



Digging deep: Victorian nurseryman Wes Fleming is confident of top honours at next year's Chelsea Flower Show.

Garden wiz Chelsea coup with Durie

MELBOURNE

The English gardening public has a treat coming at next year's Chelsea Flower Show with an Australian design destined to be a horticultural showstopper.

So says a perennial contender for the coveted best-in-show garden, Monbulk nurseryman Wes Fleming, who has chosen celebrity gardener Jamie Durie to create a design in the prestigious show garden category.

Durie, who starred in Backyard Blitz and Best Backyards and is now a regular guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show, has incorporated the outback, beaches and local flora for his Australiana exhibit. He is currently in Europe sourcing plants for the garden.

This is Mr Fleming's fifth attempt at taking on English and Irish landscape designers at their own game — previously he has won two

silver-gilt awards and two golds — and he is confident that this year the Australiana theme will impress the judges enough to award his team the top prize.

Durie's design features a wetland, a big curved deck, fire pit, layered stonework from the Kimberley region, textured walls and native plantings including melaleucas, grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*) and the beautiful bottle trees (*Adansonia gibbosa*) that feature in the Children's Garden at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens.

Some of the plants on Durie's wishlist are hard to source, Mr Fleming says. "Only a portion of our requirements are likely to be found in Europe which may mean, for the first time ever, we have to ship and quarantine plants from Australia," he said.

While he conceded that the judges usually favoured traditional English

designs, last year's award-winning dark and moody exhibit by New Zealand designer Xanthe White was far removed from an English country garden, reflecting her country's unique landscape.

Each year Fleming's Nurseries take on a different landscape designer and construction crew to create an antipodean show garden at the world's second oldest flower show.

"The high-profile representation of this project has helped to showcase our talent and ability on the world stage," Mr Fleming said.

"For that reason it is wonderful to see a person of Jamie's credibility and standing embrace the opportunity and represent Australian horticulture internationally."

Construction on the garden starts early in May for the show, which will be held from May 20-24.