

SCOTTISH GARDEN DESIGN COMPETITION 2027

SHOWCASE GARDENS APPLICATION PACK



INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Garden Design Competition is returning to Scone Palace Garden Fair on the **28th, 29th and 30th May 2027**. This unique competition showcases Scotland's horticultural talent, and we are excited for the third year of the Showcase Gardens category.

The Showcase Gardens aims to demonstrate the best of the Scottish garden design and landscaping community. This is the national showcase for the many talented garden designers and landscapers operating in Scotland, featuring excellence and imagination in the designs, plants chosen and materials used.

The uniqueness of the Showcase Gardens category is that the gardens are not only on show during the Scone Palace Garden Fair but **remain in the Palace gardens for 12 months** and are to be judged seasonally throughout the year by our expert panel of judges.

This provides a greater challenge to the designer who must consider how the garden will evolve over time, as it will be viewed, not only by visitors to the event, but also during other seasons of the year by our expert judges and the 100,000+ visitors who come to Scone Palace annually. This competition is unique within the UK.

Gardens will be viewed and judged across the 12-month period, **inclusive of two Garden Fairs** (2027 and 2028) with the final award being presented at the 2028 Scone Palace Garden Fair.

It is proposed that the Showcase gardens remain on display for a further six months for visitors to enjoy, providing **total exposure over 18 months** including two Garden Fairs.



AWARDS & JUDGING

There are two awards for the Showcase Garden Category, **Best Showcase Garden Award** and **People's Choice Award**

The **Best Showcase Garden Award** will be judged over a 12-month period by our panel of judges, to see how the gardens develop and change throughout the seasons.

The judging panel shall initially assess each design on **Thursday 27th May 2027** before the Fair opens to the public on Friday 28th May. Designers will not be permitted in the area when judging is taking place.

Initial grades will be awarded and displayed at the opening of the Fair. Expert **judging will then continue on a seasonal basis** in Summer (August), Autumn (October), Winter (February) and finally in Spring (May) at the Scone Palace Garden Fair 2028.

The judges will give initial feedback to designers after their first inspection, and after each seasonal inspection. The overall winner of the Best Showcase Garden Award will be announced at the 2028 Scone Palace Garden Fair, after a full 12 months of competition.

The People's Choice Award will be voted for by visitors over the three days of the 2027 Garden Fair, with the winner announced on Sunday 30th May 2027.

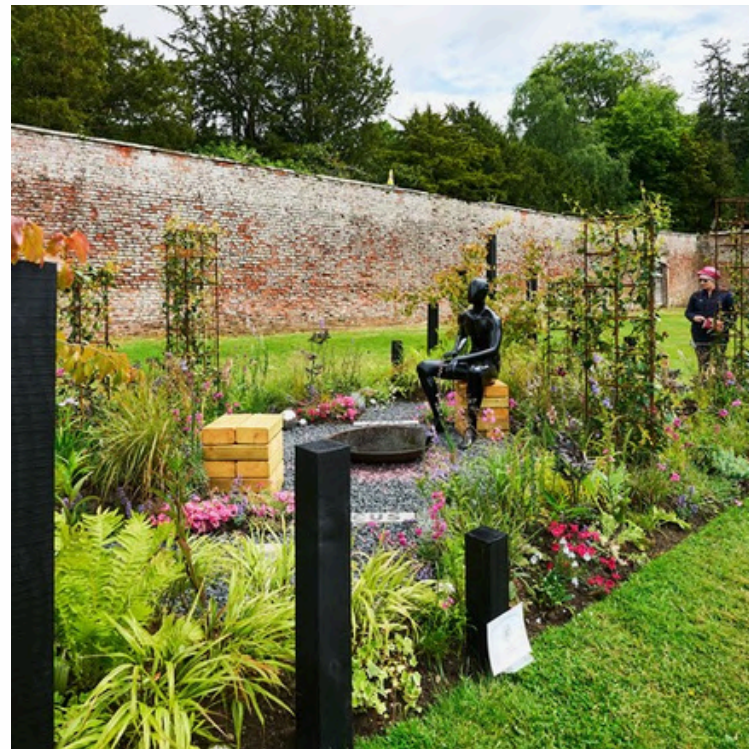


PLOT SIZE

The Showcase Gardens are allocated a larger plot size (7m x 7m) to allow you to maximise your creativity and show off your design skills.

