

# The Daily Telegraph

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For all the family

Travel



Will Greenwood  
How to win  
a Grand  
Slam

Sport



Chelsea Flower  
Show 2016  
Meet our new  
garden designer

Gardening



## Tory chaos as IDS quits in fury over benefit cuts

Former leader launches attack on Osborne  
amid rumours another minister may resign

By Tim Ross, Steven Swinford  
and Christopher Hope

PAUL BRINDLEY, IANITA  
FANY THUNICAP, IANITA  
resigned from the Government last  
night in protest over George Osborne's  
plan to cut benefits for the disabled,  
potentially triggering a major rift with  
the Conservative Party.

The former Tory leader said he was  
quitting because he could not defend  
the Chancellor's "wildly political"  
plan to reduce the benefits of some  
two million disabled people while  
spending more on the state.

Last night there were claims that  
other ministers were also considering  
resignation as the Government was  
divided over a bill which cuts over  
£100bn.

The employment minister, Bill  
Farr, who is Mr Osborne's deputy  
at the Department for Work and Pensions, was said to be considering his

role in government. In his letter, Mr  
Osborne wrote across Mr Collman's  
Deskery of forcing through cuts to  
welfare for "political" rather than  
fiscal reasons, saying: "I have for  
some time, and rather reluctantly,  
come to believe that the latest changes  
to benefits in the disabled and the  
context in which they've been made are a  
catastrophe too far."

Mr Osborne said he was "deeply  
convinced" that the cuts were  
needed to reduce the deficit and that  
they were "the only way they  
could be made within a budget that  
limits higher-earning taxpayers."

"They should have just all been part  
of a wider process to ensure that we  
are doing the best we can for the  
people of the United Kingdom."

He added: "I am unable to watch  
millions of people who are struggling  
to get by in order to meet the fiscal  
requirements that I believe are sound  
and more perceived as distasteful than





What's next for dahlias? Nudes are the new black

Softer, romantic tones are in fashion  
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Restoration project The Duchess with a digger

Belvoir's Capability Brown landscape  
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Move to the beet Best beetroot recipes

Michelin-starred chef shares favourite dishes  
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THE WEEK AHEAD  
TRIED & TESTED  
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RHS PLANNER

# GARDENING



CHELSEA GOLD MEDAL 2010



CHELSEA GOLD MEDAL 2012



CHELSEA GOLD MEDAL 2001



CHELSEA GOLD MEDAL 2005

## The secrets of a Chelsea winner

Andy Sturgeon has won six RHS gold medals at the Chelsea Flower Show. Here, he reveals his inspirations for this year's *Telegraph* showpiece

**I**n the four years since my previous show garden at Chelsea have passed swiftly. And as May hurtles towards us, I wonder why I have stuck my head above the parapet again.

The truth is that, deep down, I love the drama, the excitement and the jeopardy. I get a kick out of it. It's a drug. What's more, I owe my career to the Chelsea Flower Show so there are commercial incentives, too.

This will be the eighth time I have put myself through this ordeal since 2001 and it doesn't get any easier. In fact, the pressure I put myself under increases. In theory, I know how to win a gold medal, but I'm not the sort of person to go through the motions.

Worse still, I appear to enjoy making life difficult for myself and I'm never totally happy wallowing in my comfort zone. Chelsea, after all, is an adventure, and adventures are



Award-winning: Andy Sturgeon's gardens are renowned for their sculptural characteristics and innovative planting

meant to be exciting, even dangerous. So, as I sat down at my kitchen table one Sunday night last autumn, I did not do the sensible thing and draw a slick, contemporary "London" garden to pull in commissions from well-heeled clients and cement my career. Instead, I began modelling a garden that was a bit different, risky even. I wanted to push boundaries and flex my design muscles.

