

Sharon Hockenhull

Can you tell us about the key features of the garden?

The garden showcases a variety of features that are great for our night time pollinators. Plants that attract moths with their strong heady night scents, nectar rich perennials and a number of native plants that play an important role in providing food for the larval stage of the moth. Ornamental habitats also feature as they are a great way of re-using our garden clippings and leaves as these are essential for providing cover and overwintering sites for moths and pupae. Light in the garden is also addressed as the wrong type can really mess with a Moth's navigation system, disorientating them and distracting them from their important pollinating roles.

Why are you highlighting night time pollinators?

Recent research studies have shown that Moths are far more complex pollinators than bees [University of London] and will visit plants often overlooked by the day shift pollinators. The University of Sussex also found that Moths are actually more efficient at pollinating and are able to pollinate flowers more quickly. The humble moth is very much an essential pollinator and one that is very much overlooked so the opportunity to be involved in this project to highlight their importance was very exciting.

For more info on this research see <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/60568>

What do you hope visitors will take away from the garden?

Ideas and knowledge on how to give these night time pollinators a greater chance to survive. All it takes is a few little changes to the way we maintain our gardens, the inclusion of a few choice plants and a more relaxed approach to how our garden spaces should look... our wild weeds are so important to these creatures and the odd bramble or nettle hanging about the garden is not a bad thing.

What does having a garden at RHS Tatton mean to you?

I love this show! It is local for me and happens to be in one of the most beautiful settings, a deer park created by Landscape Architect Humphrey Repton, with stunning views and open spaces. It is always a privilege to be involved in the RHS shows, the people it brings together and the opportunities it gives is priceless.

What is happening to the garden after the show?

All the planting will be heading to a variety of local charities and community groups including Incredible Edible Ramsbottom and Prestwich, the Forget me not Garden which is a charity to support people with dementia and Crossroads Derbyshire who are looking to create a garden space as part of their support for women escaping domestic violence.

Are there any practical take-home elements of the garden visitors can replicate?

A variety of ornamental habitats feature in the garden which are all easy to replicate at home. They are important for moths and other insects as they offer a place to shelter and overwinter. The main message is to try and keep your leaves and any plant debris that you cut down as these will harbour moths, pupae and caterpillars rather than throw away them in the council compost bins. My main aim was to show how attractive these disregarded cuttings, sticks, logs, seedheads etc can look in your garden.

Georgia Toker

Can you explain what Vita is?

Vita means life, and without Moths pollinating our gardens, there wouldn't be any!

The Vita element to the garden is an immersive and mesmerising experience which showcases the beauty of moths at night, using kaleidoscopes of their wings to showcase the various flowers they choose to pollinate. There is also a cocoon/womb like sculpture in the centre of the work which viewers can walk around.

The soundscape accompanying the project is spatial also so you have moths flying around you while also a more musical side, making the viewer feel calm and transfixed within the space.

The red/amber lighting was used to highlight how much better this tone of lighting is for moths, increasing their overall fertility. Being at the centre of the work, the light shows how life grows, and as humans how we feel calmer with warmer lighting tones. We have all evolved with the sun as the main source of light for life to grow.

The whole experience plays with light and reflections to create an experience which embodies the viewer in a moth's nighttime lifecycle.

What do you hope visitors will take away from the garden?

Because the work is abstract, I am hoping it starts a conversation for viewers. Many people entering Vita will take pictures or videos and this will act as a catalyst for a conversation at a later date. Immersive experiences create memories and will connect people to the feeling of being in a moth's world more.