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SUMMER STYLE**

July 2013



Best in SHOW

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LOVES

Elliot Tucker gets a preview of this year's Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

Sadly the great British Summer doesn't always live up to expectations. Long sunny days are invariably replaced with intermittent showers, emergency umbrella purchases and barbecuing under a hastily erected awning. However, despite the perils of precipitation we might face, one event is always guaranteed to brighten up July; The RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. This year is the 23rd outing for this prestigious event and 2013 promises to be a bumper year for what has become the world's biggest floral display as it runs from 9-14 July.

The show began life in 1990 when management consultant Adrian Boyd brought together Historic Royal Palaces and rail operator Network Southeast; two entities looking to improve their visitor and passenger numbers. The railway firm sponsored the first show with special trains laid on from Waterloo, complete with porters wearing carnations in their hats. By 1993

the Royal Horticultural Society had taken over the show and, in 1994, it was declared the best outdoor public event on the calendar. Over 23 years Hampton Court has carved a reputation amongst the other flower shows as being more of an all-encompassing event with emphasis on growing your own, cookery and environmental issues alongside the more traditional aspects of a flower show.

This year sees a new look with three 'zoned' areas offering a mixture of gardens, shopping, food and flowers. This all takes place, of course, amongst one of the most majestic Royal palaces, lending the show a very regal feel. The 'Grow' zone will offer the serious gardeners an outlet with nurseries, plant stalls and gardening equipment for sale. 'Escape' presents a slice of the British countryside, with displays on growing your own, the famous Hampton Court rose displays and Artisan food producers, whilst those looking for some encouragement in their own gardening endeavours will find fertile idea territory

as 'Inspire' offers up practical tips on how to create your very own oasis.

Thirty four gardens will be on show offering something for everyone from the grand, 'budget-not-a-problem' conceptual gardens to the 'low cost, high impact' exhibitions, which make use of the smallest spaces without breaking the bank. The gardens are as diverse as they are spectacular, with themes ranging from Shakespearean witches in 'The Witches of Macbeth', skin cancer awareness in 'The Macmillan Legacy Garden' and Martin Luther King Jr in 'August 1963 - I Have A Dream'. There will also be a distinctly eco-friendly feel to proceedings this year, with sponsors Ecover exhibiting 'The Ecover Garden', which aims to highlight sustainable water systems and reuse of plastics in everyday life. Alongside the Ecover exhibition, the 'Tip of the Iceberg' garden employs a mountain of fridges as planters to emphasise reusing the debris of modern life, whilst the immersive 'Desolation to Regeneration'

Each year, the Palace grounds play host to a stunning array of flora

Left and bottom photos: Rex Features



**FLOWER SHOW
FACTS AND FIGURES:**

- ❖ Largest flower show in the world
- ❖ Years running: 23
- ❖ Area of showground: 34 acres
- ❖ Number of days to put show up: 21
- ❖ Number of days to take show down: 10
- ❖ Exhibitors at first show: 265
- ❖ Exhibitors last year: 600

garden will employ sight, sound and smell to symbolize regeneration after a forest fire.

Benedict Green is a landscape designer for Belderbos Landscapes, based in Richmond, and is exhibiting a conceptual garden. He says that the Hampton Court show is ‘a fantastic event with a lot of prestige behind it.’ This is Benedict’s first year exhibiting after he gained a slot as a freelancer before joining forces with local firm

The gardens are as diverse as they are spectacular, with themes including Shakespearean witches

Belderbos. So is he nervous? ‘Yes! Nervous and excited but then it is the world’s biggest flower show. And you only get one chance to nail it, we don’t have dress rehearsals!’ Benedict’s garden is entitled ‘The Clints and Grykes Garden’ which, he says, may ‘look like a lot of limestone with a tree in the middle!’ but looking closer you are treated to a lush world of hidden shrubs and plants between the fissures, or grykes, in the rock. The aim of the garden is to highlight sustainable limestone use and to show that the most

interesting and beautiful things in life are often found ‘between the cracks’.

Benedict is also a local lad, from Teddington, and is relishing the opportunity to exhibit on home turf (no pun intended). ‘The Palace is just a short walk through Bushy Park for me and this is absolutely the place that I’d want to do my first show,’ he comments. The Hampton Court show is set over 34 acres of land and last year saw 600 exhibitors on site, which is what Benedict says sets it apart from the other shows: ‘You see a huge variety of gardens as people are much more daring because the show is so relaxed. There are some really fantastic displays.’

