

# Family Monsters Garden

RHS Chelsea Flower Show artisan gardens, site 567



## Family Monsters Garden wins gold and Best Artisan Garden at Chelsea Flower Show

**The garden aims to get families talking about everyday pressures or 'family monsters'**

**Monty Don says he "loves the simplicity of the garden"**

***photo: Alistair Bayford with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge ([high res download](#))***

The Family Monsters Garden, shown in the artisan section at RHS Chelsea Flower Show this year (20-25 May 2019), has won a Gold Medal and named Best Artisan garden.

Designed by Alistair Bayford the Family Monsters Garden celebrates 150 years of the national charity Family Action supporting families across the country and 100 years of idverde, which creates and maintains landscapes for the benefit of local communities, such as parks and gardens.

The Family Monsters Garden is designed to get people talking about the everyday pressures all families face, but can find difficult to talk about. Research for Family Action found the top five pressures on family life today are money, health & wellness, work & education, spending quality time together and relationships. The charity says families need to find ways to talk about these 'family monsters' to stop them from becoming overwhelming, as illustrated in the Family Monsters Project film.

idverde's Alistair Bayford designed the Family Monsters Garden to encourage people to reflect on their pressures and to bring families together. The garden is full of symbolism, such as using trees with obvious imperfections to convey how families can grow together after tackling challenges, and using boulders and pebbles of different shapes and sizes to represent different family monsters becoming smaller by talking about them.

The Family Monsters Garden also includes a range of plants and habitats for Britain's native wildlife, attracting the urban wildlife in the Royal Chelsea Hospital grounds.

The Family Monsters Garden has created opportunities to develop horticulture skills for some of idverde's professional apprentices and those involved in Family Action's ESCAPE project in Norfolk, which supports people with issues around rural isolation or disability and mental health. Growing plants and making a willow sculpture for Chelsea Flower Show was something people at ESCAPE say was beyond their wildest dreams, and the team of idverde's apprentices who worked on the build have gained valuable experience in creating and maintaining green spaces.

After the show, the Family Monsters Garden will be relocated to Silkmore Children's Centre in Stafford, where it will continue to benefit local families, community and wildlife in the long term. Once in place, children will be able to play in the garden while at other times it will be a quiet space for parental learning or reflection. It is hoped that local community volunteers will enjoy learning how to look after the magnificent garden, which is next-door to a primary school.



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One of Family Action's founders, Octavia Hill, campaigned in the 1880s for urban families to have access to green, open spaces for their health and wellbeing. In 1919 the MP George Courthope and Colonel Jocelyn Brudenell Pelham (6th Earl of Chichester) set up an association to grow and manage woodlands sustainably for future generations. That association evolved and grew into idverde, managing thousands of parks and green spaces.

**idverde Operations Director and designer of the garden, Alistair Bayford, said:** "Bringing this garden to Chelsea has been a real privilege. I'm ecstatic that we've won a gold medal and have been awarded Best Artisan Garden - there's no feeling like it. It's important that we all talk more about the pressures our families face, and it's been a great experience for the 22 apprentices who've helped build the Family Monsters Garden alongside the team from Family Action's project in Swaffham."

**Family Action Chief Executive, David Holmes, CBE said:** "Every family has its monsters and we've been helping families deal with their pressures for 150 years. We hope this wonderful garden, which is full of symbolism, will encourage families to come together and talk about their family monsters. The more we do so, the better we can all face the challenges of life together, rather than pretending everything is okay. We all have everyday problems in our families that, like the boulders representing family monsters, can become more manageable simply by talking."

**idverde CEO, Doug Graham, said:** "Our mutual anniversaries are a perfect opportunity for Family Action and idverde to demonstrate our shared commitment to stronger families and communities and the green spaces they rely upon. It's also created a wonderful opportunity for our professionals and Family Action's allotment growers to work together to develop their skills and passion for horticulture - and we're proud of that there will be a lasting legacy when the Family Monsters Garden relocates to its new home at the Silkmore Children's Centre in Stafford."

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For more information or to set up an interview, please contact Jane Elston at Family Action during office hours on [media-pr@family-action.org.uk](mailto:media-pr@family-action.org.uk) or phone 020 7241 7621. Outside of office hours, please phone 07903 074 174.

## Notes to editor

Further press material is available via Dropbox <http://tiny.cc/FamilyMonstersGardenmedia>:

- Planting and supplier details are in the Family Monsters Garden leaflet
- Press photography of the garden + three generations of one family in the garden
- Family Monsters Project film + time-lapses of the corten steel construction and garden build
- Photography of the Family Action projects involved in Chelsea, located in deprived regions
- Alistair's blogs and vlogs about the creation of the garden
- Family Monster Project, idverde and Family Action logos + design sketches

**Family Action** is a national charity marking its 150th anniversary in 2019. Around 45,000 families and hundreds of thousands of children are supported by Family Action every year. Its wide-ranging work includes a new helpline - FamilyLine, help for parents-to-be, the provision of Children's Centres, intensive family support, emotional health and wellbeing services, counselling, mediation and therapies, support in schools - including the provision of breakfast clubs and holiday hunger support, and financial grants



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programmes. Family Action is also recognised as a leading provider of training and consultancy. Registered Charity Number: 264 713

**Family Action's ESCAPE project** was set up to help individuals and families in the Swaffham area of Norfolk. It is an eco-therapy project based around a community allotment and orchard, which is open to all members of the local community and is run by trained volunteers. Gardening and other activities on offer at ESCAPE aim to increase the self-esteem, independence and wellbeing of people who are experiencing social or economic isolation, or who have disabilities or mental health conditions. Between 60 to 80 people participate each week. In April, the team began work on a new site in Kings Lynn, expanding the reach of the programme.

**Silkmore children's centre** in Stafford is run by Family Action on behalf of Stafford County Council. It is attached to a primary school, in the heart of the community. As well as fun activities for under-fives such as singing and drama, the children's centre offers families a range of services, including parenting classes, baby clinics, breast feeding support and counselling sessions for older children. As well as being a space for children and parents to play, reflect and learn, it is hoped the Family Monsters Garden will draw more families to the centre and create opportunities for local community volunteers to learn how to care for it.

**idverde** is the leading green service provider in the UK and is celebrating its centenary in 2019. It offer services in amenity horticulture, focusing on parks and open space management, grounds maintenance, tree surgery, street cleansing and landscape design and build, plus civil engineering and winter services. In 2017 idverde brought the Mind Trap garden designed by Ian Price to Chelsea 2017 winning a gold medal.

**Alistair Bayford** is a Chartered Landscape Architect with diverse and wide-ranging experience in the design, build and management of landscapes and public realm. Having studied at Writtle College and the University of Greenwich becoming a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in 2008, Alistair leads professional services and landscape construction throughout London and the South East for idverde, winning nine BALI Awards in the past six years. He has previous experience designing and building at RHS Shows in 2004, 2006, and 2007.

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