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Team Hillier brings plants out from the cold to 'Feel Good about Gardening' at Chelsea 2011

Chelsea veterans, Hillier Nurseries have faced possibly their **most challenging growing season ever** as they prepared for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show this year. Hillier have a record-breaking run of 65 consecutive Chelsea Gold medals to defend, and trying to cope with a long, hard winter of sub-zero temperatures and a record heatwave in April has put even Hillier veteran plantsman, Ricky Dorlay under pressure.

"I thought I'd seen it all," says Ricky, who has been in charge of preparing plants for the world-famous Flower Show for over 46 years. "But the incredible heat and light levels we have experienced this spring have meant that our coldstores (pictured above) have been packed to bursting with flowering shrubs, trees and perennials since mid-April."



Storing plants in a cold-store for such a long time is a very risky strategy. You can only hold back time for so long, and the danger is that the flowers could go over or wilt as soon as they are taken out of the coldstore. Rhododendrons, cornus, roses, ceanothus, cornus, cherries, wisteria, aquilegias (pictured above) and more will face their moment at Chelsea as they are removed from the coldstores and shipped up to the Chelsea showground by the lorry-load.

Limbering up for Chelsea – 'Feel Good about Gardening'

Inspired by Olympic fever, the quest for Chelsea Gold, and the active theme of this year's exhibit – '**Feel Good about Gardening**', seven members of green-fingered Hampshire legends Hillier Nurseries and Garden Centres revealed their desire to tone up and Plant for Gold.



From left to right: Sue Robinson (Hillier Team Coach), Chris Rawlings (Hillier Gardening Athlete), Andy McIndoe (Hillier Team Captain), Ricky Dorlay (Hillier Master Plantsman), Gary Newell (Hillier Gardening Athlete), Steve Austin (Hillier Team Manager), Emma Dorlay (Hillier Team Trainer)

Hillier Nurseries at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2011 ‘Feel Good about Gardening’

This year’s Hillier Chelsea exhibit, designed by Hillier Managing Director, Andrew McIndoe, will explore the different ways in which your garden can make you feel good. Perhaps it’s a place for relaxation, contemplation, entertaining or perhaps for gentle exercise, such as yoga, pilates or an activity trail.....



Whatever it is that makes you feel good about gardening, come and **share the feelgood factor**. Warmed and reassured by the pinks and pastels of the Feelgood Garden, Chelsea visitors will be invited to record on film what gives them the gardening feelgood factor. Clips will be posted online at www.lovethegarden.com and via the Hillier website www.hillier.co.uk

Beyond digging: How to get toning in your garden

- ❖ The **Flex on a Deck Garden**: Why not have a selection of weights and dumbbells handy for a bit of al fresco training on the decking? Timber exercise equipment can double as clever seating, and a backdrop of a stimulating yellow planting scheme and timber decking helps raise your metabolism and your spirits with plenty to look at as you practice those sit-ups, press-ups and pull-ups.
- ❖ Visit the **Tone Up Trail** on the Hillier Chelsea exhibit, and be inspired to build stamina and increase agility at all ages by setting up a trail of stepping stones, low-level hurdles and balancing bars. This is particularly suited to a woodland garden.
- ❖ See the **Core Values Garden**, if stretching and toning are more your scene. Create the perfect space for a little yoga or pilates with a sculptural stone space for your yoga mat. Surrounded by soft blue planting this will instil a sense of calm, tranquillity and harmony.



Prefer a more relaxed approach? If this sounds all a little exhausting, visit the more relaxed gardens within Hillier’s ‘Feel Good about Gardening’ exhibit:

- ❖ The **Indulgence Garden**: the place to entertain friends or romance your partner in a garden full of exotic fragrances and rich planting in deep shades of wine and chocolate, complementing the opulent hues of purple and red rhododendrons.
- ❖ Visit the **Garden for Contemplation** to retreat into a secluded, calm sanctuary of green and white foliage with just a sprinkling of flowers and feel those cares fall away.
- ❖ **Wildlife Garden**: Perhaps you’re looking to reconnect with nature and encourage wildlife into your garden? Meadow flowers, shrubs and a light tree canopy will help to create the right environment. The **Meadow Anywhere** wildflower and grass seed mix developed in conjunction with Habitat Aid enables you to create a micro-meadow anywhere, even in a patio planter. 50p from every sale of the super-sized seed packs goes to Butterfly Conservation, and 50p to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. For more information visit www.meadowanywhere.com

