



CHELSEA 2008!

Kate Heffernan attended the Chelsea Flower Show 2008 and reports on the not so subtle changes happening in the world of gardens.

Chelsea is a real feast for the senses! Ticket holders formed queues outside the entry gates well before the show opened each day for an event that was fully sold out. Early attendees managed to make their way to their desired displays before the crowds arrived in order to take photos unadulterated by seething crowds.

The Show has met many of the challenges presented by our changing environment and has reduced its carbon footprint by introducing a number of key measures. Some of these include vetting timber products at the show as sourced from sustainable forests, recycling or re-using of products used in exhibits and catering, and 65% of all show waste being sent to waste management for recycling.

Landscape styles in many show gardens reflected a change of attitude, away from strict geometry and formal plantings and introducing a natural and more relaxed garden form. Plant life was primarily British, with a strong emphasis on lush green swathes interspersed with splashes of colour or in some instances with just one or two primary colours.

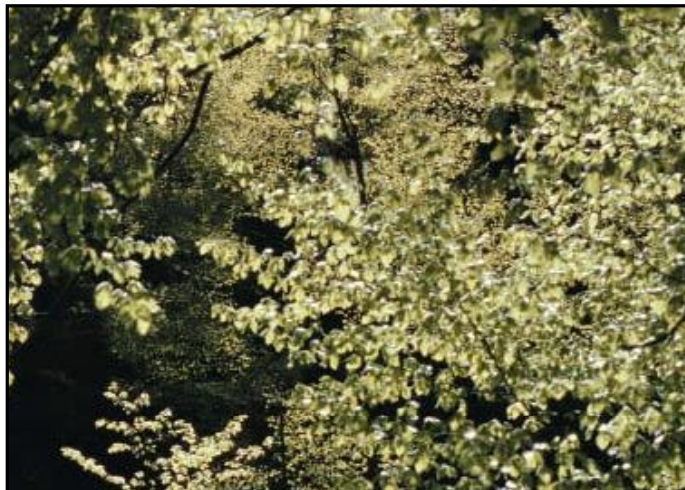
Another Chelsea Great Gold for the Australian Team!

We headed straight for the Fleming's and Trailfinders Australian Garden presented by Melbourne, Victoria. It was obviously a favourite of many as the crowds were already gathering at 8am! BBC Camera crews were setting up for an interview at the same time as Leanne Gillies from Fleming's Nursery was pouring coffee granules into the water feature



to provide mysterious dark swirls reminiscent of tea tree stained lakes in Australia. It was immediately apparent that this garden display was different. The colours and textures of the plants and the landscape materials were poles apart from the traditional British garden styles. Designed by Jamie Durie to provide visitors with a taste of Australia from the beach to the bush, the garden was developed from the emotions according to Durie. Delivering a display garden that meets emotional outcomes was the brief that Durie set himself, and his comment that he had 'never been so proud to be Australian' revealed the depth of feeling that can be achieved participating in an event such as Chelsea. Durie's design was driven by a search for a garden that was based entirely on Australian natives, offered safety and security, yet provided luxury and sophistication embraced by natural surroundings. The 20 metre long art panel backdrop was painted by artist Gabriella Possum Nungarrayi to symbolise the journey across her Northern Territory Homeland.

The garden was steered by the impelling enthusiasm of Wes Fleming who inspired perfection from a team he describes as having great camaraderie and dedication while they lived and worked together for sixteen days. Fleming's commitment to the project was stirring, his rationale motivated by a desire to



