



Environmentally-friendly pathways for Gold medal garden at Chelsea Flower Show

Every year The Chelsea Flower Show puts on a showstopping display of show gardens, all of which represent the pinnacle of horticultural and landscaping excellence. The show in 2023 was no different. The selection process for entering a show garden is vigorous and those chosen represent the best of the best.

Horatio's Garden is a national charity creating and nurturing beautiful gardens in NHS spinal injury centres to support everyone affected by spinal injury. This year they had a garden at The Chelsea Flower show which was designed by Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg of award-winning landscape design practice Harris Bugg Studio. The garden went on to win a Gold medal at this prestigious event and attracted great accolade from both gardening celebrities and the general public alike. The garden was generously funded by Project Giving Back a grant-giving scheme which gives UK-based charities the chance to apply for a fully-funded show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Designers:

HARRIS BUGG STUDIO

Sponsor:



Background

Harris Bugg Studio designed a beautiful, immersive, restorative haven, the antithesis of a busy, clinical hospital setting for this year's show. They were inspired to develop an entirely new wheelchair-friendly surface material for the pathways and turned to Poundfield Precast to help them achieve it.



Charlotte Harris observing the production of the slabs

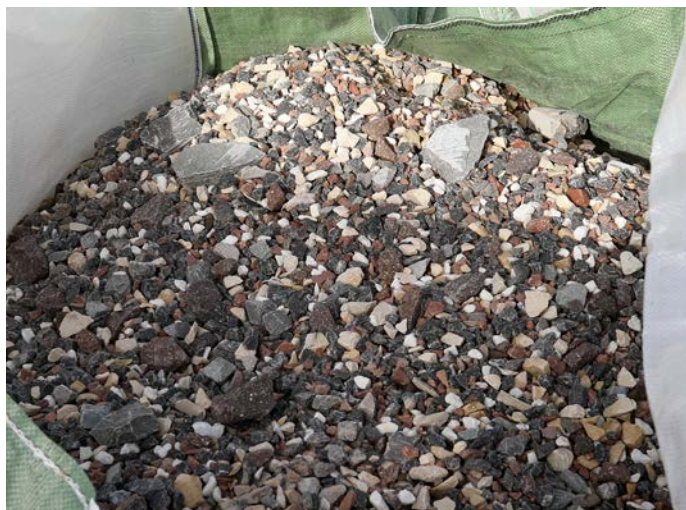
How we helped

Although it may sound like a straightforward and easy job, there were many complexities to overcome. Once installed the pathways had to provide a totally smooth surface as any joints, bumps and dips could cause extreme pain for anyone learning to use a wheelchair for the first time. This meant that conventional blocks with lots of joints couldn't be used and instead the design required for the pathways to be made using permeable concrete (to allow rain water to seep through to the ground underneath). Although permeable insitu concrete is available, as is permeable block paving (which relies on water filtering through the joints in between the blocks), finding a permeable precast solution was pushing the boundaries of what was technically possible.

This was a new challenge for the team at Poundfield but their technical and production teams worked very closely together and carried out test productions until the right mix had been created.

The pathways also had to have as low a carbon footprint as possible and this was achieved by several means. The slabs were cement-free using Cemfree from DBG Holdings, and the mix was created using recycled aggregates, along with basalt reinforcement (rather than steel). This achieved carbon savings of 77% compared with using traditional OPC (Ordinary Portland Cement).

In order to enhance the appearance of the concrete a damson colouring was added during the mixing process. It was important to ensure the consistency of the colour across all the slabs in order to provide a uniform appearance when the path was laid.



The positioning of the lifters within the slabs had also to be individually placed to avoid being in areas which would subsequently be polished during the next stage of processing the slabs.

By working closely with Harris Bugg Studio we were able to achieve all of these goals and in total we supplied 24 concrete slabs, each 2.5m long x 1.6m wide.

Once the slabs were produced they were subsequently taken to Stoneworld in Oxfordshire who then cut the slabs into various shapes and polished the concrete to give an amazing finish to the pathways.

Following the Show, the garden will be installed as part of the creation of a permanent Horatio's Garden at the

Princess Royal Spinal Injuries Centre at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield - the second largest spinal injuries centre in the UK. This new garden will transform a car park and will provide a green haven where patients, their families and staff can spend time away from the busy hospital ward. This will be Horatio's Garden's eighth site in the UK, which includes gardens at Stoke Mandeville, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, and the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury District Hospital.

Horatio's Garden has launched a capital appeal to raise the vital funds needed to create Horatio's Garden Sheffield and to find out more and donate to the appeal, please visit www.horatiogarden.org.uk.