One such display, and one that The Hampton Court Flower Show is renowned for, is its roses. This year the Rose Marquee will be turning the clock back and injecting some classic glamour with a Vintage 50s theme of roses and

floristry. The rose exhibition has been a mainstay of the show since its introduction in 1991, and 2013 will see the launch of the, surely soon to be coveted, Rose of the Year competition. After a series of national heats between competing rose growers, and their attractive floral offerings, a winner was decided upon and will be exhibited at this year’s show. ‘You’re Beautiful’ (‘Fryarcy’) is grown by Gareth Fryer and is a bright pink, lightly-scented rose with rich foliage. It will be shown alongside other intriguingly named varieties such as Bobby Dazzler, Nelsons Journey and Summer Sweetheart.

For foodies in attendance, the Growing Tastes Marquee will bring together growers and producers of the finest fruit, vegetables and herbs. All exhibitors will be selling direct to the public as well as offering tips on how to grow your own at home.

Meanwhile, the *Country Living Magazine* pavilion will play host to over 120 stands selling everything from garden furniture and accessories to clothing, jewellery and homewares giving the shoppers a chance to really indulge themselves.



Staying true to its environmental awareness pledge, the show will also be focusing on the pollinators and insects that make up the wildlife in our countryside and gardens. Bees, butterflies and thousands of insect species comprise a vital component of our complex eco-system, and to celebrate this, the show has collaborated with the Eden Project to erect a Butterfly Dome, Bee Garden and Marquee. The butterfly dome promises to give visitors the rare chance of some up close interaction with a magical array of some

The rose exhibition has long been a mainstay of the show, and 2013 sees the launch of the Rose of the Year Competition

of the world's tropical butterflies as well as those native to our shores. With bee numbers on the decline, and even EU legislation to boost current levels, the Bee Garden will offer practical advice on how to entice pollinators into your garden and even how to keep bees and make your own honey.

This year the show will also be bringing a bit of glitz and glamour from well-known faces of TV and film. Stars such as Joely Richardson and Kate Humble will be entering hen houses that they have customised into a charity auction with all proceeds split between the RHS Campaign for School

The Hampton Court Palace Flower Show is the largest in the world, and last year attracted 600 exhibitors, and thousands of visitors

Gardening and the Addington Fund which supports British farming. This will be alongside an event organized by Ecover, who have tasked several of the biggest names in horticulture and design to come up with some innovative and interesting planters which will be donated to Maggie's Cancer Care at the end of the show.

If all of this sounds a bit too grown up, fear not – children are well catered for, with under 16s getting free entry. The specially laid on Children's Zone will get budding gardeners involved with a 'sow and grow' area, where they can plant seeds under the guise of their favourite superhero courtesy of a face painting stand – think Spiderman in a straw hat. An arts and crafts area will also be offering plant pot decoration classes and a 'make your own bumblebee hat' stand. Local schools will be exhibiting scarecrows made by pupils as well as a prize giving for the best garvinea plant grown at school.

For those readers who want to get a look at all of this a bit earlier, then the show has an exclusive preview evening on Monday 8 July. This event offers quite a unique and different experience to the normal days with live music, exhibitions and fine dining culminating in a spectacular firework display. You can even bring your own picnic and leave it at the Picnic Deposit until you are ready to sit back and enjoy the evening.

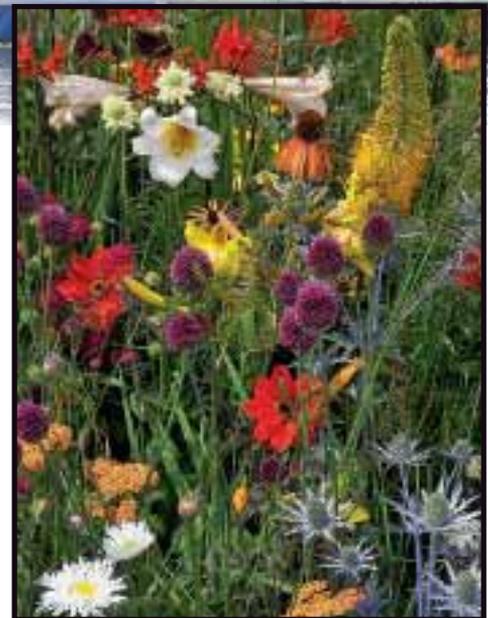


Photo: Rex Features

In a relatively short period of time the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show has grown to eclipse some of its more established rivals and continues to get bigger each year. Having such a prestigious event on the doorstep is something that Benedict feels we shouldn't miss out on, and urges everyone to attend: 'It's a fantastic day out, you see a really high level of horticulture in a relaxed environment. Flower shows aren't elitist and stuffy; they can be really interesting and fun – especially at Hampton Court.' ●

❖ rhs.org.uk/hampton-flower-show

Win a pair of tickets to the Hampton Court Flower Show!

Email your name, address and telephone number to residentcomp@archant.co.uk by 4 July. Winners will be notified by 5 July, and can choose to attend one day from 11-14 July.