-gender](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/progress-on-household-drinking-water--sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2022---special-focus-on-gender)

^[2] WHO (2023). *Burden of disease attributable to unsafe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene: 2019 update*. Available at: [who.int/publications/i/item/9789240075610](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240075610)

^[3] WaterAid (2021). *Mission-critical: Invest in water, sanitation and hygiene for a healthy and green economic recovery*. Available at: washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/mission-critical-invest-water-sanitation-hygiene-healthy-green-recovery

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. 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.

Tom Massey and Je Ahn

Tom and Je first worked together collaborating on 'The Hothouse' the landmark project for London Design Festival 2020. The exhibit highlighted the effects climate change is having on what we can grow, displaying a range of edible and exotic plants in a beautiful contemporary structure. The structure provided a regulated temperature and protective environment for the exotic plants, but with the warming climate these plants could potentially be grown outside in the UK a couple of decades from now. The exhibit was sited in a high-profile area of public realm opposite the Olympic Park in Stratford.

Since then, Tom and Je have collaborated on a number of projects, ranging from public parks and landscapes in and around the City of London to an educational forest garden for a library in Lea Bridge. Find out more at www.tommassey.co.uk and www.studioweave.com

The WaterAid Garden Spokespeople

Download photos: <https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/baf02924-2ab3-4c7a-8f5d-d92fd033f5cf/assetbox.html>

Landscape Designer Tom Massey

Tom Massey is principal designer at Tom Massey Studio based in South West London, where Tom oversees a team to design gardens for private and commercial clients, as well as for festivals and shows in the UK and overseas. Drawing inspiration from a range of sources - from natural landscapes, to architecture, art and design - Tom's work always considers the environment, location and context of the site, working with nature to produce sustainable, ecological and beautifully designed gardens that supports local wildlife and promotes biodiversity.

Tom, who graduated from the London College of Garden Design in July 2015, has won multiple industry awards and widespread recognition, including multiple RHS medals. Tom is also a published author and his first book 'RHS Resilient Garden' published by DK, launched to critical acclaim in spring 2023.

As well as running the design studio, Tom lectures at the London College of Garden Design, based at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, and is an RHS show garden judge.

Architect Je Ahn

Je Ahn spearheads the award-winning architecture and urban design practice Studio Weave. Over the past 15 years, Je has delivered an extensive number of community-led buildings, public realm and neighbourhood plans and art installations.

Je's awards include three RIBA Awards, including South East Building of the Year, three Civic Trust Awards, The Marsh Excellence in Public Sculpture Award, and the European Copper in Architecture Award.

Actor Indira Varma

Oliver Award-winning actor, Indira Varma, best known for her roles in Game of Thrones, Luther and Obi-Wan Kenobi, will visit The WaterAid Garden on press day to help promote the importance of sustainable water management to combat the effects of climate change.

To highlight our garden's focus on the power of rainwater in combatting climate change, WaterAid has commissioned a florist to create stunning umbrellas for Indira and other guests to pose with on Press Day. They are made using a colourful array of flowers that feature in the garden and are designed to deal with varying amounts of rainfall.

Tim Wainwright, WaterAid Chief Executive

Tim Wainwright joined WaterAid UK as Chief Executive in 2017. He is responsible for driving forward WaterAid's mission of ensuring everyone everywhere has access to clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene.

Tim, who has spent the majority of his career in International Development, has spearheaded the development of the organisation's Global Strategy 2022-2032 and its four key focus areas:

prioritising water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) across the health sector; creating sustainable water systems to influence wider global change; strengthening the resilience of water solutions to climate change; and increasing the quality and quantity of funding for WASH.

In his role, he works with partners and global governments to ensure WASH is represented in rooms where key decisions are made.

Jennie York, Director of Communications and Fundraising

Jennie has extensive experience of the international development sector, having worked in the third sector for almost 20 years. She rejoined WaterAid in 2021, returning to an organisation and a cause she feels passionately about, following 5 years at WaterAid earlier in her career. Jennie loves to drive collaboration, create change and engage and inspire others who want to make a difference. She believes wholeheartedly in the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in driving progress for women, men and children and its vital importance in addressing the impacts of our changing climate.

