

***The Finnish Soul Garden* at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2020 - the most prestigious show in the world**

The Finnish Soul Garden, by way of displaying a variety of indigenous plants in their natural seaside habitat, celebrates the International Year of Plant Health 2020 and the 40th anniversary of coming into force of the first Convention of The Protection of the Baltic Sea Area, the Helsinki Convention.



THE GARDEN

The setting is comprised of a sauna with a cool-off area and a seaside garden as a recreational facility for the inhabitants of the city, provided by the City of Helsinki Culture and Leisure Division. The garden is situated in the proximity of the city's main public beach on a secluded peninsula.

The main focus is on the natural Baltic seaside vegetation and scenery with a planted, secluded cool-off area for recreational use for small group bookings. From inside the sauna and the garden there is an open view to the sea and nearby islands. The west-facing garden provides plenty of light and a view towards sunset. It is a haven with an atmosphere of relaxation, recuperation and recreation.

The key features are a modern version of a traditional Finnish sauna with a green roof and a water feature, which depicts the open sea in front of the sauna and the garden. There is a wooden wall behind the garden to give shelter and intimacy. The area is surrounded by natural vegetation. There will also be large rocks which can be found in most coastal areas of the Baltic Sea on the Northern shores of the Gulf of Finland.

The garden will recreate the natural green seaside nature and in the planted cool-off area, the colours of the traditional summer flowers, red blue and white will be present. The green meadow roof of the sauna has benefitted from years of research on green roofs by the University of

Helsinki Fifth Dimension research group. The recycled swathes of forest undergrowth with the soil, rescued from construction sites, is a new approach towards creating natural planted areas in a garden.

The garden will reflect traditional seaside life and communality in harmony with the surrounding nature. The Nordic tradition of seaside life has continued virtually unchanged for centuries. It is still alive and well and enjoyed in Finland - even in the urban setting of the capital city on the unique brackish inland sea, the Baltic Sea.

THE FINNISH SOUL GARDEN TEAM

The main sponsor of the garden, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland** is delighted that for the second consecutive year a garden will be designed by the renowned Finnish landscape designer Taina Suonio at the Chelsea Flower Show 2020. Ms Jaana Husu-Kallio, Permanent Secretary at the ministry, said that the proposed garden by Taina Suonio "is a demonstration of the clean and quiet environment of Finland and offers a unique window to the Finnish soul". Finland, which has been at the forefront of declaring the year 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health has made it a priority to protect its horticulture and the environment against the devastating effects of invasive plant pests and diseases in order to give also future Finnish generations the opportunity to enjoy its unspoilt nature.

After the inaugural Finnish garden at the CFS 2019, **The Embassy of Finland, London**, are very excited that Finland will yet again be represented at CFS 2020. There is no better opportunity to showcase Finnish plants, Finnish garden design know-how and Finns' love of nature combined with urban living. Taina Suonio's design represents all the things that are important to Finnish people and we hope that international audiences will discover the reason why we are the happiest country in the world 2019!

The Finnish-British Chamber of Commerce are excited and honoured to be working with designer Taina Suonio and this incredible group of Finnish companies on this project. We look forward to seeing how the Nordic Heritage Urban Seaside Garden comes alive and brings a small piece of Finland to the Chelsea Flower Show. This is an incredible collaboration and promotes Finland and Finnish expertise in a unique way.

City of Vantaa, located in the capital region, right next to Helsinki, sees itself as a modern, family-oriented city offering its inhabitants plenty of natural spaces and unspoilt nature rich in biodiversity. The City wants to be at the forefront of sustainable development towards carbon-neutrality and it is proud to be associated with the Finnish Soul Garden, which promotes plant health and Finnish way of life.

Loimaan Kivi Company, pioneers of Finnish stone refining, have always over the course of the 100 years of its history represented traditional values. We are particularly proud of our main raw material, the Finnish granite, for lasting solutions in the world of construction. We at Loimaan Kivi are absolutely delighted to be part of the Chelsea Flower Show again and to bring a piece of Finnish bedrock to Taina's seaside garden.

OmaSauna are a provider of authentic Finnish saunas and sauna experiences for more balanced and healthier lives. Our saunas are carefully hand-crafted and designed in Finland from high-quality materials so that your OmaSauna experience will be enjoyable - every time!

