

# Chelsea Gold Medal collaboration launches new garden charity!

Cleve West, one of the UK's foremost garden designers, joined Neil Lucas, the UK's leading ornamental grass specialist and owner of Dorset-based Knoll Gardens, for the official launch of a new gardening charity at the Chelsea Flower Show on 19th May.

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is dedicated to providing a working example of tomorrow's gardens – today. It aims to study and evaluate plants, practices and habitats that meet the present and future needs of both people and the wider environment in our gardens and designed spaces.

## Environmentally friendly approach

"I have long held a dream to bring the Knoll style of gardening to a wider audience," said Neil Lucas. "The timing now seems to finally be right as we are all coming to realise that each garden, and the way we garden, is of increasing importance to the wider environmental picture. At Knoll we have always felt that our naturalistic style of gardening was of benefit to wildlife and environmentally friendly, as well as providing a low maintenance route to a beautiful garden. We know what works here for us. The Foundation has been created to help us both prove and improve our methods, and share them with gardeners across the country."

The charity will initially operate in three principle areas:

1. Maintaining and developing the gardens at Knoll as a dynamic and practical showcase for the Foundation's gardening ethos - including the introduction and trialling of new plant varieties.
2. Undertaking specific projects such as the introduction of the Dutch Elm Disease tolerant Princeton elm as a replacement elm tree across the UK.
3. Developing educational 'outreach' programmes through workshops, courses and lectures, both on site and at other venues, as well as through attendance at major national flower shows.

## Search for sponsors

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is now actively looking for donations, grant-funding and potential sponsors interested in coming on board at the start of what is sure to be an exciting process.

"Initially we are hoping to secure a series of charitable donations which can be allocated to specific projects," said Neil. "And we are delighted to be launching the first of these projects, with Cleve's help, at this year's Chelsea Flower Show".



Neil Lucas with Cleve West amongst the grasses at Knoll Gardens

## Cleve West design

"Whilst a large part of the charity's educational work will be done off site, there is a need for a more permanent classroom at Knoll, allowing us to expand and improve our range of courses and lectures in the gardens. I am delighted to announce that Cleve has donated his time and effort to produce a fabulous design for this project, that will not only provide a functional building but also a working example of low impact design and what is known as bioretention; basically our attitude to and how we deal with, water in our gardens and designed spaces.

"The whole project will be sited in a part of the gardens designed back in the 1970s," added Neil. "Currently it features a very large and thirsty pond area, with a lot of hard landscaping. It certainly would not win any environmental awards as it stands. Cleve's design will not only create the classroom we so badly need, but will also radically change this whole area, allowing us to create a sustainable habitat in keeping with the rest of the gardens. His plans mark a new beginning for the gardens and I'm delighted he is able to be here to formally launch The Knoll Gardens Foundation with me at this year's Chelsea Flower Show."

"I am delighted to be able to support such a vital new charity," said Cleve. "Neil and I have joined forces to offer a complete garden design and planting service. It was only natural for us to come together on this project as well, creating a sound base for the launch of the Knoll Gardens Foundation. I hope that everyone interested in the future development of gardening in this country will join me in supporting Neil's work".

- The Knoll Gardens Foundation is a charity registered with the Inland Revenue, reg no XT14949
- Knoll Gardens has won eight consecutive Gold Medals at the Chelsea Flower Show from 2002 – 2009.
- From a total of seven RHS Medals Cleve West has won 5 RHS Golds. He also won the BBC/RHS People's Choice Award for his 2008 BUPA garden at Chelsea and is a three time George Cooke Award winner at Hampton Court (1994, 1996 and 1997), for the most innovative garden.