

Australia stands tall among Chelsea mates



The earthy colours of the Australian landscape and the grey green foliage of Australian plants contrasted with the soft greens and pastels of the English show gardens at Chelsea 2008.

The Fleming's and Trailfinders Australian Garden had a distinctive character that thrilled visitors.

Bright sunshine provided an essence of Australian weather as the Australian team was awarded a gold medal for the Fleming's and Trailfinders Australian Garden.



By Kate Heffernan

Warm spring weather meant visitors to Chelsea were in short sleeves and sun hats, and as the temperature climbed so too did the excitement at the Australian Garden. The spirit of Australia was evident as onlookers listened to Wes Fleming's presentation.

He courted visitors with an animated description of various elements of the garden which was designed by Jamie Durie and supported by a team of 20.

Mr Fleming described the water feature "as a work of art and a miracle", describing its



ABOVE: Wes Fleming explains the features of the Australian Garden to onlookers. INSET: Garden Designer Jamie Durie was never prouder to be Australian.

wet edge construction as "nigh-on impossible to achieve at the best of times, a bloody miracle".

Designed with coffee coloured water spilling over the two long edges and a hand-carved water feature in the centre, the movement of the water caused an unusual vortex effect.

Mr Fleming was full of praise for the construction team led by Ian Barker. Almost breathless and growing hoarse, Mr Fleming went on to describe how the massive grass trees were transported laying on their sides over a three-day period from Barcelona.

The flower spike had begun to change direction until they were returned to the vertical, causing a curious kink in its scape.

Mr Fleming then explained how there were 3500 laser cut pieces in the stunning curved Kimberley sandstone walls.

Every piece was numbered, and then laboriously laid as an Australian interpretation of a dry stack wall.

The Australian plants were mostly sourced from Spain and Italy, and a last minute hitch meant a few extra headaches



1 Leanne Gillies pours coffee granules into the water feature to achieve a tea tree stained effect. The crooked flower spike of the grass tree was caused in transport. The vortex in the water feature adds special interest, and the flow of water over the two straight edges was something of a miracle according to Wes Fleming. 2 Australian plants were popular across displays at Chelsea as the UK comes to grips with the effect of climate change and introduces new plants to their gardens.



until several super-advanced bottlebrushes were located as substitutes for the she-oaks which were originally specified. (The Italian nursery holding the she-oaks had given them a very serious pruning just before the show).

Mr Fleming described the camaraderie of the team, commending the commitment that brought the garden to its stunning best and impressed judges, royalty and the sell out crowds who flocked to Chelsea.

Asked what motivated him to bring a piece of Australia to the spectacular Chelsea Flower Show, Fleming pondered quietly for a moment before listing the elements that are his driving force.

Number one, raising the profile of Australian horticulture at both a national and international level.

Number two, offering the horticulture

“
I have never been more proud to be Australian.
”

industry as a solution to climate change. Number three, fostering a love of gardening and the natural world among children, who often have a limited capacity to explore their natural surroundings due to an increase of urbanisation.

According to chief designer, Jamie Durie, the design process started with "the desire to reach an emotional outcome, a search to achieve a luxurious sophisticated zone that provided the essentials of both safety and

security while allowing nature to control the architecture".

He said he sought to shape the garden to fit his emotions, while providing an outdoor space that was embraced by natural surroundings.

"I have never been more proud to be Australian," he said after winning.

Ian Barker and Associates Landscape contractors worked with the rest of the Flemings team to build the garden on-site at Chelsea, spending up to 14 hours each day for 16 days.

Featuring exclusively Australian plants, the garden showcased the best of Australian materials.

The feature wall was painted by Gabriella Possum Nungarrayi to represent a symbolic story of a journey across her family's homeland.



3 Brian Sams and Vivienne McNamara from Wattle Tree Services, Toowoomba, Queensland led a group tour to Chelsea. 4 Hilliers Nursery Display featured a beach scene with a selection of Australian plants suited to the changed climate in the UK. 5 The late George Harrison was a keen and capable gardener and this garden designed by Yvonne Innes and sponsored by The Material World Charitable Foundation and Olivia Harrison, celebrates the former Beatle's life from beginnings in Liverpool, to the psychedelic 60s and the more contemplative period of his mature years. The Venetian glass mosaic path linked the narrative. Ringo Starr even paid a visit, arriving in a flaming red Mini. 6 Green was the predominant colour for the Laurent Perrier Champagne Garden designed by Tom Stuart Smith and featuring a grove of 30 year old Hornbeam trees pruned to cloud shapes. A path in traditional Flemish bricks winds through the garden which had an ethereal quality and was designed to stimulate a contemplative mood.

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