Designers should note all gardens will be viewed from all sides, and should incorporate this into their design.

On display with each design will be an A3 sized plaque containing the story of the design and information on the designer. This may also include business or sponsorship details.



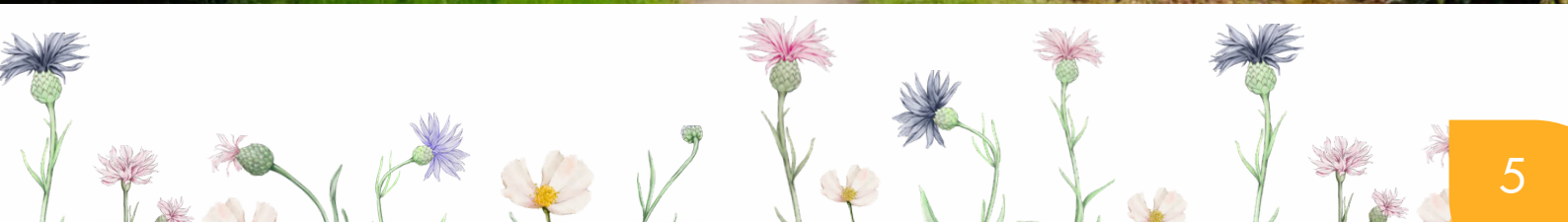
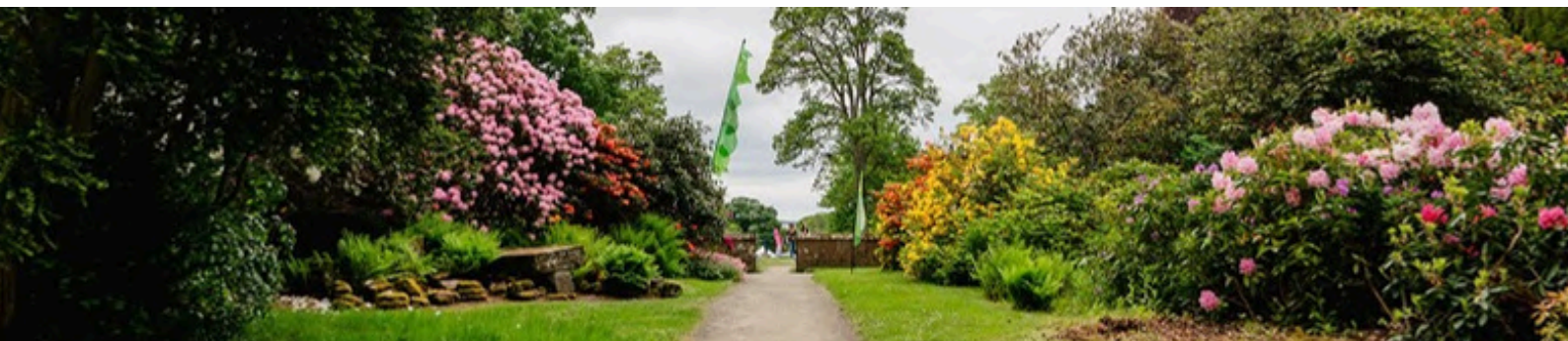
GARDEN DESIGN

Each designer must create a strong story for visitors and judges, which they will interpret in their design. Whether expressed through bold bursts of colour, striking sculptural elements, or dynamic use of space, we invite designers to reflect their own chosen design theme via their garden elements and showcase how their garden communicates and interacts with those who view, linger or engage with it.

We encourage designers to be bold, expressive and innovative. While the competition runs for 12 months, designs must impress visitors and judges at the 2027 Scone Palace Garden Fair, while also ensuring plants perform throughout the year and remain looking their best for the 2028 Garden Fair. The challenge is to create a garden that delivers both immediate impact and lasting appeal.

All designers will have the chance to showcase themselves to the many attendees at both the 2027 and 2028 Scone Palace Garden Fair with the opportunity to meet new clients and followers, as well as fellow designers, from across Scotland and beyond, plus compete for the two awards in the Showcase Garden category: **‘Best Showcase Garden’** and **‘The People’s Choice Award’**.

