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Hillier Garden Centres and Nurseries

Hillier have won Chelsea Gold every year since 1945! Does Hillier have the Golden Formula???

Hillier have an as yet unbroken and definitely unrivalled record of winning Chelsea Gold medals every year since the end of the Second World War!

An incredible feat and a Guinness World Record of 61 consecutive RHS Gold Medals!

But such a golden legacy brings enormous pressure. Nowadays, anything less than Chelsea Gold would be a bitter disappointment.

Hillier's Designer – Andrew McIndoe

The designer of Hillier's stand at the Chelsea Flower Show is Andrew McIndoe. Andy has designed and led his team to Chelsea Gold for the past 16 years, whilst also managing his day-job as Deputy Managing Director of Hillier Garden Centres and Nurseries.



Andy confesses that whilst the core structural elements and specimen planting is clear in his mind some time ahead of the show, much of his inspiration comes from the wealth of fantastic plant material that arrives at the show from Hillier Nurseries in the days before the show opens.

"The inspiration comes from the adrenalin that is Chelsea. Ideas bounce around the exhibit, colour combinations evolve," says Andy. "No matter how many times one works on the exhibit, there is always something new: a different way of putting plants together, a different way of using a plant. The focus always seems to be on what is new in the world of plants, but it is often those old familiar friends that turn out to be the ones that steal the show."

Hillier's Plant Preparer – Ricky Dorlay

The responsibility for preparing over 3000 plants and trees for Hillier's Chelsea exhibit falls on the thankfully broad shoulders of Ricky Dorlay, who has helped stage the Hillier garden for the past 42 years. Drawn from Hillier's container plant nurseries as well as Hillier's specimen tree nursery, all the plants have to be brought to the peak of perfection for Chelsea by Ricky and his hand-picked team.



"One lesson I have learnt over the years is that Mother Nature has the biggest influence at the end of the day," are Ricky's wise words. "It is always best to work with her and not against her, and usually she will give you that bit of help when you need it, which hopefully results in a Gold Medal Award for the exhibit."

Hillier - The Largest Site at the Chelsea Flower Show

Hillier has the largest of all the exhibits at the Chelsea Flower Show. Measuring 23.5m x 18.5m, the site centres on The Monument at the centre of the Floral Pavilion. Hillier are not allowed to dig down into the football pitches and roadway that lie beneath, so all constructions must be above ground. Just 10 days before the show opens (at least a week later than the outdoor Show gardens), the Hillier hard landscape construction team arrives on site, covers the entire Hillier pitch in black polythene, and then sets to work. Walls are built, paving laid, buildings erected, water features created, terraces, lawns and pools raised.

The Plants

6 days before the doors open for Press Day, the Hillier team in Hampshire starts loading the first of Ricky Dorlay's carefully prepared plants bound for Chelsea.

First up are the trees and large shrubs, which Andy McIndoe and the early Hillier staging team position to provide the crucial height and structure to the exhibit.

The following morning – with just 4 days to go - huge volumes of the remaining plant material arrive at Chelsea and a strengthened Hillier staging team spends the final days and hours creating aesthetic order out of chaos, making Andy's vision a reality!



Hillier's Chelsea Vital Statistics

The Hillier site measures 23.5m x 18.5m and uses:

- over 3000 plants and trees
- 16 tons of sand, cement and ballast
- 1300 concrete blocks to raise the terraces and water features
- 4 tons of paving and walling
- 10 tons of bark chips
- 750 hand-written labels!



The Hillier stand takes 10 days to build, but only 10 hours to take apart.....

Hillier Chelsea Live Magazine

As if the stress of staging a Gold-medal winning exhibit weren't enough, Philippa Bensley, Editor of the Hillier Gardening Club magazine, races to pull together the Hillier Chelsea Live issue, writing copy and compiling images from within the buildings on the Hillier exhibit. Occasionally to be seen running through Central London with a red-hot CD-ROM in her hands, Pip never fails to have the Hillier Chelsea Live magazine printed and available by Press Day!

Notes to editors

Hillier Nurseries was founded in 1864 by Edwin Hillier, and has an unrivalled and (to date) unbroken run of Gold Medals at the Chelsea Flower Show since 1945. Hillier has 3 divisions:

Hillier Wholesale Nursery: supplies a network of UK stockists, producing around 2 million container-grown hardy plants, shrubs and herbaceous perennials per year.

Hillier Amenity Nursery: is Britain's largest tree nursery, growing semi-mature trees for commercial projects and local authorities in the UK on 500 acres at Liss in Hampshire, and 20 000 trees a year in containers ranging from 45 litres to a staggering 2000 Litres at the Broadmead Nursery beside the Company's head office in Ampfield, Hampshire.

Hillier Garden Centres: are specialist garden centres at 13 locations in England where the focus is on premium plant range and quality, gardening advice and customer service. Hillier has the largest membership of any garden society other than the RHS with over 200 000 members, who receive the Hillier Gardening Club Magazine three times a year. Hillier Garden Centres are in Bath, Newbury, Hemel Hempstead, Sunningdale, Chichester, Eastbourne, Horsham, Redditch, Botley, Braishfield, Liss, Romsey and Winchester.

For further media information, hi-res images, or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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