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PRESS PACK

The Asthma + Lung UK Breathing Space Garden - MA322

Designed by Angus Thompson

Angus Thompson brings the Japanese principle of 'Yohaku no bi' to RHS Chelsea 2026 with the Asthma + Lung UK – Breathing Space Garden



Award-winning garden designer [Angus Thompson](#) returns to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026 with the [Asthma + Lung UK](#) – Breathing Space Garden — a contemplative woodland-edge sanctuary inspired by the Japanese concept of Yohaku no bi, the beauty of empty space.

Designed as a place for pause, reflection and reconnection, the garden invites visitors to slow down, breathe deeply and experience the restorative power of nature.

Sponsored by grant-giving charity [Project Giving Back](#), the garden is inspired by the work of [Asthma + Lung UK](#) and the lived experiences of people living with lung conditions — for whom every breath can feel uncertain. Its design reflects their strength, resilience, and the need for a calm, supportive 'breathing space' in which to recover, reflect and reconnect with their breath and body.

An empathy led design

One in five people in the UK will develop a lung condition during their lifetime, and this



ANGUS THOMPSON

project is rooted in deeply personal connections. Angus' wife, **Kate Binnie**, is a researcher and therapist in palliative and respiratory care and runs breathing therapy groups for **Asthma + Lung UK**. Kate's daughter lives with asthma, and her late mother experienced severe breathlessness, and the garden's contractor, [Dan Flynn](#), recently lost his mother to a lung condition.

These shared experiences shaped an empathy-led approach. Angus and the team worked closely with clinicians and patients at [Breathing Space lung rehabilitation centre in Rotherham](#), where the garden will be permanently relocated, and consulted with Asthma + Lung UK's community to understand what a therapeutic garden could most meaningfully offer.

The response was clear - the need for a 'breathing space — somewhere to pause, recover breathing confidence, and connect with both people and nature.



Angus Thompson – Credit: Rachel Warne

A contemporary Japanese influence

This inspired Angus (left) to draw on the Japanese concept of *yohaku no bi* — the beauty of empty space — a design philosophy that values uncluttered restraint, reducing visual noise and allowing both mind and body to rest in space and time.

The Design

Rather than a traditional Japanese garden, the design offers a modern interpretation of Japanese aesthetic principles. A calming woodland-edge planting palette of predominantly greens and whites is punctuated with subtle touches of pink and orange, creating seasonal interest without overwhelming the senses.

Notable plants include *Carex Kyoto*, *Teucrium scorodonia* 'Crispum', *Hydrangea aspera*, *Pilea matsudae* 'Taiwan Silver', *Scleranthus uniflorus*, *Boehmeria Nivea*, *Euonymus planipes* and *Sorbaria sorbifolia* 'Sem'. (see plant list **from page 7**)

A large, cantilevered carbon-neutral concrete platform sits at the heart of the garden, from which water subtly flows into an informal pool. Slightly elevated, it provides open space for breath-based movement practices such as gentle yoga and tai chi. The



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platform is constructed using an innovative new carbon-neutral concrete, marking its first use at RHS Chelsea.

Two sculptural ***Pinus sylvestris***, affectionately known as ‘*The Brothers*’, anchor the space. Rescued from wetlands in the Netherlands by nursery [Solitair](#), their unusually flat root balls and gnarled forms reflect years of growth in high groundwater conditions. Chosen for both their character and symbolic strength, pines have been central to Japanese garden design since the Shogun period and are also associated with lung health through their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Cultural Exchange and horticultural expertise

To ensure authenticity and sensitivity in the garden’s planting, Angus is honoured to be supported by renowned Japanese horticulturist [Midori Shintani](#), former head gardener of [Tokachi Millennium Forest](#) in Hokkaido, alongside colleague Shintaro Sasagawa from Japan. Their involvement brings a valuable cultural and horticultural depth and authenticity to the project.

Innovative and sustainable materials

Sustainability underpins every aspect of the garden. The central platform has been engineered by [AKT Structural Engineers](#) using a net zero concrete designed by **Tarmac** and created with state-of-the-art carbon reduction innovations including **ACLA**, a carbon negative aggregate manufactured using biochar by **Low Carbon Materials** and calcined clay — a world-first and potential game-changer for landscape and construction industries.

The ACLA biochar also enables three distinct surface finishes across the garden: a smooth polished platform, textured pathway setts for improved grip, and a polished exposed aggregate at the canopy edge where the biochar is clearly revealed — adding material depth and a legibility to the design that rewards a closer look.

