



# Jules Hudson

## COUNTRY ESCAPE

Forget love; gardening is a drug, says Jules, who finds there's no better escape from the pressures of daily life than pottering amongst the peonias, pooch at his side

**G**rowing... your own drug?! Today is one of those days that I just adore. It's just gone six am, the sun is already warm and it's starting to fill the garden. Iolo and I are taking our morning tour of inspection; two sets of footprints trailing through the dew that mark our route as we catch up on what the weekend's gardening has achieved.

On Friday, as I gradually made my way home from Worcestershire and a fascinating day on the Severn Valley Railway, I listened to the radio and Gardener's Question Time. The panel was asked what is was about gardening that made it so addictive. Amongst the replies was one that left me smiling and agreeing wholeheartedly; "It's one of the few things we can do where we see and enjoy the results of our efforts straight away" was more or less how one of the guests described it. His answer set my weekend up perfectly. As well as looking forward to watching the Wimbledon Final (of course... and what a result!), we had a list as long as a rake to catch up on in the garden. With the weather forecast to be glorious, I couldn't wait.

It's sometimes surprising to people that when I have free time, I don't lead a 'rock'n'roll' life. I've never been interested in so-called 'celebrity', often a fickle and vacuous term at best. When it's down time, it's my time, and there's nowhere else I'd rather be than at home pottering about in my garden.

But why? There is certainly a lot in what the man on the radio said, but let me add a few more thoughts. One of the GQT line up was my colleague James Wong. He wrote a book called *Grow your own Drugs*, but for me the real drug is in the growing itself, and the

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freedom it confers. Many of us work in businesses that relentlessly require others to approve of what we do and how we are doing it. The creative and often very subjective world of TV can be one of the toughest. As much as I might like to think that the films I make are my own, in truth they are the product of many minds and many hands all working to the same aim. It is of course all great fun and I wouldn't be anywhere else, but my foil to all those often-competing factors is my garden. It's a place that I can genuinely describe as my own, and be the sole judge of my efforts. It can be whatever I want it to be, and the hard work and energy involved give us such a feeling of reward time after time that it's a drug I am happily addicted to. Yes, revelling in that sense of achievement either at the end of the day with a wander and a glass of wine, or early on with a cup of tea and my dog by my side is one of the most intoxicating and relaxing feelings I know.

Prince Charles once said that gardening was good for the soul. As a man who knows a thing or two about pressure, he'd know, and I can only agree. So as I walked out this morning enjoying the scents of the summer, my little world was at peace, as indeed was Iolo's.

It was only then that we discovered the chickens were out...

JULES HUDSON was born in Essex but stayed in Wales after studying archaeology at Lampeter University. He has worked in television since 1996 and is a member of the *Countryfile* team, but is best-known as the leading face of *Escape To The Country*. He moved back across the Border in 2012, to Herefordshire.

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