Frehiwot Gebrewold, Communications Specialist in Ethiopia

Born and raised in Addis Ababa, Frehiwot grew up admiring her father who spent a lot of time travelling and working in rural communities. Following her BA degree with Foreign Language and Literature at the University of Hawassa, in Ethiopia, Frehiwot gained a variety of experience working at different organisations as a teacher, journalist, and communications specialist.

She joined WaterAid as a 'Communications Specialist with the Community Voices team. Being the bridge between the communities and WaterAid supporters is a dream come true and what satisfies her the most. Frehiwot feels this is one way of giving back to the community in her country. Being the only female community voices team member, she is dedicated to bringing women and girls voices to the forefront.

WaterAid case studies

The WaterAid Garden is inspired by the organisation's work supporting communities across the world to develop locally relevant sustainable water solutions. Here are a few of the life-changing projects.

Download photos: <https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/191e148e-0e55-4797-a6ea-768b5ae29cbf/assetbox.html>

Download footage of a community in Bangladesh benefitting from a rainwater Harvesting system. <https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/ad943b33-4406-4a8f-a29f-900f83035a13/assetbox.html>

Harvesting rain – and time – in Bangladesh

Komola Munda has more time to do what she enjoys – and earn a living doing it – thanks to a rainwater harvesting plant in her village in Bangladesh. The 23-year-old is caretaker of the plant, which was set up by WaterAid and partners in 2018.

“Previously, it was very difficult to get clean drinking water. We had to walk a long way,” she recalls. “Now we don't have to walk far and we have more time with our families, more time to tend to crops, and I can spend more time doing my tailoring.”

Bangladesh is in the top 10 countries most affected by climate change. Floods are frequent, bringing saltwater inland and polluting water with sewage.

Before the rainwater harvesting plant, the pond that Komola and her neighbours used for drinking water was dirty and full of disease. “Almost everyone got a waterborne disease – diarrhoea, dysentery, stomach aches,” she says.

Repeated environmental destruction has left Komola and her community painfully aware of just how precious water is. But with the rainwater harvesting plant, they now have a supply of clean water that keeps flowing, whatever the weather, so they can stay safe, healthy and thrive.

“There have been lots of changes in our lives,” says Komola. “I feel very good that we no longer have water related challenges, and as a caretaker benefitting and doing something for others in my community.”

Clean tech powers clean water in Ethiopia

Gashawbeza Shegaw is relieved that his clinic finally has clean water. Thanks to support from WaterAid and partners, Safoge Health Centre now has a rainwater harvesting tank. This means that Gashawbeza, a nurse and clinic manager, can care for patients safely and hygienically.

“When we had a mother delivering here, we used to face a huge water shortage,” he recalls. “This made our janitor's work very difficult. Currently, with the support of WaterAid, we have started rainwater harvesting. This has changed everything in our health centre, in a good way.”

Ethiopia has been hit hard by climate change. Oromia state, where Gashawbeza's clinic is located, has suffered increasingly severe droughts and floods in recent years. Fortunately, Safoge gets more rainfall than other areas in Oromia. Knowing this, WaterAid worked with the community to make the most of this precious resource.

“When we started working here, there was no water in the facility. We only got unclean water from a pond,” explains Gashawbeza. “Though Safoge gets rainwater almost throughout the year, we didn’t have the system to harvest and use it until WaterAid supported us.”

In other areas of Oromia, WaterAid and partners worked alongside communities to build a huge reservoir, and pioneered the use of a generator and solar pumps to supply clean water to tens of thousands of people.

Memuna Malima is one of them. A grandmother, she used to walk for hours to collect water several times a day. That’s until the edge of the hand-dug well she was using gave way. The accident, which killed one of the other women she was with that day, broke her leg and meant she would never be able to collect water again. With the new taps, though, she doesn’t have to.

