



Caspar Gabb gets down to the task of turning his Chelsea vision (below) into reality.

# Caspar's Chelsea challenge

By Henry Carpenter

**"**I think I may have bitten off more than I can chew," chuckles Caspar Gabb as he potters around a small, work-in-progress garden which, at the end of this month, will be on view to thousands of horticultural cognoscenti at the world's most famous flower show.

We are midway through April and Caspar is shifting plants from the poly-tunnel at the back of the nursery where he has rented a space to construct his garden, which is bound for Chelsea in a matter of weeks.

To the layman he seems thoroughly in control of his exhibit's destiny, but he's not so sure. This is despite the fact that he has built up a fair bank of confidence over the last decade, and he knows that he can't be doing too badly when his company, Natural Elements, has been commissioned by pop idol and multimillionaire Robbie Williams to landscape his garden – and apparently was delighted with the result. Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's garden near Newbury is another which has benefited from a successful Gabb makeover.

However, having a design accepted for any of the categories is still big news for both him and the county and Caspar, who is from Bridgnorth but spends much of his time in London,

will be one of a select handful of exhibitors in the 'small city' category. It doesn't get any more prestigious for a landscape gardener.

He has been working flat out on his design, called The Green Room, which is a re-creation of a clearing in a temperate-to-subtropical forest, and constructing it in a nursery a few hundred yards from his city house in West London. He is mocking up the exact garden and making sure that everything is positioned correctly before dismantling it and taking it over to Chelsea later this month.

By the very nature of any exhibition there is no hiding place – and the fact that Chelsea is the most high-profile and prestigious flower show in the world doesn't exactly ease the pressure.

But Shropshire's latest county flag-flyer at the great show will get there in the end – I suspect he knows it in his heart of hearts; it's just that the rest of this month is going to be hectic at best.

The stress will be worth it though because, come the beginning of June when the flower show comes to an end, Caspar will have acquired a kudos and station in his peers' eyes that money can't buy.

"That's the reason I'm doing it, to generally try to up my ranking," he admits. "If there is

