

Ann-marie powell

2 MIN READ

A QUICK CHAT WITH...

The garden designer, TV presenter and aauthor on the magic of nurturing plants

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Ann-Marie's award-winning garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show





Low-maintenance poppy 'Lauren's Grape'
PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY; OLIVER DIXON; GETTY; PENNY WALKER

THE GREAT OUTDOORS IS MY HAVEN.

I loved playing outdoors as a child – I'd always be in fields and parks, often climbing trees. But it wasn't until my early twenties when I dropped out of studying textile design and went travelling in Asia and Central America that I really fell in love with landscape. Captivated by the breathtaking scenery and colours, I was in awe of how Mother Nature 'whirled her skirts'. It was a turning point for me. Once home, I enrolled at Capel Manor College in London to study garden design and hard landscaping alongside additional brickwork courses.

I'M SO PROUD OF BUILDING MY BUSINESS.

Being self-employed since 1998 has been seriously hard work, but I love what I do. Jules, my husband, is incredible, giving up his job to raise our two sons while I built my garden design business, which includes presenting at seminars, workshops and TV shows as well as writing books and features. I've just been commissioned to write my sixth gardening book. At the RHS Chelsea Flower Show back in May this year, it was a real privilege to celebrate Octavia Hill, the social reformer and co-founder of the National Trust, in my wildlife garden. The Florence Nightingale of landscape, she believed, like me, that everyone needs access to nature-rich public spaces. Receiving a Silver-Gilt Medal, the BBC People's Choice Award and the RHS Children's Choice Award was extraordinary. If I can spread even a bit of the joy I feel from gardening, hopefully that may help someone else make their life a little better.

MY GARDEN IS A LIVING PINBOARD OF IDEAS.

I'm always experimenting with plants and enjoy the mechanics of gardening – especially sowing seeds in my neighbour's greenhouse, as I don't have one myself. During the first Covid lockdown, I launched My Real Garden (@myrealgarden) on Instagram. Amassing a huge following, it has become a supportive community sharing ideas and tips. My book of the same name (below right), published in 2021, tells the stories of hundreds of gardeners.

‘My motivator is showing people the beauty and fragility of the natural world’

SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE A BETTER PLANET.

There are lots of little ways we can all make a difference. For example, when my team and I are building a garden, we have a 'no skip' policy; we recycle hard landscaping materials as a subbase for design projects. At home, you can reuse yogurt pots and fruit cartons as seed trays, water your patio pots with washing-up water and be less tidy in the garden to encourage more wildlife. If everyone planted a small tree, imagine the difference it could make to improving biodiversity. One of my biggest motivators is showing people the beauty, fragility and importance of the natural world.

A connection to the earth is innate in all of us, and looking into the future in a positive way by nurturing plants is magical.