

SCOTTISH GARDEN DESIGN COMPETITION 2026





INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Garden Design Competition is returning to Scone Palace Garden Fair on the **29th and 30th of May 2026**. This unique competition showcases Scotland's horticultural talent, and we are excited for the second year of the Showcase Gardens category.

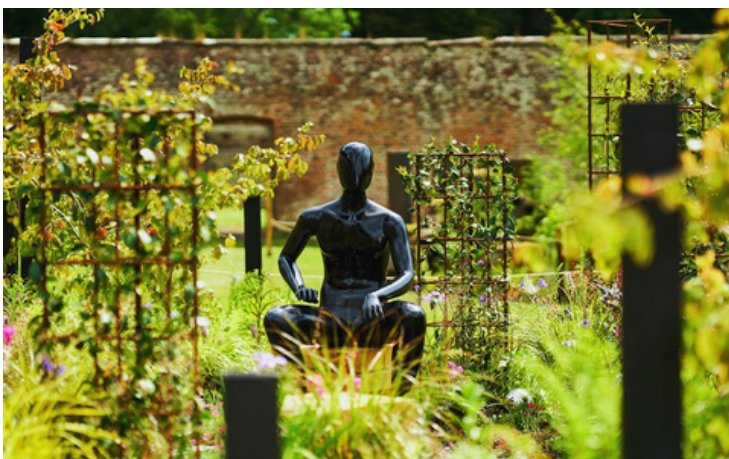
The Showcase Gardens demonstrate the best of the Scottish garden design and landscaping community. This is the national showcase for the many talented garden designers and landscapers operating in Scotland, featuring excellence and imagination in the designs, plants chosen and materials used.

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 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 visit 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** (2026 and 2027) with the final award being presented at the 2027 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 AND 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 28th May 2026** at 3pm before the Fair opens to the public on Friday 29th 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 2027.

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 2027 Scone Palace Garden Fair, after a full 12 months of competition.

The People's Choice Award will be voted for by visitors over the two days of the 2026 Garden Fair, with the winner announced on Saturday 30th May 2026 at 1pm.



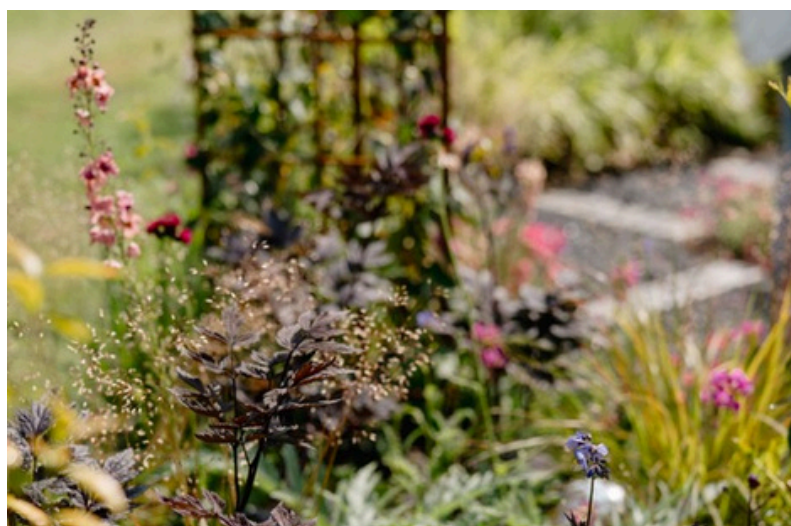


PLOT SIZE

The Showcase Gardens are allocated a larger plot size to allow you to maximise your creativity and show off your design skills. The garden designs can be of **any shape within a 49sqm space**.

Designers should note all gardens will be able to 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

There is no set theme for this year's Showcase Gardens, but 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 with their designs.

All designers will have the chance to showcase themselves to the many attendees at both the 2026 and 2027 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'**.





SUPPORT

Cash Grant: A grant of £1000 will be given to help towards the cost of the build and designers are also encouraged to source their own sponsorship opportunities. Advice and support will also be on hand to help guide you through the competition.

Labour and Landscaping: The Garden Fair has secured a sponsor to provide landscaping labour at no cost to designers. This support will be time limited during the installation period - further details will be provided to successful applicants.