My starting point was a childhood memory. I vividly recall entering the cavernous halls of the Natural History Museum as a boy of no more than ten and feeling shivers run down my spine. As I stood in that cathedral of knowledge and gazed at the magnificent *Diplodocus* skeleton, I received a profound lesson in scale, time, theatre, architecture, history and nature. I remember how tiny and insignificant I felt.

Of course, I've been back many times, first as a child and more recently with my own three boys – and, on each occasion, I am awestruck. It is

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Vision: Andy Sturgeon's design for this year's Chelsea garden (in CGI form, left) recalls the spine of a Stegosaurus, below

TELEGRAPH CHELSEA GARDEN 2016

## We're all part of this adventure and it is not without risks

cardboard to represent a mountain range running through the garden, I arranged them to define the space and they seemed to take the form of the bony plates on the spine of a Stegosaurus. When I was finished, there were 17 "mountains" or "bony plates" in all, which, I discovered, is about the average for one of those handsome chaps.

Fundamentally, I was making a simple connection between colossal geological events that shape our planet, vast timescales and man's relatively fleeting and insignificant



Inspired: clockwise from top left, Andy Sturgeon has been inspired by the South Downs, South America and the jungles of Borneo

time on Earth. The usual analogy is that if 3.8 billion years of Earth's history are represented by a single day, then the dinosaurs arrived at about 11pm and us humans didn't pitch up until a minute before midnight, which rather puts things in perspective.

Bronze seemed the obvious choice for the mountains/Stegosaurus plates - I like the ambiguity - as it represents a period in time. There is also a happy coincidence that the fossil-rich limestone I am using as paving was laid down in the late Jurassic period, which is when the Stegosaurus roamed the Earth. Everything appeared to fit together.

Over the years, I have developed a style that is significantly sculptural. The form of that sculpture defines the spaces and the character of the garden,

and this year is no exception.

And then, of course, there are plants. Lots of them. In the past few years, I have worked on gardens all across the Mediterranean, from Portugal to Italy and Turkey. I've bought plants from nurseries in Spain, the south of France and Tuscany, and I have fallen in love with Italy in general. I'm fascinated by the natural plant communities I see. I'm interested in the way they grow together, the way they colonise unpromising ground, how they prosper and how they struggle.

By visiting a project regularly wherever it is in the world, I get to see the same place during different seasons. I notice the seasonal changes in plants that are perhaps unfamiliar and learn to identify the local adaptations for drought or salt-laden winds. It then becomes easier to

### a life in gardens

Andy Sturgeon has won RHS gold medals at Chelsea Flower Show in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010 (for *The Telegraph*, when he was also awarded Best in Show) and 2012. He has won gold awards in Singapore and Philadelphia, and three awards from the UK's Society of Garden Designers in 2014. Sturgeon mixes traditional materials with contemporary styling. His gardens are known for their sculptural characteristics and innovative planting. See [andy.sturgeon.com](http://andy.sturgeon.com) for details

recognise the same modifications in plant communities in different continents and hemispheres.

I spot connections between plants in the Mediterranean and those on the Black Sea on the Crimean Peninsula and further afield in South America, New Zealand and California.

It is, I realise, amateur botany, but I firmly believe these observations of plants in their natural habitats can inform and influence plant selection in a garden - regardless of the climate you are working in. A Yorkshire hedgerow or a Berkshire roadside are equally as informative as a scree slope in Sarajevo or a hillside in China.

If you put plants together that are adapted to the same sort of conditions, they will always look right and thrive together - even if they are from opposite sides of the globe.

This year I've picked plants from all these places and more. Crocus, the nursery that is growing all my plants, would normally gather them up from around the UK and northern Europe.

This year I have dragged Crocus, willingly I hope, out of its comfort zone. Peter Clay, its co-director, and I have been shopping in the south of France, Italy and Spain. Rather than sending everything back home to spend the winter shivering in Surrey, all the plants are growing (rather faster than we would like) in sunny Almeria. We are all, of course, slightly worried. But this is an experiment, we are all part of this adventure and it is not without risks.

