

Polar bear victim inspires Chelsea garden winner



Accessible: Horatio's Garden was voted Best In Show by Chelsea's RHS Judges

A WHEELCHAIR-friendly garden designed to be a 'wonderful sanctuary' for people with damaged spines has won the top prize at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Horatio's Garden – which is named after the young British victim of a horrific polar bear attack – was created to help patients with spinal injuries recover surrounded by nature.

The victory of the display designed by Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg seems to mark a return to traditional gardening values by judges.

However, some prominent gardens featuring weeds and wildflowers still prompted some to dub this year's Royal Horticultural Society event the 'Chelsea Weed Show'.

Last year, a 'Rewilding Garden' meant to look as if a beaver had constructed a dam in the showground won top prize. Ms Harris said: 'We are delighted to have won. We wanted to create a garden that was beautiful but accessible to wheelchairs, or to someone with a broken leg.'

Ms Harris said that those

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recovering from spinal injuries are often confined inside for months. 'To go outside and hear a bird sing, or a drop of rain on the cheek can be so healing,' she said.

Olivia Chapple founded the Horatio's Garden charity to create beautiful gardens at spinal injury centres around Britain in memory of her son. Eton schoolboy Horatio, 17, was killed by a polar bear during a school trip to the Arctic in 2011 – and he was a volunteer at a spinal injuries unit in his home town of Salisbury.

Dr Chapple hopes that every spinal injuries centre in the UK will eventually have their

own Horatio's Garden. The winning display has a non-slip surface on one level, made out of recycled building site waste. There is also a shelter with a hospital bed for a spinal patient to rest.

The garden will be re-sited at The Princess Royal Spinal Injuries Centre at Sheffield's Northern General Hospital in 2024, where it will be made seven times bigger.

Calling it 'uplifting', head show judge Marie-Louise Agius added: 'For someone who has had a life-altering spinal injury it will provide them with a wonderful sanctuary.'

Meanwhile, The Centrepoint Garden, by six-time Chelsea gold-winner Cleve West, was awarded the prize for Best Construction in the Show Garden category. The display, which Mr West called a 'very visceral metaphor for young people facing homelessness', featured a half-demolished building, upended tree roots, a rusty bin lid and weeds.

For my son: Dr Olivia Chapple and Horatio, who was killed by a polar bear

