

MULTICHANNEL

## Harrods grows awareness for conceptual garden through month-long floral celebration

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Image from Harrods' "Whatever the Weather" campaign

By SARAH JONES

Leading up to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, British department store Harrods is bringing the garden to consumers across channels through a botanical takeover.

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"Whatever the Weather," running through the month of May, includes activities and services in-store and across London along with digital content tackling the topic of flowers. Through this campaign, Harrods has turned what could have been a limited-time affair into a point of engagement for all of its shoppers.

"Harrods' timing works great because it gets the halo effect from the flower show," said Gustavo Gomez, director of research and methodology at [Envirosell](#), New York.

"The Chelsea Flower Show is probably the most famous flower show in the world," he said. "Harrods will also benefit from all the media coverage not only domestically but internationally where all luxury brands are looking to grow their name and status.

"Also as we all are eager for a beautiful spring, Harrods can be associated with the renewal that spring brings. That unconscious connection is powerful with consumers."

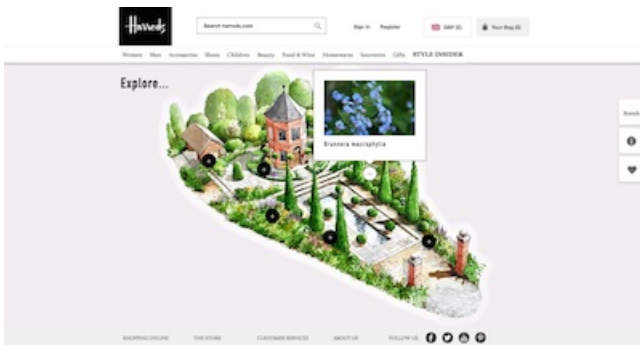
Mr. Gomez is not affiliated with Harrods, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Harrods** did not respond before press deadline.

Green thumb

Harrods is partnering with garden designer Diarmuid Gavin on a display for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show running May 24-28. The Harrods British Eccentrics Garden pays homage to cartoonist and illustrator William Heath Robinson, with a quirky take on the traditional English garden complete with a sense of humor and eccentricities.

Ahead of its premiere, consumers can explore a rendering of the garden on Harrods' Web site. Here they can also learn more about Mr. Gavin's work and his collaboration with the retailer through a short video.



*Screenshot of Harrods' Whatever the Weather campaign page*

"The Chelsea Flower Show elevates interest," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL. "Harrods is tapping into the psyche of springtime in England.

"This is not a new relationship for Harrods," he said. "They're expanding after last years success.

"The most successful partnerships transcend product and touch the heart. Flowers, gardens and landscaping evoke a visceral reaction after a long winter."

Outside of the flower show, Harrods is teaming with the award winning Mr. Gavin on a bespoke service for landscaping and garden design. An ambassador for the Prince's foundation for Building Community, Mr. Gavin is also an author.

Letting consumers explore the world of Mr. Heath Robinson, an exhibit curated by the illustrator's namesake trust will take place at The Georgian on Harrods' fourth Floor from May 4-29.

Continuing the theme, Harrods is also offering consumers an opportunity to take part in a Floral Afternoon Tea complete with blossom-inspired cakes and treats invented by the store's in-house chefs. These sweets, including jasmine and orange chocolate mousse and lavender and peach macarons, will be on the tea menu at The Conservatory at The Georgian, or consumers can take home the patisserie items from its food halls throughout May.

Join @moysesstevens in-store to discover how to create the perfect 'British Flower Bouquet' from 25th-27th of May and enjoy Afternoon Tea in The Conservatory. For further information please contact therestaurants@harrods.com. #HarrodsGarden #WhateverTheWeather ??

A photo posted by Harrods (@harrods) on May 7, 2016 at 9:58am PDT

Later in the month, those who book the Harrods Floral Afternoon Tea will be able to hear from experts including Mr. Gavin, Helen Dillon and Mark Gregory during a series of Gardening Talks. These speakers will give additional insights into the planning and execution of the British Eccentrics Garden.

There will also be workshops on creating the perfect British floral bouquet, letting consumers get hands-on.

Harrods is also spotlighting floral-themed merchandise, including specially created umbrellas to ward off the infamously unpredictable London weather. On social media, the brand is sharing ideas such as a Victoria Beckham floral clutch or warm weather-approved cosmetics with the hashtag #HarrodsGarden.

"I am always impressed with Harrods' use of social media," said Dave Rodgerson, a retail business development executive at [Microsoft Canada](#), Toronto. "They certainly understand the importance of using that to relate to their audience.

"They have more than 860,000 followers on their Instagram, which is very impressive," he said. "Compared to many retailers, they have a very good sense of how to curate the content and keep that audience engaged.

"Successful omnichannel retailers like Harrods understand that the best promotions are those that blur the line between the online and the physical experience. Bridging those two worlds makes Harrods' messaging and the experience all that much more compelling."

This content continues in Harrods' magazine, which profiles Mr. Gavin and delves into the floral theme in an editorial photo shoot of fashions from Michael Kors and Dolce & Gabbana.



*Image from Harrods' Whatever the Weather editorial*

"Social media is key to reach the younger audiences and the connected audiences," Mr. Gomez said. "Using the hashtag #HarrodsGarden is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately it seems Harrods is not going full throttle with social media or the garden campaign.

"There is no mention of it on their Web site's main landing page," he said. "They do invite social media followers to post pictures using the hashtag, but it is deep in the Instagram post and not on the Harrods profile page.

"If Instagram is their main vehicle for it then they need to step up engagement and integration to the main site a little more. There is no Instagram icon on the main Web site to follow them. They seem to be doing a better job in the other social media sites like Twitter Facebook and YouTube."

Creative concept

Harrods exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show for the first time last year with a conceptual garden created in partnership with designer Sheena Seeks. Through the medium of flowers, Harrods celebrated perfume's collision of nature and science.

One side of the garden featured flowers housed in oversize scientific beakers and test tubes, representing the 19th century technique of enfleurage, in which flowers' scents were captured in wax. The adjacent side showed the flowers reappearing and emerging as paper blossoms ([see story](#)).

As flowers are a frequent ingredient in beauty products, garden themes lend themselves to cosmetic campaigns.

For instance, department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue is hosting a botanical beauty blowout in its flagship store to usher in spring.

Establishing a tradition, the retailer's Glam Gardens campaign is back for the second year, this time playing off the theme of "The Secret Garden." Presented by Mastercard, the multichannel effort will see the launch of a dedicated magalog, store window displays and a special high tea ([see story](#)).

"[Harrods] have been involved in the Chelsea Flower show for several years now and count on that as an event upon which they can create their own messaging," Mr. Rodgerson said. "It's become very successful, because the flower show itself has a huge following, and that offers them more traction that they could achieve building their own promotion.

"The context of the flower show is such a natural connection for a retailer with a strong presence in fashion," he said. "It's all about color, sound, texture and a visceral experience.

"It's so real, and that complements the fashion and fragrance message that Harrods is connecting to this promotion. It becomes a very compelling message."

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