

CANADA BLOOMS 2010

Good taste returns to the garden

Colour and whimsy are big at this year's Canada Blooms show, **Marjorie Harris** writes. But so are crisp designs and earthy accents

Gardeners love to talk about passion, a word they fling about without caution. It's the theme of this weekend's Canada Blooms show, the country's biggest garden expo, which concludes at Toronto's Direct Energy Centre tomorrow.

This year, designers took the show theme seriously, displaying passion for many causes and in many forms. In *Seen, Unseen*, Toronto-based bsq. design studio's horticultural treatise on the environmental impact of the Alberta oil sands, giant oil drums serve as unlikely containers.

In *Forbidden Flora*, Columbia Fuller and Ron Holbrook's modern-day take on the Garden of Eden, a pair of mannequins with boxes on their heads are enclosed by chic semi-transparent screens in the show's trendiest colour: sinful red.

Both of the gardens are must-sees, as is the Canadian Cancer Society's really touching Yellow Beacon display.

While trudging through the show, be alert to the trees. They are stunning and many (including native serviceberries) have been forced into bloom. This is a tough act to pull off, but every exhibitor uses trees and shrubs with grace. Take note of which ones you can get into your own garden in terms of both size and adaptability. Check out how many of them have been underplanted in huge containers with tulips and heucheras in hues ranging from peach to purple.

Despite all the vibrant colour on show, this year's event is notable for its subdued good taste. Martha Stewart, among others, is slated to visit the show today, while the boffo \$350,000 garden sponsored by Landscape Ontario represents money well spent.

Think elegant stonework, living walls and ceilings, a very rare Woollemi pine tree in a container. As the major garden, it can be regarded as a metaphor for the whole show.

When you've taken it all in, have a sit in the Via Rail lounge in the judiciously edited Marketplace shopping area, which is largely and mercifully free of overly gaudy tchotchkes this year. You won't be rattled by Canada Blooms 2010, but you just might be inspired.

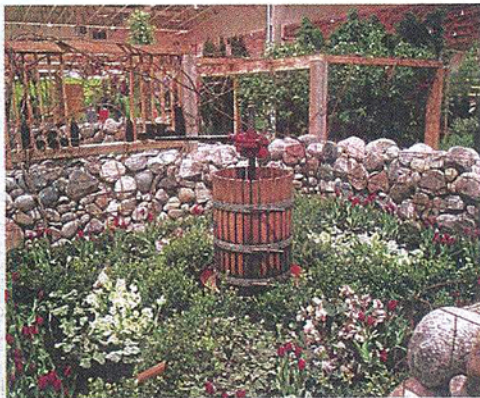
Visit www.canadablooms.com for show hours, admission prices and other details.

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GEOMETRY LESSONS

Clean lines and sharp angles distinguished structural elements such as fencing, pergolas and pools in many a garden at Canada Blooms this year. Here, a rectangular wooden deck in a Zen-like space by Oriole Landscaping Ltd. of Toronto juts into a similarly shaped reflecting pool to striking effect.



DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES

As this grape press at the centre of D.A. Gracey & Associates' whimsical Cellar garden shows, there are no design limits when it comes to outdoor focal points. For a pleasantly rustic look, think vintage farm equipment, antique water pumps, oversized wagon wheels. Just make sure that the element is sturdy enough to weather the elements.



VEGGING OUT

Showing off their decorative value, vegetables assumed a new versatility at the show as design elements (in this space by Parklane Ltd.) and as complements to herbs and perennials (in the space by Toronto Botanical Gardens). Besides veggies, the trendiest plants were hellebores, perennial flowering species that look great in or out of containers.



COLOUR CONCEPTS

Sure, bsq. landscape design was making a point about the Alberta oil sands by incorporating this drum cum planter into its space, but it also reflects the power of a dramatic dose of colour. If accents were mostly cobalt or red, however, plant colours were more subtle, ranging from soft peachy tones to various shades of purple to always elegant black.