This is a plant-centered event, and designers are encouraged to make planting a key feature of their gardens. As a guide, designers may wish to consider a 70% planting to 30% hard landscaping split, although the final balance is entirely up to the designer.



HOW TO ENTER

To take part in the Showcase Garden category of the Scottish Garden Design Competition, please provide the following details for your design:

BRIEF

A short written story on the ideas behind the design, no more than 250 words.

PLAN

- A 2D layout design; showing the design of your garden from above highlighting the key elements of planting, hard landscaping, materials and structures, etc. This should be to scale. Indicate the key views into the garden with arrows.
- A planting plan is not required at this stage. Materials guide Construction drawings will be required after submission for those accepted. Costings and any Sponsor information.
- All drawings and images must be to A3 size, submitted as a PDF. All designs will be viewed digitally by the judging panel.

PERSPECTIVE DRAWING

A 3D sketch of the garden should be included, possibly from more than one angle.

GARDEN DESIGN COST ESTIMATE

Provide an estimated cost of the full build to demonstrate that it is achievable.

Designers must secure your own funding from sponsors, donors or product support to cover the cost of the build.

GARDEN LEGACY

We would like to know the details for the future of the garden after 18 months of it being enjoyed by visitors to the Palace and gardens.

Please Include your full name, location, and garden name on your entry.

The closing date for entries is 16th November 2026 by 9pm.



JUDGING CRITERIA

The judges will assess the gardens on the following criteria. Not all criteria will apply to each design:

CRITERION 1 - REALISATION OF THE DESIGNERS CHOSEN THEME

Excellent (4 points)	The garden clearly and obviously realises the theme in multiple ways
Very Good (3 points)	The garden recognises the theme without further explanation
Good (2 points)	The theme can be understood but may need further explanation
Fair (1 point)	The theme may be part recognised but elements missed
Poor (0 points)	It's not clear or obvious how the theme appears in the garden



JUDGING CRITERIA

CRITERION 2 - WOW! FACTOR

Excellent (4 points)	An eye-catching garden with creativity and imagination at a high level
Very Good (3 points)	An exciting garden made with care and thought
Good (2 points)	An original garden but lacks features or finer detail
Fair (1 point)	The garden fails to demand attention lacking in creativity
Poor (0 points)	Fails to make that positive impact to the audience

CRITERION 3 - LAYOUT: THE 2D ELEMENT OF YOUR DESIGN

Excellent (4 points)	Demonstrates advanced skills from the designer in scale, proportion, comfort and design
Very Good (3 points)	Visually shows a balanced garden and good level of designer skills and knowledge
Good (2 points)	Some aspects may compete with each other making the garden difficult to understand
Fair (1 point)	Elements make the garden seem confusing or lack unity
Poor (0 points)	A poor understanding of garden design has been demonstrated



JUDGING CRITERIA

CRITERION 4 - STRUCTURE: THE 3D ELEMENT OF YOUR DESIGN

Excellent (4 points)	Demonstrates advanced skills from the designer in scale, proportion, comfort and design
Very Good (3 points)	Visually shows a balanced garden and good level of designer skills and knowledge
Good (2 points)	Some aspects may compete with each other making the garden difficult to understand
Fair (1 point)	Elements make the garden seem confusing or lack unity
Poor (0 points)	A poor understanding of garden design has been demonstrated

CRITERION 5 - QUALITY OF ARTEFACTS AND HARD LANDSCAPING

Excellent (4 points)	High levels of craftsmanship demonstrated with no faults that would take away from the final finish of the garden
Very Good (3 points)	Very good construction skills shown but with two minor faults noted that reflect in the final finish of the garden
Good (2 points)	A good quality of build with three or more minor faults that reflect the final finish of the garden
Fair (1 point)	Inconsistent build quality featuring minor and notable faults that affect the final appearance of the garden
Poor (0 points)	Substandard build quality that would affect the function of the garden