In a further layer of design detail, **coal dust sweepings from the UK’s last decommissioned coal-fired power station, Radcliffe Power Station**, have been recycled into a resin plinth, referencing Rotherham’s industrial and mining heritage and the region’s historically high rates of lung disease. The plinth supports a 1.2 metre tall, abstracted “lungs” sculpture by acclaimed Kent-based sculptor [Oliver Barratt](#). The sculpture speaks of containment and flow - a narrative that runs through the garden.

The sandstone boulders are sourced from Cadeby quarry in Yorkshire — the same local stone used at the Rotherham rebuild site, connecting Chelsea directly to the garden’s permanent home.



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Recycled oxygen cylinders

As a garden inspired by the often hidden difficulties of living with breathlessness, the material choices have been guided accordingly. In a pleasing full-circle gesture, repurposed oxygen cylinders — vital sources of breath support — become the structural elements of the floating “Breathing Space” platform. Once functional medical apparatus, they take on a new role, raising the platform into the air. Stripped of their coating, the cylinders have been reworked into an 8m-long honeycomb structure. At its centre, a larger steel half-pipe creates a water outlet, pouring into an informal pool below.

A garden grounded in evidence

The Breathing Space garden embodies practical elements grounded in Kate’s clinical practice and PhD research (Hull York Medical School) which has shaped every element of Angus’ design.

The charred timber boundary fence, with its pattern of six boards to four, encodes a rectangular breathing rhythm — an evidenced technique in which a longer exhalation activates the body’s natural calming systems, reducing anxiety and improving breathing efficiency. The accessible path and steps were designed with the Breathing Space physiotherapy team to encourage gentle movement whilst offering regular poise points.

“You cannot think your way out of breathlessness-related anxiety,” says Kate. “But you can create a calm, spacious environment in which the body’s nervous system finds its own way back to easier breathing. That is what this garden offers visitors”

During the build and show week, Kate has/will be sharing breathing practices on the Breathing Space platform. The garden’s brochure links directly through a QR code to *Find your own Breathing Space* tips on the A+LUK website to support people living with lung conditions to find breathing ease: [Breathing Ease Practices | Asthma + Lung UK](#)

Raising awareness through design

Speaking about the garden, **Angus Thompson says**, *“We want this garden to raise awareness of the invisible impact of breathlessness and to highlight breath health and wellbeing for all. We hope visitors to RHS Chelsea take a moment to pause, experience calm and clarity, and notice their own breathing — and to reflect on the human right to a future with greener, cleaner air.”*



ANGUS THOMPSON



Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive at Asthma + Lung UK

added, “We are hugely grateful to Project Giving Back for gifting us this inspiring garden and to Angus and the team for creating such a thoughtful space. Access to green space supports both mental and physical wellbeing, yet too many communities — particularly in more deprived areas — face barriers to healthy lungs and green open spaces.”

“For people living with lung conditions, every breath can feel uncertain. We hope this garden inspires reflection on

how vital it is to breathe freely and encourages support for projects that green our polluted cities and promote clean air for all.”

A lasting Legacy for Lung Health

Following RHS Chelsea, the garden will be permanently relocated to the specialist [Breathing Space lung rehabilitation centre in Rotherham](#) which is supported by Asthma + Lung UK. Rotherham is one of the UK’s worst-affected areas for lung-related hospital admissions. Here, the **Asthma + Lung UK - Breathing Space Garden** will offer therapeutic support for people living with lung conditions, as well as a place of respite for the staff and caregivers who support them.

For Further information about Asthma + Lung UK please visit www.asthmaandlung.org.uk

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Media enquiries

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About [Angus Thomson Design](#)

Angus Thompson runs an award-winning landscape and garden design practice based in Oxford with projects across the UK. He has worked closely with contractor Dan Flynn (multiple Chelsea award winner) for most of his career.



ANGUS THOMPSON

Angus graduated from the Inchbald School of Garden Design, London, receiving the Principal's Award in 2004. Awards include the Gold Medal-winning 'Nature Ascending' garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2009. Angus has developed a reputation for creating beautiful, multilayered gardens of quiet elegance and his uncluttered design approach is best described as 'quietly contemporary', exploring natural plant communities and materials with crisp detailing, textural contrasts and reflective water. Angus holds a commitment to simplicity and sustainability.

For more information visit: www.angusthompsondesign.com

Dan Flynn has been building at Chelsea for almost 29 years starting with Merrist wood college in 1989, then 5 main avenue gardens with Clifton Nurseries before he started Gardenlink, building Angus' garden in 2009 winning gold for Nature Ascending, followed by best in show for Jehae Hwang's Artisan garden in 2011 and again with Jehae in 2012 winning gold and the President's award. More recently he built and relocated the Blue Peter garden in 2022.