The Finnish trees and plants of the garden, e.g. *Alnus incana f. laciniata* 'Johanna', *Salix Fragilis* 'Bullata', *Rosa blanda* 'Tarja Halonen', named after Finland's first female president and *Rosa pimpinellifolia* 'Tove Jansson' will be supplied by the nursery **Taimisto Huutokoski Ltd**. As the northernmost nursery in Europe, we produce among other plants a lot of trees that are exceptionally adaptable for harsh winters and we are specialised in trees for cities, says Arttu Haverinen.

Speaking of trees growing in the harsh climate of the North and the superior quality that the conditions contribute to, plywood used in the garden, like last year, will be supplied by Finnish **UPM Plywood**, the leading plywood supplier in Europe.

Kekkilä Garden and **Hasselfors Garden** are part of Kekkilä-BVB, one of the leading manufacturers of high-end growing media in Europe. Sustainability is at the heart of Kekkilä-BVB with an ambition for global biodiversity and sustainable growing practises. For the 2020 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, we will e.g. provide The Finnish Soul Garden design with a composter, grow boxes, decorative stones and substrate for both the garden and the green roof.

The garden furniture by the internationally acclaimed designer, **Tapio Anttila**, displays his clean-lined, simple and functional Skandinavian design style, using mainly metal, wood, concrete, rattan and textile in varying combinations. The Garden Furniture is produced by Finnish **Nordic Country Home**.

The Strawartist **Pirjo Vaisanen** from **Studio Oljikko** uses natural materials in her art. The technique is from traditional Finnish Christmas decoration called "himmeli", which is made of rye straw. The three art works in the Finnish Soul garden are made of reed, which is a better material for the outdoor, because it tolerates humid air and variations of temperature.

The Garden will be constructed by the award-winning landscaping company Conquest Creative Spaces and the plants acquired from the UK come from the renowned Hortus Loci. The planting and the final touches will, as a matter of course, be by the designer her team.

THE DESIGNER

Taina Suonio is a horticulturist, environmental biologist, landscape designer and researcher in the Fifth Dimension - Green Roofs in Urban Areas research group at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research concentrates particularly on the environmental change and policy with regard to green roofs in urban areas. She is currently working on the Green Roof Strategy for the 4th largest city in Finland, Vantaa. She also lectures at various educational institutions on green roofs, gardening and design, and writes articles in gardening magazines on matters relating to horticulture, gardening, landscaping and the environment.

In 2019 Taina came to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show as the first ever Finnish designer and first ever Nordic female designer. She was awarded a Silver-gilt for her garden "The Roots in Finland Kyrö Garden" in the Space to Grow category. After the Show, the garden was incorporated in the garden of the Finnish Embassy in Belgravia, London.

For over fourteen years Taina worked for leading British garden designers; Carol Klein, Andy Sturgeon, Thomas Hoblyn, Paul Stone, Nigel Dunnett, Catherine MacDonald, Mark Gregory and Jo Thompson. She was mainly in charge of the planting team and plant composition on several award-winning designs at the Chelsea Flower Show.

She is the "mother" and plant and landscape designer of the Greenest of the Green (internationally awarded block of 121 flats) -project in Helsinki, completed in 2017. The housing project combines green walls and roof gardens with research of both the plants and environmental aspects as well as the sociological impact of the shared greenery on the community living in the building.

Taina is constantly busy designing and working on biodiversity-supporting roof gardens, gardens and greeneries in urban settings. Many of them are in notable locations in the capital region. Her most recent urban communal roof garden and yard designs - with e.g. rooftop meadows, kitchen garden and urban runoff pools - are for a housing development in Espoo, the 2nd largest city in Finland and the National Housing Fair development area in Vantaa. In London she worked with Professor Nigel Dunnett to create the "dreamy and magical" Barbican Centre roof garden.

Taina is currently a member of the Executive Board of the Scandinavian Green Infrastructure Association (SGIA) since 2015. Her previous positions of trust include the Deputy Chair of the VYL, the Chairperson of the Garden Builders' Association (Puutarhanrakentajat ry) as well as the Chair of Finnish Horticulturists' Association. She was a member of the Executive Committee of the Urban Diversity research project (2010-2013), coordinated by the University of Tampere and also worked as a subject matter expert for the "Deck and Roof Gardens and Green Roofs Committee" on the renewal of Finland's national building code.

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