

Press Release

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Jo Thompson at Merriments Gardens leaning on silver birch trees which will feature in the Demelza garden

Merriments Gardens and Demelza produce a garden at Chelsea

Garden designer Jo Thompson and Merriments Gardens in Hurst Green will be working in partnership with the Demelza Hospice Care for Children charity to design a Courtyard garden for this year's Chelsea Flower Show.

Leading garden designer Jo Thompson, who designed part of Merriments own four acre gardens which are open to the public, will be working on this exciting project which has been inspired by Demelza Hospice Care for Children. The garden design focuses on the positive work carried out by the charity, as well as the changes that music can make to a child's life.

She said "The Chelsea Flower Show is the pinnacle of any garden designer's career and a great challenge. Designing the garden has given me the fantastic

opportunity to raise the profile of the charity and highlight the hard work carried out by Demelza across the South East.”

When designing the garden Jo has focused on the gentle elements of music, contemplation and positivity and reflects these through the use of simple planting, colour schemes and musical instruments.

“I wanted to create a safe and relaxing atmosphere through the use of musical instruments and cooling colours, to reflect the safe environment that Demelza provides for children and their families. The more vibrant colours reflect the charities positive work, and the explosion of colour at the end of the garden is a celebration of Demelza. I hope that my garden enforces what Demelza stands for, adding life to days, when days cannot be added to life.” Jo said.

The garden will be constructed by Merrimts Gardens own landscaping division at the Chelsea Flower Show before being moved to a new permanent home at Demelza House, the charity’s children’s hospice in Kent, for the families and visitors to enjoy.

The garden is made up of a simple London stock brick wall, which encloses a low curving seatwall and leads the visitor around the garden. The wall is simple so as not to detract from the important elements within the garden. One of the main focal points of the garden is the group of elegant multi-stemmed silver birch. The trees’ are inspired by those found at Demelza House and in Merrimts garden, and they help create the contemplative mood Jo had hoped for, as well as stirring feelings of security.

Upon entering the garden the planting is of cool blues and greens and comprises plants such as Omphalodes Cappadocia ‘Cherry Ingram’ and Tellima grandiflora. As visitors move through the garden the colours become interspersed and then overwhelmed by bright oranges, yellows and reds made up of Geums, Geraniums, Iris and Anthemis sancti-johannis. The inspiration for this explosion of colourful planting comes from the preferences of the children of Demelza itself, who were drawn to the hopeful and cheerful colours.

The main inspiration for the garden is music and this is reflected by the water harp and upright chimes found amongst the plants. The harp consists of a frame set in a low pool and as water trickles down the stainless steel wires the gentle sounds it makes create a relaxing and safe atmosphere. A particularly unique feature of the garden is the suikinkutsu, an underground water chamber which creates a different kind of sound and is best appreciated when there is silence elsewhere. By creating a relaxing and safe environment in the garden Jo hopes that she will reflect the work carried out by Demelza for children.

Jo works closely with Merriments Gardens in Hurst Green and many of the plants used in her garden are from their nursery. Merriments is one of the finest gardens in Europe and visitors to the garden can enjoy the mix of colour themed gardens, an array of wildlife and unique garden designs reflecting those of famous artists such as Monet.

Visitors can see Jo's garden at the Chelsea Flower Show from 19 – 23 May 2009. To book tickets please call 08442091810 or visit <http://www.rhs.org.uk/whatson>.

For more information or to arrange an interview with Jo Thompson or Merriments Gardens contact Caroline Edmunds on 01892616647 or caroline@penningtonpr.com

Note to Editors:

Demelza is an organisation providing hospice care for over 570 children with life-limiting illnesses and their families across Kent, East Sussex and South London through:

Residential Hospice Care

A care team at the eight bedded hospice in Kent, provides respite, symptom control, end-of-life care and bereavement support. Over 370 life-limited children and their families benefit from a wide range of facilities that include a multi-sensory room, Soft Play, Jacuzzi, and The Inclusion Zone for young adults. Available therapies include music, physiotherapy and aromatherapy. The care team, led by specialist children's palliative care nurses, make the most of every moment that the child spends at the hospice. Parents have described having the opportunity of an undisturbed night's sleep as pure luxury. At the end of the child's illness, we offer a comprehensive service of support using a bereavement suite - known as the Hop Garden – which

enables a family to let go and say goodbye at their own pace. We share our expertise in childhood bereavement with organisations such as the Police and the bereavement charity, CRUSE.

Community Care

The Demelza community team provides a care service for just under 200 children in East Sussex, South West Kent and South East London with life-threatening and life-limiting illness and their families. The service complements the care offered at Demelza House with the community team's specialist paediatric nurses going directly into the family home to provide care, crisis intervention, an on-call service and respite. The service helps enable the family to live life, as a family, in their own environment and combined with short breaks and other services at the hospice offers flexibility in care provision. When a child reaches the end of its life the Demelza community team can offer the choice of 24 hour end of life care at home. The community team can provide medical help and expert advice in the home or can simply just allow Mum and Dad to be Mum and Dad again.

Capital Appeal

We are currently running a capital appeal to build and run a new hospice in South East London which opens in early 2009. Once opened the new hospice will provide short breaks, symptom control, end of life care and bereavement services to over 200 children and families in this area.

Registered Charity No. 1039651