“Now we can drink clean water,” she says. “Most of all, we can get water whenever we want. This is a dream come true for us.”

Gardens flourish whatever the weather in Mali

Mayaman Malle waters a lush crop of onions in the women’s market garden where she’s worked for 20 years. Set up by women in Tigama village in Mali’s historic region of Ségou, it’s a vital source of income for the community here. But as Mayaman knows all too well, a garden is nothing without water.

Tigama village has been hit hard by climate change. Villagers cope with two extremes: searing droughts and freak floods. In the last 10 years, rainfall has more than halved. Up until around 2021, Mayaman and the other women working the garden had to rely on water from a well.

“We started with two wells that dried up,” recalls Mayaman. “We could hardly make one harvest per year.” Community efforts to find a solution were boosted by support from AMEPPE (a Malian environmental protection organisation) and WaterAid. Together, they built a water tower, taps and dug a borehole to help distribute clean water to people in the area.

“We... make two harvests now as we have more water available,” says Mayaman. “Previously, many of our vegetables did not grow because of the lack of water, including tomatoes, cabbages, and beets. But the borehole has changed that.”

Thanks to the hard work of people like Mayaman, local organisations, and WaterAid’s determination to future-proof communities against climate change, the market garden is thriving.

“Gardening means a lot to us,” says Mayaman. “We eat and sell the vegetables we grow, which enables us to increase the quality of our food, and to generate money to cover for other expenses. The allotment is important for everyone in Tigama.”

Made possible by players of People’s Postcode Lottery.

Climate change hits our own backyard as 4 in 5 UK gardeners notice its impact, reveals WaterAid survey

Brits love talking about the weather, but a WaterAid survey has revealed that a concerning 4 in 5 UK gardeners (82%) have noticed how hotter summers and prolonged heavy rainfall are affecting their garden, plants and home-grown produce.

WaterAid surveyed 2,000 UK gardeners ahead of RHS Chelsea Flower Show, where the international charity will unveil its garden, which will harness the power of rainwater and highlight the importance of sustainable water management to combat the effects of climate change.

Three in five gardeners (60%) are concerned about the impact of climate change on their lawns, plants and home-grown produce. Two-thirds (66%) say excess rainfall has proved an issue, while over a third (38%) have experienced increased heat stress, and 35% have struggled with water shortages.

The climate crisis is a water crisis, and according to the UN, a staggering 90% of all natural disasters are water-related, with more frequent and extreme floods polluting water sources and droughts drying up springs.

With support from grant-making charity Project Giving Back, The WaterAid Garden by award-winning landscape designer Tom Massey and celebrated architect Je Ahn will feature flood and drought resilient plants to adapt to a changing climate. These include water violet (*Hottonia palustris*), which can indicate whether water is clean or polluted, and alder tree (*Alnus glutinosa*), which can absorb nitrogen and toxic heavy metals from the ground, improving soil health and fertility.

The centrepiece is a rainwater-harvesting pavilion inspired by WaterAid's work with communities around the world to develop sustainable water solutions. The garden's design-led features allows all water that falls on the garden to be stored and utilised.

Tim Wainwright, WaterAid Chief Executive, said:

"The WaterAid Garden is a beautiful and thought-provoking way of celebrating our most precious resource – water – while also highlighting the need to adapt to the changing climate to ensure water keeps flowing, whatever the weather."

"Almost one in ten people globally lack clean water, and climate change is making the situation worse as more frequent flooding contaminates fragile water sources, while longer droughts dry up springs. At WaterAid, we are supporting people living on the frontline of the climate crisis, helping to ensure a reliable supply of clean water, which enables communities to thrive."

"The garden, made possible by Project Giving Back, is inspired by WaterAid's work alongside communities across the world and we hope it will help people recognise the life-changing impact water has on everyone around the world."

WaterAid's survey found that nearly three in four (73%) of British gardeners think about the amount of water they use on their garden every time, often or sometimes. Nearly three in five Brits (58%) already collect rainwater for their gardens.

