



V&A Dundee

Garden Futures: Designing with Nature
17 May 2025 – 25 January 2025

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Bosco Verticale, Milan, 2014. Designed by Boeri Studio

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Garden Futures: Designing with Nature

The role that gardens play in all of our lives is celebrated at V&A Dundee's major exhibition for 2025, *Garden Futures: Designing with Nature*, which opens on 17 May. The exhibition is a UK exclusive at V&A Dundee and runs until 25 January 2026.

The exhibition delves into how garden design impacts us all in useful and joyful ways, from providing food through kitchen gardens and the resurgent allotment movement, to inspiring beautiful designs and artworks ranging from William Morris to contemporary videogames. *Garden Futures: Designing with Nature* digs up surprising stories of gardens through time, including creating sanctuaries and empowering communities and individuals to find peace and hope in times of adversity.

More than 400 objects are on display in this vibrant and colour-filled exhibition, which is brought to life through light, sound, texture and a garden scent trail, including the fragrances of rose, jasmine and narcissus.

Garden Futures: Designing with Nature reflects the broad style and variety of gardens across the globe – from a window box to a vast estate – celebrating and exploring every element of what a garden can be. It takes visitors on a journey from Persian garden paradises to the sustainable Oban

Seaweed Gardens, from huge vertical gardens in Milan flourishing in giant concrete apartment blocks to a videogame-inspired garden in China.

Tickets can be booked [online](#). Members and young people aged 18 and under go free.

Garden Futures: Designing with Nature is an exhibition by the Vitra Design Museum, the Wüstenrot Foundation, and the Nieuwe Instituut, supported by Weleda, Gardena and the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust.

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#VADGardenFutures

For media enquiries please contact press@vandadundee.org

Key objects:

Kim Jones for Dior, Spring Summer 2023



The garden of artists Duncan Grant (1885–1978) and Vanessa Bell (1879–1961) at Charleston, Sussex was a living canvas and vital source of inspiration.

It was also a gathering place for the Bloomsbury Group, a collective of progressive writers, creatives and thinkers. Here, they could express their queerness openly, unburdened by the societal constraints of the time.

Kim Jones of Dior was inspired by the story of Charleston to create the Spring Summer 2023 menswear fashion line, blending the radical ideals of the garden with modern couture.

The look here is inspired by garden workwear, incorporating imagery from paintings by Duncan Grant.

Allotments, 2009. © Andrew Buurman



Allotments are small parcels of rented land that have provided space for people in Britain to garden and grow their own food since the Anglo-Saxon period. Although they conjure up a sense of nostalgia for some, in the last decade allotments have continued to grow in popularity and demand, attracting gardeners from all walks of life.

Andrew Buurman's photographs capture the enthusiasm and diversity of modern-day Britain's plot holders. These images document everyday moments at the Uplands Allotments in Birmingham, the UK's largest allotment site. As people look towards more self-sufficient lifestyles, the allotment acts as a centre for community, fun and food.

The Garden Carpet Tapestry



Dovecot Studios commissioned Farshid Moussavi, the Iranian-born and Dundee-trained architect, to design The Garden Carpet Tapestry specially for the exhibition at V&A Dundee.

Woven at the world-renowned tapestry studio in Edinburgh, the design imagines a paradise populated by Scottish plants and wildlife that are at risk, including bats, bogbean and red squirrels.

Persian Tile Panel, 1630-40



Persian *chahar-bagh* ('four-garden') gardens represented paradise on earth. They were typically divided into four sections representing the universe's four classical elements: earth, fire, water and air. The tile panel here, intended for a palace interior, depicts a garden scene rich in symbolic meaning. Themes of fertility and abundance are conveyed through large flower vase motifs, while intertwined trees symbolised the bond between the faithful and the divine.

On loan courtesy of National Museums Scotland. Conserved with Art Fund support in 2021.

The Gardens of Marqueyssac, Dordogne, France, designed in the 1860s



The perfect garden has taken many forms and been shaped by the values and ideas of different societies.

From neatly arranged flowerbeds to wild, untamed meadows, these changing landscapes have been interpreted by countless artists, designers and writers.

Over the centuries, inspired by these creative and philosophical movements, garden designers and owners have attempted to create their own paradise on earth.

William Morris Trellis © William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest



William Morris (1834–96) and the Arts and Crafts movement advocated for beauty, craftsmanship, and functionality in design.

Morris and other like-minded artists, like Scottish architect and designer Robert Lorimer (1864–1929), brought garden imagery into the home interior with patterned wallpaper, furniture, ceramics and textiles.

Their commitment to improving living conditions and promoting social reform inspired the Garden City principles developed by English urban planner Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928) which aimed to create self-sufficient communities in harmony with nature.

Advertisement for Scott's Lawn products in *LIFE Magazine*, 1959



The image of the perfect lawn is ingrained in western culture. Demonstrating a typical belief that nature can be moulded at will, a traditional lawn should be no higher than 3.8 cm, consist of one grass type, be weed-free, have sharp edges and be uniformly coloured.

