

THE ACCIDENTAL GARDENER

After psychologist Jinny Blom found herself with a friend's garden project on her hands, the seeds were sown for a hugely successful career. *Laura Creal* meets the green-fingered award winner

Jinny Blom didn't always want to be an award-winning garden designer. After training in theatre design, Jinny ran her own delicatessen for a while, before starting a 12-year career working with deeply psychologically disturbed people as a transpersonal psychologist.


In 1996, a life-changing event caused Jinny to change her career path, "like a river bursting its banks." The said event was the death of her best friend who passed away halfway through the completion of a garden. Jinny finished it off, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Eleven years on and Jinny has designed some of the UK's best gardens, including many in the Notting Hill and Holland Park area. Winner of gold and two silver gilts at the Chelsea Flower Show, Jinny's name is now synonymous with innovative design

and intelligent concepts. Her latest venture is Spores, a made-to-order ecologically friendly garden seat, handmade in mouldable stone. The seats take pride of place in the permanent installation garden in the Design Centre Chelsea Harbour. "That place was terribly 1980s before the refurbishment; it was almost soul destroying," says Jinny. "I put forward the idea of building a forest and designed the Spore seats to match the huge tree planters we put in. They are organic in shape and concept, and people have really taken to them." The garden and its Spores have been so well received that the team won the Design Centre the BALI Platinum Award for the best interior-landscaping scheme.

After working in a variety of professions, Jinny has finally found her niche. Yet Jinny maintains a connection to her psychotherapist past through her

work with Gardening Leave, a charity that helps ex-servicemen suffering from post-traumatic stress. "It is awful returning from war, yet those who have fought receive no help from the government. Gardening Leave offers horticultural therapy within walled gardens, providing a safe and secure place for the soldiers." So far, the charity has been a great success, with plans to open up a London branch at the Chelsea Hospital next year.

"I think that gardens and psychotherapy mix really well," Jinny enthuses. "In my view gardens have an uplifting effect on people, architecture and the wider landscape." 

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