

Funding the Future

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As [The Guardian](#) has reported:

A gardener and activist hired by the Royal Horticultural Society to help it reach out to younger and disadvantaged people has said its flagship [Chelsea flower show](#) celebrated “exclusivity over equity” as he walked away from the role.

They added:

Tayshan Hayden-Smith, 28, was asked in 2022 to become the charity’s ambassador for young people and communities. But now he says that after three years working with the RHS, he has lost hope that it genuinely wants to become more accessible.

Announcing his resignation on Instagram this week, on the eve of the RHS’s biggest annual event, the Chelsea flower show, Hayden-Smith said: “I entered this role well intentioned and optimistic. On reflection, I now see that I was also naive.

“What I’ve come to learn is that representation without redistribution – of power, resources or decision-making – is not justice. And working within institutions that aren’t prepared to listen, adapt or truly share space only goes so far.”

He was particularly critical of the Chelsea flower show: “Year after year [the event] sets a precedent that celebrates spectacle over sustainability, exclusivity over equity.”

As the article makes clear, Tayshan Hayden-Smith was appointed because of his work after the Grenfell disaster, using gardening as a means of recovery, creating the Grenfell Garden of Peace.

Now, he has quit making his reasons very clear.

Who would have thought that the Royal Horticultural Society (of which I was, quite a long time ago, a member) would be, as a bastion of upper-middle-class England, a hotbed for the promotion of continuing inequality? I am shocked.

And yes, Tayshan Hayden-Smith might have been naive, but I admire him for both trying and for now speaking out.

But the real question is, why does the BBC keep broadcasting this celebration of blatant gross inequality, which is always, it seems, heavily sponsored by financial services companies dedicated to maintaining everything that reinforces economic injustice? I like gardening, but is this view of the art something that really deserves as much coverage as it gets?