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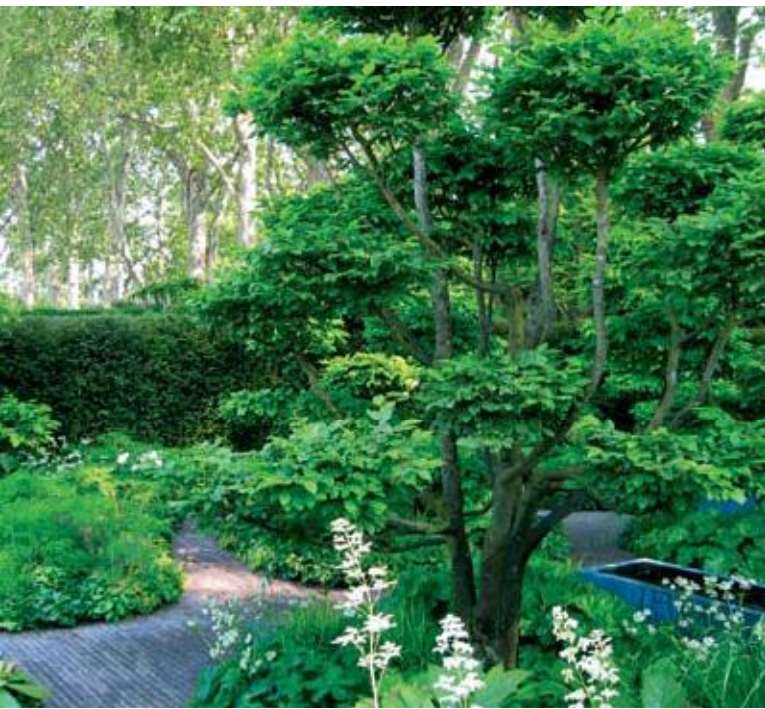
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raise the profile of Australian horticulture. Fleming’s concern for the shrinking Australian horticulture market, climate change and the vanishing urban environment should instigate greater recognition among the broader Australian community. Gold at the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show is a remarkably high achievement and the Fleming’s team deserves enormous respect and acknowledgement.



In an event that upholds the traditional British criterion for formality, Fleming’s work on the display was a true breath of fresh air. Fleming articulated the design intent and the detail in an entertaining and breathless style that captivated the surging crowds. Fleming expressed the features of the display garden with humour and passion, and his fervour was unmatched at other Show gardens.

Marks for the Show Gardens are based on the brief (10), the overall impression (20), overall design (20), construction (20) and planting (30) which unambiguously reflects the essential ingredients of a successful show garden at Chelsea. Team work is a critical ingredient and balancing all these factors to win a Gold indicates the strength of Australian landscape and horticulture on the international stage.

Best of Show

The 2008 Best of Show was awarded to the Laurent-Perrier Garden, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. The garden was set among a grove of 30 year old hornbeams trimmed tightly to cloud like foliage forms. Pathways laid in Flemish bricks intersected the garden which was predominantly a tapestry of green, relying on texture and form to provide a pervasive aura of calmness. The quality of the plants stood out as truly exceptional.



Commemorating a Beatle - From Life to Life, a Garden for George

George Harrison was a talented and passionate gardener and The Material Charitable Foundation and Olivia Harrison, with designer Yvonne Innes, presented a garden that journeyed through a narrative that began in Liverpool and progressed through the psychedelic 60’s into the more mature contemplative years of the much loved Beatle. The mosaic work on this garden was incredibly detailed and the quotes set among the garden reminded show visitors of the depth behind George Harrison.



A Garden for Children

– The Marshall's Garden That Kids Really Want.

The future surely lies with children and leading UK hard landscape company Marshall's presented a stimulating garden inspired and designed by children. Challenges, the senses and nature prevailed, revealing the honesty and directness of the young for their surrounds. The garden illustrated the desire of children to connect with the natural world and demonstrated the importance of capturing the instinctive spirit that connects humans with the environment. The trend is slowly moving toward engaging children in gardening, and Marshall's garden elevated this objective brilliantly.

Climate Change

There were no heads buried in the sand at Chelsea as Educators and Government agencies highlighted the changes anticipated due

to climate change. Their displays showed the changes that can be expected in plant selection and garden layout. Out with the old and in with the new. Plants that thrive in a drier and warmer climate were displayed, with Australian species featured by some. Water harvesting, soil improvement and designing with a minimum input of resources was a common thread through the gardens and plant displays, and some highlighted the plants of the future as Britain's climate alters.

Dedicated Gardens

Raising awareness for charitable organisations through Show Gardens dedicated to charitable organisations including Motor Neurone Disease and Cancer Research UK was a wonderful attribute of the show. Designed by Andy Sturgeon Garden Design, the Cancer Research UK garden was entirely funded by a private donor. A fascinating small garden inspired by the challenge of gardening in an inhospitable climate promoted the cause of Motor Neurone Disease. The Shetland Croft House Garden sponsors included Shetland Islands Council, NorthLink Ferries and Atlantic Airways. The strength of sponsorship from outside the landscape and horticulture industries is evidence that

The Chelsea Flower Show is revered by the corporate sector.

The overall standard of all the exhibits was astounding, new ideas inspire the gardening public and indicate the horticulture sector in Britain is robust. **LG**