Landscaping Equipment: Basic landscaping equipment such as excavators and dumpers, will be made available during the installation period (May).

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





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 the 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





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





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

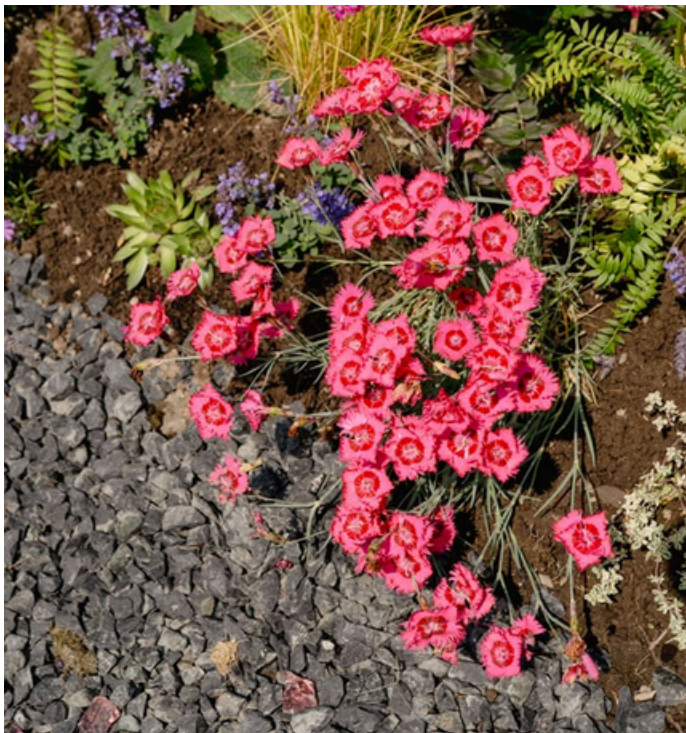
Excellent (4 points)	An excellent example of plants that would live and survive with each other
Very Good (3 points)	Very good planting associations but with two minor inaccuracies in plant selections
Good (2 points)	Good selection of plants but with three or more inaccuracies
Fair (1 point)	Weak planting 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





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. **Installation Period:** Successful designers will be given access to the event site from **Friday 1st May** to start the design build, and designs must be completed no later than **12 noon on Thursday 28th May**.
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 or exhibitor.
3. Scone Palace ask all exhibitors and 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 in Winter/Spring 2028 with final dates to be confirmed.
6. Access to electricity and water will be provided for the build.
7. Details on the Press Day and how finalists can get access to entertain their sponsors or potential clients during the Fair, and while the gardens are on display, will be given.
8. **Sponsorship:** Designers are encouraged to source their own sponsorship, please speak to the team at Scone Palace if you would like support in securing.
9. **Ongoing maintenance:** Designers will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the garden throughout the 12 months of the competition
10. **Accommodation:** 1.If you are needing accommodation during installation or the event let us know and we can make affordable local recommendations.



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:

STORY

A short written story on the ideas behind the design, no more than 500 words.

PLAN

A colour plan showing the design, highlighting the planting, hard landscaping, materials, structures etc. Showcase gardens will be able to be viewed on all sides which this plan should also reflect the key views your garden will be enjoyed.

PLANTING LIST

Provide a preliminary planting list giving an indication of the plants you intend to use in your design.

GARDEN COST ESTIMATE

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

GARDEN LEGACY

After the 18 months of being enjoyed by visitors to Scone Palace Gardens at our numerous events, we would like to know the details for the future for the garden.

NOTE

All drawings and images must be to A3 size, submitted as a PDF. All designs will be viewed digitally by the judging panel.

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

The closing date for entries is **Friday 16th of January** when a panel of judges will choose the successful designs that will go on to be created for show at this year's Scone Palace Garden Fair. Successful designers will be notified in the week beginning January 30th.



SUBMISSION

Designs should be submitted by **12 noon on Friday 16th of January 2026** by email to sconealacegardenfair@scone-palace.co.uk

Successful designers will be notified during week commencing Monday 2nd February.



Good luck! We look forward to welcoming you and your creativity at the Scone Palace Garden Fair 2026.