Four in five (80%) gardeners have made changes to how they garden in the last five years, with a third installing a water saving system (31%), and a third using wastewater from the house to irrigate during dry spells. (31%).

Designer Tom Massey, said:

“In recent years, British horticulture has felt the effects of extreme weather - including heatwaves, drought and flooding. As our climate changes water scarcity and insecurity is becoming more commonplace – here in the UK and around the world. We can all do things to help mitigate climate change, such as improving soil health, planting greenery to provide shade, and, most importantly, managing water sustainably.”

WaterAid's survey found that only 1 in 10 people (8%) feel very confident in their understanding of climate sustainable garden practices.

Tom has included elements of The WaterAid Garden that can be used at home, so visitors can take ideas to help their garden thrive whatever the weather, while also demonstrating the bridge between local and global concerns and the value of water for all.

Tom's top tips for a water-wise garden are:

Collecting rain

Installing a simple water butt to gather rainwater run-off from garden buildings or downpipes is a must for all domestic gardens. Ensure there is an overflow pipe that redirects excess water to vegetable patches or ponds that require more water, mitigating waste and reducing water bills.

Slowing flow

Thinking about the way water moves through the landscape is an important way of managing excess surface water. Designing swales, depressions or channels can keep water in the landscape providing seasonal habitat for invertebrates and amphibians.

Nurturing soil

Healthy soil is the best foundation for a climate-resilient garden, and we should all take steps to protect and nurture it. Mulching is a cost effective and efficient way to protect soil as the mulch layer creates a protective barrier helping to insulate the soil, sustain moisture and protect against erosion. This can be an organic mulch such as homemade compost, or composted bark mulch, or inorganic mineral mulch such as gravel or other natural aggregate.

Planting the right plant in the right place

Selecting plants adapted to site-specific conditions and planting the right plant in the right place ensures garden resilience without expensive retro-fitting of structures to protect plants from adverse weather. If you are on a windy exposed site, then plants that will tolerate a battering from wind and rain, or if you know you are in an area prone to flooding, then trees and plants that can tolerate boggy or wet conditions are really important choices.

Gardening for flood and drought in a changing climate

If you know your garden is prone to flooding, introduce one or two natural swales or water channels that can help store and redirect water away from areas you don't want to become waterlogged. These more 'boggy' areas can be planted with things that thrive in moist conditions, such as trees, which can draw a lot of moisture from the soil.

Reducing hardscape, making it permeable and/or replacing it with healthy soil and planting as much of the garden as possible is a really good way to help reduce risk of flooding.

You can adapt the topography of your garden to create high and dry areas, and low and wet areas. This is a great way to help manage surface water, storing it in low swales and depressions, whilst also creating dry sunny higher areas, that can boost biodiversity allowing you to introduce species that like dry and sunny conditions alongside shady and damp loving plants.

In a heatwave, look for signs of water stress; this could be wilting, browning of leaves or dieback. Water in the early morning, or later in the evening when the sun is at its lowest. Try to-water deeply and by hand, targeting the base of the affected plant, rather than wasting a lot of water by spraying erratically with a hosepipe or sprinkler.

Shade can be achieved by planting taller plants, like large shrubs or trees, which will also cool the air around them as they release moisture into the air through transpiration. Shade structures like canopies or pergolas could also be considered for more static / permanent shade.

The WaterAid Garden Plant List

Below are just some of the plants in The WaterAid Garden

Trees:

Alders
Field Maple
Dwarf Mountain Pine
Common Dogwood
Hawthorn
River Birch
Sea Buckthorn.

Plants

Red yucca
Iris 'Blue Note
Erigeron karvinskianus,
Thymus serpyllum - 'Magic Carpet',
Bulbine frutescens,
Armeria Maritima,
Nepeta Racemosa - 'Walker's Low',
Eriocephalus africanus '- Carl Faust'
Hottonia palustris (Water Violet)
Cuckoo Flower
Angelicas
St Bernard's Lily
Common Colombine

Thank you and if you have any further questions or requests for interviews please do get in touch with WaterAid's media team in the following ways.

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