



Creating a little piece of Aussie wilderness in the centre of London sounds more than a touch bizarre. But that's exactly what Australian landscape designer Phillip Johnson did, in creating his winning entry for the 2013 Chelsea Flower Show. His sustainable, bushland-inspired design was an amazing practical challenge to create, but it was all worth it in the end – the garden won both a Gold Medal and the prestigious Best in Show award – a feat never achieved before by an Australian team at Chelsea. ▶

1. Phillip Johnson's re-creation of a native habitat was so realistic, even the lizards couldn't stay away!

Chelsea goes bush

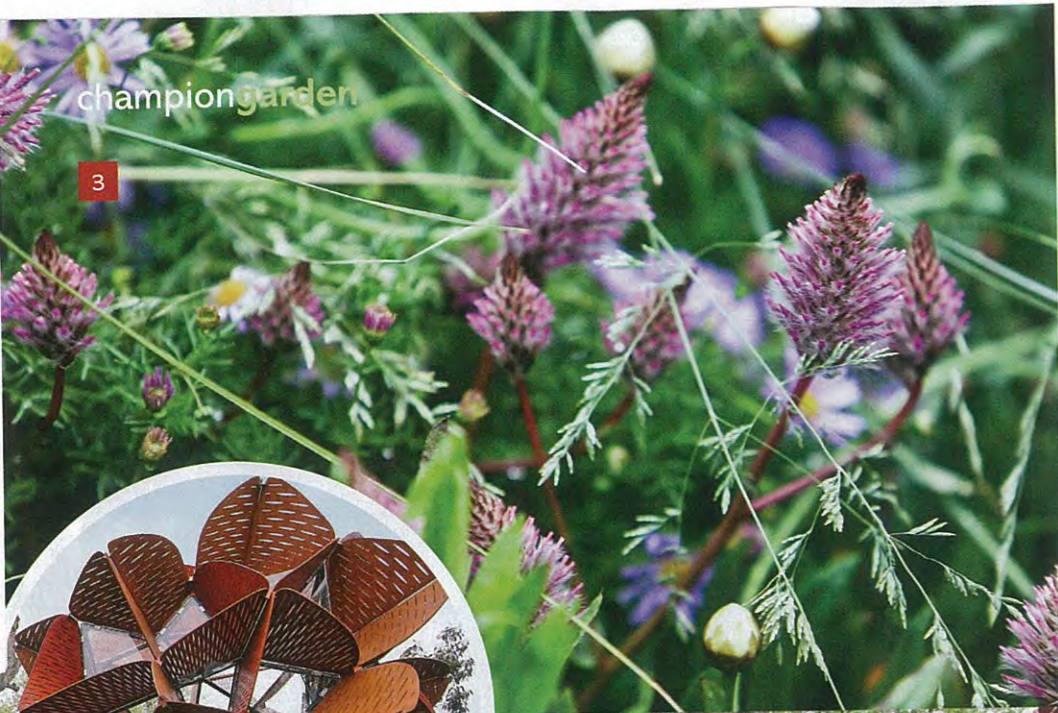
You little beauty! It's been a great Aussie triumph at the Chelsea Flower Show this year



2. An idealised Australian landscape, this fabulous garden has a billabong at its heart. The natural swimming pool is fed by waterfalls and is towered over by a stunning studio.

with a record-breaking win. Come and check out what all the excitement is about...

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3. Australian wildflowers create an entirely different floral dynamic at this very English event. Feathery-flowered pilotus makes a pretty groundcover with soft pink blooms.

4. Inspired by the waratah flower, this amazing studio structure is crafted from laser-cut 'petals' made from reclaimed timber. It offers 360-degree views of the surrounding landscape.

5. As they seem to sprout from the rocks, tree ferns make brilliant plant choices where soil is shallow. In the foreground, a handcrafted timber ladder reaches from the billabong to the top of the gorge.

6. Strike a pose! Reptilian contortionists are right at home among the Aussie landscape.



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About the garden

Inspired by nature's beautiful forms and textures, this garden recreates a small-but-perfect piece of Aussie wilderness. It is a fully sustainable habitat, maintained by an integrated water management system which is independent from the water mains and can retain and recycle storm water run-off. As such, it's a timely reminder of how even home gardeners can use more sustainable methods to manage that most precious of all resources – water.

Design details

- **At the heart** of the garden is a billabong fed by a series of waterfalls, cascading over stone.
- **The 'sunset platform'** timber deck (see page 81) was inspired by the rising sun on the ANZAC badge. It overlooks the billabong, providing a vantage point from which all aspects can be enjoyed.
- **A series of stepping stones** form a pathway to a sandy beach (see page 80). A timber boardwalk connects the beach to a grotto and solar-heated outdoor shower.
- **The timber and glass studio** was designed by Melbourne's Studio 505. It was crafted specifically with the Queen's height in mind.

Plant palette

The garden features an intriguing selection of native plants, endemic to both arid and damp environments. A Queensland bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*), which is native to desert zones, offers structure with its bulbous trunk. Around the waterfalls and billabong area, magnificent tree ferns and moisture-loving grasses add lush foliage. Flowers get a run too, in true Chelsea style – colourful Australian perennials, such as kangaroo paw and pilotus. ▶

The garden is a living lesson on the possibilities of sustainable landscape design



7. Looking for landscaping inspiration? Consider this fabulous marriage of textures – a timber boardwalk meeting a small sandy beach, fringed by rocks and clear sparkling water.



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champion garden

8. Even naturalistic gardens need a touch of order, like these elegant steps crafted from slabs of cut stone. Densely planted native grasses and perennials soften the edges and delight the eye.

The finished design of this garden took 17 days and more than 2500 man-hours to build. It used 38 tonnes of materials, plants, tools and equipment, and was created by a team of 18 volunteers.

for you to know!



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10. **Grass trees** (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.) are a sculpture all on their own. Seek out a specimen with a chunky blackened trunk and flourishing head of grassy foliage.

11. **The semi-circular deck** radiates from a rocky outcrop, overlooking the billabong and providing a chill-out space. It's an idea worth borrowing – decks don't always have to be rectangular!

12. **Visitors at Chelsea** included (L-R) Dame Helen Mirren, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Jamie Oliver, Joanna Lumley, Ringo Starr, Rob Brydon and Zara Phillips.

Photography: Getty Images, Leigh Clapp



9. Take the idea of the classic English perennial garden and make it your own by mass planting wildflowers, such as the gorgeous red kangaroo paw and mauve brachyscome.

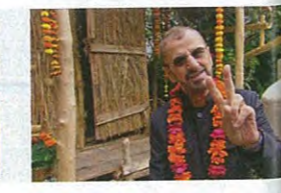


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Hurrah!

The Australian entry at the 2013 Chelsea Flower Show was sponsored by Trailfinders and Fleming's Nurseries. This is the nursery's ninth and final year of their involvement at Chelsea, during which they have won five gold and four silver-gilt medals.



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