Meticulously maintained lawns serve as a stage for many activities, from sports to parties. Lawn care products began to market not just products but a life of leisure.

J. Howard Miller, Poster for the Westinghouse War Production Co-ordinating Committee, USA, c. 1942 © Detre Library & Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center



Throughout the 20th century to the present day, gardens have offered a means of survival, refuge and defiance in times of crisis and displacement. They represent stability and routine when the world feels out of control, enabling people to nurture life even in difficult and dangerous times.

During the First and Second World Wars, gardening was promoted as a patriotic act across Europe and North America. Victory Gardens campaigns aimed to boost food production, foster community spirit and reconnect urban societies with their agricultural roots. These initiatives underscored the importance of gardening in creating national resilience during upheaval.

During the Second World War, Victory Gardens in the USA produced up to 40% of the nation's fruit and vegetables.

Mohammad Kabir in the Darul Aman Palace Garden, Kabul, Afghanistan, 2012. © Lalage Snow



British war correspondent and photojournalist Lalage Snow has dedicated many years to photographing gardens in crisis zones and interviewing their creators. Snow's photographs documented in the book *War Gardens* (2018) highlighted how individuals in conflict areas including Afghanistan and Ukraine cultivate gardens as acts of hope, offering moments of peace and normality amongst adversity.

Writer Jamaica Kincaid in her home garden, Vermont, USA. © Rob Woolmington



For Antiguan-American writer Jamaica Kincaid (born 1949), her garden in Vermont, USA, has inspired her to interrogate colonial history, cultural appropriation and displacement, as well as her own life and relationships. As a writer and columnist for *The New Yorker* magazine, she explores these themes, as well as the discoveries and pleasures she gains from the natural world.

Kincaid's work draws a connection between the removal of living organisms from gardens, like pests and unwanted plants, and the ongoing displacement and oppression of people.

Derek Jarman, Prospect Cottage Garden at Dungeness, Kent, UK, designed from 1986. Photo: Howard Sooley, 1993



Artist and filmmaker Derek Jarman (1942-94) moved to Prospect Cottage in Dungeness on Kent's windy, exposed coast in 1986, the same year he was diagnosed as HIV positive.

Jarman's desire to nurture a garden in such an inhospitable landscape might signify his determination to create life when faced with his own mortality. With no fences, as Jarman wrote in his diary, 'my garden's boundaries are the horizon'.

Jarman was one of the leading artists and gay rights activists of his generation. Since his death from an AIDS-related illness in 1994, his cottage and garden have become a site of pilgrimage for artists and garden designers.

‘Guerilla Gardener’ Liz Christy in a New York community garden, 1970s. Photo: Donald Loggins



In 1973, the artist Liz Christy co-founded the Green Guerillas in New York, a group of gardening activists who wanted to claim green space for city residents. The activists distributed flyers and leaflets with instructions for making ‘seed bombs’ as tools of peaceful protest.

To achieve the longest possible range, they recommended using an old Christmas tree ornament or water balloon as the carrier, time-release fertiliser, and wildflower seeds. When thrown over a fence, these ‘grenades’ could transform barren areas into blooming fields.

**The Oudolf Garden designed by Piet Oudolf on the Vitra Campus, Germany, 2020.
© Vitra, Photo: Dejan Jovanovic**



Garden designer Piet Oudolf (born 1944) aims to capture the beauty of nature in all seasons. Oudolf and his wife Anja have tended their own garden in Hummelo in the Netherlands since 1982. It serves as a testing ground for planting designs and ideas.

Whilst many gardens look their best during spring and summer, Oudolf's planting schemes evolve from month to month, providing a sensory experience all year. Believing that 'a plant is only worth growing if it looks good when it is dead', he uses grasses and perennial flowers which bloom each spring but still create rich, colourful landscapes when they die back over winter.

One of Oudolf's recent projects, the Oudolf Garten, was created in 2020 on the Vitra Campus at Vitra Design Museum, Germany. Around 30,000 plants were selected for the garden using a combination of perennial, self-seeding plants, shrubs, grasses, bushes and wildflowers. The design includes the organic shapes and winding paths typical of Oudolf's work, creating a landscape that looks vibrant and naturalistic, but which requires meticulous planning and maintenance.

Garden by Biome Collective



Biome Collective is a Dundee-based creative studio whose work explores gaming, digital art and technology. *Garden* is a first-person adventure game set in a solar system of living, singing plants, threatened by a darkness which is spreading decay.

Every plant is an instrument and each world is a song made by planting different species. Players must transform dying worlds by seeding and nurturing spectacular musical gardens full of life, sound and joy. The game encourages us to expand our idea of what a garden can be, even into virtual worlds.

Mekane Meskel, South Gondar, Ethiopia, 2018. © Kieran Dodds



Less than 100 years ago, vast forests covered 40% of the Ethiopian Highlands. As the population grew and more farmland was needed, the forests were cleared, leaving only the groves surrounding Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Churches.

Symbolically, these groves provide a protective canopy for the sacred buildings at their centre and represent the church's belief that humans are caretakers of nature. They are also oases of biodiversity, helping to sustain the region's soil fertility and, by extension, the welfare of local farming communities.