JUDGING CRITERIA

CRITERION 6 - PLANTING DESIGN

Excellent (4 points)	An inspiring use of plants and design with a good use of plant textures and colours
Very Good (3 points)	A largely excellent planting design with a few minor areas where improvements could be made
Good (2 points)	A good planting design with three or more minor issues that take away from the final enjoyment of the garden
Fair (1 point)	A satisfactory use of plants but with noticeable issues that affect the final enjoyment of the garden
Poor (0 points)	Overall a weak use of plants with noticeable errors in the design

CRITERION 7 - PLANTING ASSOCIATIONS

Excellent (4 points)	An excellent example of plants that would live and survive with each other
Very Good (3 points)	Very good planting associations but with two minor inaccuracies in plant selections
Good (2 points)	Good selection of plants but with three or more inaccuracies
Fair (1 point)	Weak planting associations that horticulturally would not work together with each other
Poor (0 points)	A poor planting scheme using plants that would not live or survive with each other



JUDGING CRITERIA

CRITERION 8 - PLANT QUALITY, HEALTH, AND DENSITY

Excellent (4 points)	Excellent plant quality of good health, planted at the appropriate spacing
Very Good (3 points)	Although featuring two noticeable errors this is largely a very good quality of plants and health, planted at the appropriate spacing
Good (2 points)	Good plant quality but undersized or with some imperfections. Planting density slightly inappropriate (four issues)
Fair (1 point)	Undersized and/ or unhealthy plants. Planting density inappropriate.
Poor (0 points)	Poor plants showing obvious damage, diseases, or evidence of neglect. Planting density inappropriate



POINTS TO NOTE

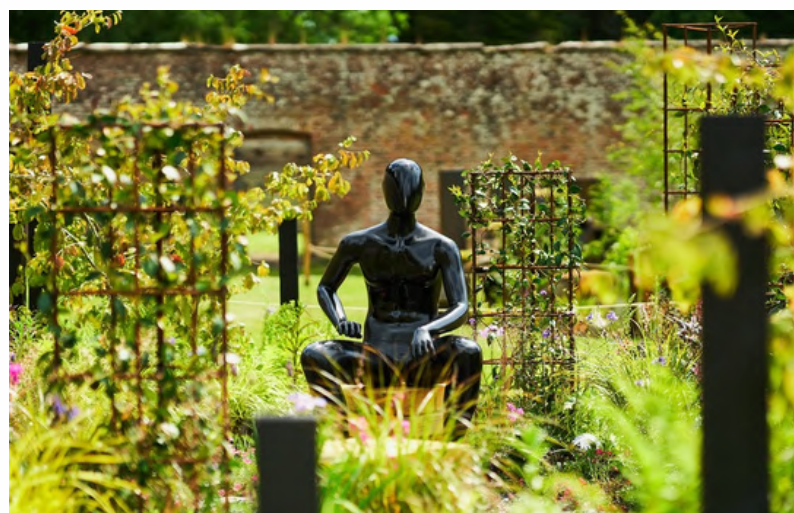
1. The aims and objectives of the garden should not be changed during the year. The gardens will be judged against the original aims and objectives throughout the year.
2. Any deliveries made directly to the site must be signed for by the exhibitor. Scone Palace will not accept any items on behalf of a designer.
3. Scone Palace asks all designers to ensure that all plant materials have been grown and sourced responsibly and arrive with a clean bill of health for biosecurity. If required, plants may be removed at the discretion of Scone Estates.
4. Soil excavations for the Showcase Gardens will be permitted to a depth of 1.5m.
5. Breakdown of the finished gardens will be March 2029.
6. Access to electricity and water will be provided for the build.
7. Sponsorship: Designers are encouraged to source their own sponsorship.
8. Ongoing maintenance: No major changes to the design are permitted but care of the plants and replacement of any casualties are encouraged to maintain the quality of the garden.
9. Accommodation: If you require accommodation during installation or the event let us know and we can make affordable local recommendations.

SUBMISSION

Designs should be submitted by Friday 16th November 2026, by 9pm via email to sconepalacegardenfair@scone-palace.co.uk.

Designer interviews will be held week beginning 23rd November 2026.

Successful designers will be notified during the week beginning 1st December 2026.



Good Luck! We look forward to welcoming you and your creativity at the 2027 Scone Palace Garden Fair.

