# Chelsea Flower Show breaks tradition with sustainable funeral floristry exhibit



This year's Chelsea Flower Show has introduced an unexpected feature that has sparked deep emotional responses from visitors: a funeral floristry exhibit, marking a significant departure from the traditional celebratory atmosphere typically associated with the event. For the first time in its 112-year history, the show showcases a poignant installation that includes a willow coffin, gravestones, and a moving wire sculpture of a man with his dog, all designed to provoke reflection and dialogue about death and remembrance.

The exhibit, created by The Farewell Flowers Directory, emerges as a response to the stagnation in traditional funeral floral design, which has remained largely unchanged for decades. Co-founder Gill Hodgson highlighted the environmental considerations inherent in their work, stating, “Funeral flowers haven’t altered for 50 years. The designs haven’t altered and they’re based in floral foam which is plastic.” The installation seeks to challenge this norm, offering an alternative that is both visually stunning and sustainable. Crafted entirely from British-grown cut flowers and free from plastic floral foam, the exhibit presents a vibrant arrangement that celebrates life rather than simply mourning it.

In keeping with the ethos of sustainability, the flowers are arranged in glass jugs filled with water, a deliberate choice to maintain shape while honouring ecological principles. The standout features, including personal tributes such as walking boots filled with gardens of flowers and a shareable casket arrangement, serve to personalise grief in a way that resonates deeply with attendees. Hodgson noted that many have found themselves in tears upon encountering the display, expressing that “it’s nice that people can be moved.” This suggests a shift in how society engages with themes of loss—viewing them not solely through a lens of sadness but also as opportunities for celebration and meaningful reflection.

The installation received a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show, a testament to its innovative approach to an often-overlooked aspect of floristry. Queen Camilla herself was seen admiring the exhibit, an endorsement that reflects a growing recognition of the importance of addressing death and grief in contemporary society.

Mathew Crawley, Chief Executive of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, noted the enduring significance of such conversations, stating, “The Farewell Flowers Directory champions a simple but transformative idea: funeral flowers can be personal, beautiful, and environmentally responsible.” This sentiment underscores the exhibit's aim to harmonise grief, remembrance, and sustainability, fostering a dialogue about how we honour those who have passed.

As the landscape of funerals continues to evolve—predominantly leaning towards cremation—attitudes toward floral tributes are also in flux. With a reported increase in cremations each year, the visibility and importance of floral arrangements are diminishing. Hodgson pointed out that these flowers are often seen for mere moments before being discarded, contributing to environmental harm rather than preserving memories. The approach presented in this exhibit reflects a growing desire to change this narrative, giving individuals the agency to choose flowers that not only speak to their loved ones but also tread lightly on the planet.

Thus, this year's Chelsea Flower Show offers more than horticultural beauty; it invites a re-examination of our rituals surrounding death. The Farewell Flowers Directory’s exhibit could be a catalyst for a broader cultural shift, where the beauty and significance of funeral flowers are embraced in settings that foster warmth and connection rather than solely grief.

The effects of this groundbreaking exhibit may ripple beyond the confines of the show, encouraging more people to envision their final farewells in a way that aligns with their values—honouring lives lived with choices that are both meaningful and respectful to the world we inhabit.

### Reference Map

1. Leads on the emotional impact and significance of the funeral floristry exhibit.
2. Discusses the sustainable aspects and British-grown flowers featured in the display.
3. Highlights the historical context of the exhibit’s introduction at the Chelsea Flower Show.
4. Details the personal tributes in the exhibit and their design philosophy.
5. Explores the environmental implications of traditional funeral practices.
6. Emphasises the changing attitudes towards funeral floral arrangements.
7. Mentions royal engagement and tributes presented at the show.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14731073/Chelsea-Flower-visitors-break-tears-moving-funeral-display-festival-first.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.floraldaily.com/article/9709770/uk-a-chelsea-first-as-the-farewell-flowers-directory-takes-funeral-flowers-to-the-rhs-chelsea-flower-show/> - This article announces that The Farewell Flowers Directory will exhibit funeral flowers at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show for the first time. The display will feature exclusively British-grown cut flowers and foliage, entirely free of plastic floral foam and single-use plastic. The exhibit aims to demonstrate that funeral flowers can be both beautiful and sustainable, moving away from traditional sombre designs.
3. <https://www.floraldaily.com/article/9726932/uk-rhs-chelsea-flower-show-2025-to-stage-the-first-ever-funeral-floristry-display/> - This piece highlights the historic first of a funeral floristry display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025. The exhibit, created by The Farewell Flowers Directory, showcases an artistic interpretation of a funeral scene with vibrant seasonal flowers and foliage bursting from an open willow coffin. The display emphasizes compostable, foam-free funeral flowers, demonstrating that beauty and sustainability can coexist.
4. <https://www.farewellflowers.co.uk/stories/taking-the-first-ever-funeral-flowers-display-to-rhs-chelsea-flower-show-in-may> - This article details The Farewell Flowers Directory's plans to stage the first-ever funeral flowers exhibit at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. The display will feature a vibrant arrangement of seasonal flowers bursting from a woven willow coffin, accompanied by personal tributes like walking boots filled with fresh flowers. The exhibit aims to inspire conversations about sustainable funeral flowers and showcase the beauty of compostable arrangements.
5. <https://www.farewellflowers.co.uk/rhs-chelsea-2025> - This page provides information about The Farewell Flowers Directory's participation in the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025. It outlines the exhibit's focus on sustainable, plastic-free funeral flowers, featuring exclusively British-grown blooms. The display includes a churchyard scene with compostable designs such as flower-filled boots and shareable casket sprays, aiming to demonstrate that funeral flowers can be both beautiful and environmentally friendly.
6. <https://www.floristrytradeclub.co.uk/post/preview-rhs-chelsea-flower-show-2025-showground-exhibits> - This preview highlights new exhibits at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025, including The Farewell Flowers Directory's display of funeral designs in the Great Pavilion. The exhibit features exclusively British-grown blooms and is entirely free of floral foam and single-use plastic. It aims to prove that beauty and sustainability can coexist in funeral flowers, showcasing fresh, natural, seasonal materials that are resonant with meaning.
7. <https://www.housebeautiful.com/uk/garden/a43233561/chelsea-flower-show-2023-royal-garden/> - This article discusses royal tributes at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2023, including a topiary display depicting Emma, the fell pony who stood to attention along the drive of Windsor Castle to pay her respects as the Queen's cortege passed on the day of the funeral. The display is part of the Great Pavilion's offerings, celebrating the life of Queen Elizabeth II.