About Asthma + Lung UK

Asthma + Lung UK is the only charity in the UK fighting for everyone with a lung condition, aiming for a world where everyone can breathe with healthy lungs. We fund cutting-edge research and provide advice and support for the 12 million people who will get a lung condition during their lifetime. We also campaign for clean air and for better NHS diagnosis and treatment. For further information visit asthmaandlung.org.uk.

About Project Giving Back

Project Giving Back (PGB) is a unique grant-making charity that provides funding for gardens for good causes at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. PGB was launched in May 2021 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects on UK charitable fundraising - effects that have since been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis. PGB will fund 11 gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2026 and will have funded a total of 63 gardens inspired by a range of good causes from 2022 to 2026. PGB funding offers UK-based good causes an opportunity to raise awareness of their work at the high-profile RHS Chelsea Flower Show, as well as supporting the relocation of the gardens to permanent homes after the show where they can continue to benefit the charities and their communities. Find out more at www.givingback.org.uk.



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Plant List - The Asthma + Lung UK Breathing Space Garden

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Feature Trees

Pinus sylvestris

Shrubs/small trees

Acer japonicum aconitifolium

Cryptomeria japonica

Euonymus planipes

Hydrangeas — various

Perennials, Grasses & Ferns

Acaena magellanica

Actaea simplex Brunette

Adiantum pedatum (Imbricatum)

Ajuga reptans Catlins Giant

Alchemilla alpina

Amsonia tabernaemontana

Anemone leveillei

Anemone multifida syn A. magellanica

Anthericum lilago (racemosum)

Aquilegia caerulea Spring Magic Blue

Arisaema consanguineum

Aruncus Horatio

Aruncus Misty Lace

Asarum caudatum

Asarum europaeum

Asplenium scolopendrium (Undulatum)

Astilbe Europa

Bergenia cordifolia Ballawley



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Blechnum penna marina
Boehmeria nivea
Boehmeria platanifolia
Brunnera Betty Bowring
Carex ex Kyoto
Carex muskingumensis
Chloranthus sessifolius Domino
Cirsium Trevors Blue Wonder
Clematis recta purpurea
Corydalis flexuosa Blue Heron
Corydalis flexuosa Craighton Blue / Korns
Cyrtomium falcatum
Darmera peltata
Disporum Green Giant
Dryopteris affinis
Dryopteris erythrosora (prolifera)
Dryopteris sieboldii
Epimedium Amber Queen
Epimedium grandiflorum White Queen
Epimedium Spine Tingler
Equisetum hyemale
Euonymus fortunei kewensis
Euphorbia arendsii
Euphorbia ceratocarpa
Euphorbia oblongata
Euphorbia wallichii (cornigera)
Farfugium giganteum
Fatsia polycarpa Green Fingers
Fatshedera lizei
Geranium phaeum Joseph Green
Geranium Sanne



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Geum Savannah Sunset
Hakonechloa macra
Heuchera Greenfinch
Hosta Devon Green
Iris ensata
Iris laevigata
Iris sibirica Butter and Sugar
Iris sibirica Shirley Pope
Iris sibirica Silver Edge
Lamium orvala
Laserpitium siler
Libertia grandiflora / chilensis
Lilium hansonii orange
Lilium martagon Deep Pink
Lysimachia nummularia
Mathiasella bupleroides Green Dream
Matteuccia struthiopteris
Meum athamanticum
Miscanthus sinensis Gracillimus
Mukdenia rossii Karasuba
Narcissus poeticus var recurvus
Ophiopogon japonicum
Osmunda regalis
Paeonia White Wings / emodii
Persicaria affinis Superba
Peucedanum cervaria
Pilea matsudae Taiwan Silver
Podophyllum Spotty Dotty
Polygonatum Betberg
Polygonatum odoratum
Polygonatum verticillatum



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Polygonatum verticillatum Himalayan Giant

Primula bulleyana

Primula pulverulenta

Prunella vulgaris

Rodgersia pinnata Superba

Rodgersia podophylla Braunlaub

Sanguisorba Lum

Scleranthus biflorus

Seseli libanotis

Sesleria heufleriana

Sorbaria sorbifolia Sem

Spiraea betulifolia albiflora

Tellima grandiflora

Tellima grandiflora Rubra

Teucrium scorodonia Crispum

Thalictrum Black Stockings

Triteleia Queen Fabiola

Veratrum nigrum