Featured in the exhibition is a map representing church forest locations in Ethiopia's Amhara province.

Scottish photographer Kieran Dodds created the map using data from researchers who have located 11,353

forests, each managed and maintained by a local community. They urgently require protection to prevent them shrinking any further.

Maggie's Dundee



Maggie's is a UK-wide charity providing practical and psychological support to people living with cancer and their families. Maggie's centres and their gardens are designed to aid both physical and mental wellbeing, with some centres running gardening therapy groups.

In all seasons and weathers, each garden must provide visitors with privacy, peace and space for contemplation. Being able to see the moving, changing landscape outside can provide comfort during moments of turmoil and distress, with the garden acting as a reminder that we are all part of a living world.

For the garden at Maggie's Dundee, Arabella Lennox-Boyd (born 1938) designed a labyrinth based on the famous example at Chartres Cathedral in France. It represents the winding, often uncertain path through life and provides the ideal setting for wellness activities such as yoga and mindfulness walks.

In the spring of 2025, the grounds around the centre were refreshed using Lennox-Boyd's updated planting scheme. The new design advances the garden's original ethos, using fragrant plants and flowering trees to create a peaceful, reflective space.

Rewild the Run trainers, 2023. © Kiki Grammatopoulos



Rewild the Run trainer soles take inspiration from plants and animals to imagine how city dwellers can help rewild urban environments.

Their texture mimics the bristly seeds of the cocklebur and grapple plant, which are dispersed by hooking onto the fur of wild animals.

The sole's hoof-like design highlights the important role of large animals such as bison in creating healthy ecosystems, transporting plants and seeds when they create pathways through forests and grasslands.

By wearing these shoes, people can promote biodiversity on their daily run.

Phoebe English x Rootfull © Rootfull



By harnessing the natural growth process of plants, British designer Zena Holloway has developed an innovative biomaterial. Rootfull is a completely biodegradable fabric produced by growing wheatgrass roots onto carved beeswax templates. The roots bond together to form a flexible yet durable material. Holloway's work aims to reduce the environmental impact of the fashion and interior design industries.

This garment is the result of a research collaboration with fashion designer Phoebe English in 2024-25, with whom Holloway has worked to design and grow a custom outfit.

The material growing process, crafted from water, grass seed and dead-stock cotton fabric, took 12 days to come to life and the dress was created without stitching, relying solely on a series of knots and ties for construction.

Self-watering plant pots, POTR, 2025



Scottish designers Andrew Flynn and Martin Keane founded POTR with the mission to make gardening more environmentally conscious and accessible. Made from recycled plastic either destined for landfill or collected from UK beaches, POTR plant pots use 95% less material than traditional concrete or ceramic planters.

The origami-inspired design means they can be shipped using carbon-saving flat packed delivery without plastic packaging and at the end of their life the pots can be fully recycled.

Using a QR code on POTR packaging, customers can trace the journey of the plastic used in each plant pot, right back to the exact beach where it was collected as marine waste.

Bosco Verticale, Milan, 2014. Designed by Boeri Studio



The Bosco Verticale, or vertical forest, in Milan is a residential skyscraper that is not only home to humans.

Botanist Laura Gatti selected 20 tree and 80 plant species that were grown and ‘trained’ for life on the 111-metre tower. Its vegetation cleans the air, promotes biodiversity and provides habitats for birds and insects, as well as benefiting residents of the building by filtering sunlight, noise and air pollution.

Vertical Forest by Boeri Studio was completed in 2014 and has received major international awards and in 2025 was listed as one of Milan’s ten iconic buildings by The New York Times.

Pollinator Pathmaker, Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg



Gardens look very different from an insect’s point of view. Insects can see different parts of the colour spectrum and have evolved features which allow them to feed from specific flowers. It is vital

that there are enough suitable habitats for pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies, which are key to maintaining diverse ecosystems and the survival of wild plants.

British artist Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg's *Pollinator Pathmaker* uses an algorithm to design gardens for pollinating insects, rather than people.

From beginners to experienced gardeners, members of the public can use this digital tool to transform their gardens into living artworks in which other species can flourish.

The first large gardens to be designed using the *Pollinator Pathmaker* tool opened in 2022 Eden Project and Serpentine Garden in London.

(Ends)

For media enquiries please contact press@vandadundee.org

V&A Dundee

V&A Dundee is Scotland's design museum. Designed for everyone – firing imaginations and sparking curiosity in design in Scotland and around the world, from the heart of Dundee's reimagined waterfront.

Conceived as a 21st century museum and designed by Kengo Kuma, V&A Dundee is a place of activity and energy, presenting spectacular exhibitions and a range of vibrant design experiences across our building, plaza and city. V&A Dundee brings design from all over the world to Scotland and gives a new voice and platform to Scottish design and designers.

V&A Dundee is part of the V&A family of museums, supported by Scottish Government and our founding partnership of V&A, Dundee City Council, the University of Dundee, Abertay University and Scottish Enterprise.

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