

weekend **gardening**

# Paul could get Chelsea patch



## The VIRGIN GARDENER

BY HILARY SCOTT

IT'S been a pretty good 12 months for Byfield-based gardener Paul Titcombe.

Not only did he scoop a *Daily Telegraph* competition to design a garden the size of a small hatchback car, he's also been given the chance to build the garden for real at Gardener's World Live this summer.

And on Wednesday he'll find out if he's also won the chance to create a show garden at next year's prestigious Chelsea Flower Show. He's reached the final five of the Marshalls RHS Chelsea Flower Show Competition.

Fame is certainly beckoning for Paul, 42, who until recently had a full time career in publishing and was studying part-time at Warwickshire College.

If you watched *Gardener's World* last Friday, you'd have seen him chatting about his college's silver medal-winning entries at Malvern Spring Show.

And all this for someone in his second year of a part-time horticulture degree, who had to enter the Chelsea competition as a professional because he'd just decided to launch his own business. He said: "I was going to enter as an amateur because I'd literally just launched on my own, and thought it was too early for me and I'd be laughed at!"

His first taste of success came last year on entering his first ever competition – to design a garden no larger than a small car. His innovative but simple plan scooped the top prize and is being built at Gardener's World Live at the NEC from June 13-17.

"I dithered about entering any of these competitions," laughs Paul. "For the first one I was just doodling on holiday and entered for the experience. When they rang to tell me I'd won I was in shock."

Since then, Paul has carried on at college (he plans to finish the three-year foundation degree in garden and landscape design), and has recently left his 17-year long career at Reed Elsevier to concentrate on his own garden design company. Clients are already snapping him up – he's just completed a £10,000 private garden in Oxford.

"I had to set up now or I'd never had done it," said Paul. "It's fairly nerve-wracking but I've become more confident about my designs. I'd never realised at the beginning how technical it all is, but that's now the part I rather relish."

"I'm getting to grips with planting plans – there's just so much choice. You can't resist thinking about it all the time, 'could I put this with that?' I'm careful not to over-complicate things."

At home in Byfield, his own garden is nothing like the modern garden-with-a-garden he's designed for Chelsea. It's a gorgeous, billowing cottage garden to suit his gorgeous cottage. It's clear he has an eye for both scale and detail that have shot him to the giddy heights of Chelsea.

"I love it, I'm passionate about it, and to do a garden at Chelsea, well, the theatre of it all, it would be fantastic."

Find out more about his work at [www.paultitcombe.com](http://www.paultitcombe.com)

■ Paul Titcombe in his Byfield garden

CE picture by KELLY BARNES 070516KA11

### Tell us about your garden or allotment

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Northants cottage made into show garden at Chelsea