

THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NATAL
2009 SUNDAY TRIBUNE GARDEN & LEISURE SHOW
25 TO 27 SEPTEMBER
PRESS RELEASE NO. 4 – GENERIC

The 2009 Sunday Tribune Garden & Leisure Show will open its gates to the public at 09h00 on Friday, 25 to 18h00 on Sunday, 27 September at the Royal Showgrounds, Pietermaritzburg.

This event - now in its 34th year – draws an audience in excess of 24 000 visitors from across South Africa and abroad and is today South African's largest three-day show of any kind.

Acknowledged as being Africa's premier horticultural event, the show is a must, not only for garden enthusiasts but for anyone interested in being 'blown away' by the wow factor in the many displays of international acclaim.

In line with the Chelsea concept on which the show is modelled, the emphasis is on corporate and municipal designer gardens, with final displays being anything from the functional to the surreal.

Some 40 feature gardens will be on display, including amongst others, the reconstruction of the award winning 2009 Durban Parks Chelsea exhibit and displays by Ludwig's Roses, the Wildlands Conservation Trust, The Gardener magazine, the Sunday Tribune, ABI, Telkom, Ezemvelo Wildlife and the municipalities of Ekurhuleni (Kempton Park), Mangaung (Bloemfontein), Mbombela (Nelspruit), Msunduzi (Pietermaritzburg), Tshwane (Pretoria), Kwadukuza (Stanger / Ballito) and Nelson Mandela Metro (Port Elizabeth).

For 2009 the show has adopted the theme *Hip and Happening*, sufficiently non-restrictive to encourage 'thinking out of the box' and allow for creativity of the highest order.

All designer gardens are subject to the scrutiny of the invited Chelsea Flower Show mentored judges, whose brief it is to adjudicate displays in accordance with the best of international criteria; this process being complemented by an invitation to the public to vote for their favourite garden.

The show's guest of honour will be Miss Earth South Africa 2009, Chanel Grantham, whose focus is to empower young women to become ambassadors and role-models for environmental and conservation programmes.

Also, Jason Hartman, a recently crowned Idols winner and director of Men of the Trees, an international society involved in the planting and protection of trees and the creation of sustainable food gardens, will be involved in a number of aspects of the show. This will include a display, as well as participation in Ready Steady Plant on Sunday, 27 September.

The 900 sq. metre architecturally impressive Hall 2 will focus largely on the spread of invasive species, with substantial informative displays focused on the theme 'Stop The Spread – Plant Me Instead'.

This year and especially in the light of the economic downturn, the wow factor will be tempered slightly with a number of exhibits focused on self help; an aspect which the organizers hope will become an on-going part of the show going forward.

Amongst several NGOs, the hydroponic farming endeavours of the KZN Blind & Deaf Society will afford the public an informative display. This organization, run exclusively by the disabled, now supplies in excess of 400 kgs of tomatoes and 300 kgs of cucumbers to Spar and other retailers in greater Pietermaritzburg each week.

Similarly, Izingadi Zethemba 'Garden of Hope', whose aim is to provide practical assistance to families and individuals affected by HIV Aids, will also be participating with displays focused on starting and sustaining mini fresh produce gardens.

Ukhozi FM, South Africa's largest radio station, will be represented by way of a display, as well as an outside broadcast unit.

To the extent that many have viewed the show as being the exclusive domain of the privileged hobby gardener, it is hoped that these new dimensions, focused especially on the under privileged and those battling to survive, will benefit from exposure to these self-help initiatives.

Apart from gardens, the show incorporates a substantial commercial exhibition component, catering for manufacturers and suppliers involved in horticulture and home decoration in the broadest sense. Also and primarily for the benefit of the 3000 plus visitors who come from out of province, the Midlands Meander experience will have a dedicated and informative presence.

Every effort is made to cater for the aspirations of all age and demographic groups. To this end and to harness the fresh and uncluttered skills of the youth whilst simultaneously instilling pride in one's environment, the show caters for the young. In 2009 several schools, including a number from rural areas, will again participate by way of designer mini-gardens measuring 2m x 2m. Should this prove a little daunting, the show will also include in excess of 100 (yes, one hundred) 50cm x 50cm tray gardens from schools across the province.

Garden clubs and horticultural societies form an integral part of the show, with the annual pièce de résistance being the 600 sq. metre Hall of Orchids. Also and for the fourth successive year, the event will incorporate a substantial indigenous component;

this to complement the presence of a large number of nurseries – certain with highly specialized plant material – affording the public an educational experience whilst simultaneously encouraging sales.

In addition to horticulture, the show has for much of its history hosted the Illovo Floral Cake Icing display and 2009 will be no exception. This is indisputably the largest and most prestigious expo of icing expertise in the country and in its own right is a major attraction. Illovo will also be operating a state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen, where the emphasis will be on the preparation and presentation of fresh foods and salads.

Every day of the show, 'Ready Steady Plant' demonstrations under the watchful eye of Tanya Visser, editor of The Gardener, will take place. Although a light-hearted and fun-filled experience, the 20 minutes granted to the teams to design something meaningful is an inspirational eye-opener in its own right.

These will be complemented with a number of ancillary activities, including KZN dog agility and jumping displays, as well as the re-introduction of lectures (following a three year break) relating to eco-sensitive matters. These – offered at no additional charge to the public - will be hosted jointly by the Wildlife Crime Working Group and the Botanical Society.

The full programme is as follows:

Saturday, 26th September:

09h30	Wildlife Crime Working Group	Adv Ross Stuart Chairman: Wildlife Crime Working Group
09h45	Citizens in Conservation	Christina Curry Chairman: KZN inland branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa
10h00	Wild Gardening	Geoff Nicholls A prominent horticulturalist, author and indigenous plant expert. He is a consultant on topics from vegetation assessment to site rehabilitation
11h30	Ready, Steady, Plant	Catharine Hanekom Dr Peter Dommert Dairy Farmer & Vet actively involved in vulture research on his Berg farm
12h00	Indigenous Muti	
13h00	Saving the Bearded Vulture	
14h00	What is Happening to our Rhinos?	Riaan van Rooyen Detective Inspector with Hawks and Chairman of Honorary Officer Wildlife investigations.
15h00	Biodiversity Stewardship - Conservation in the Hands of Landowners	Kevin McCann

Sunday, 27th September:

09h30	Wildlife Crime Working Group	Adv Ross Stuart Chairman: Wildlife Crime Working Group
09h45	Citizens in Conservation	Christina Curry Chairman: KZN inland branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa
10h00	Hunters: First & Foremost Conservationists	(Speaker to be announced)
11h00	Role of Honorary Officers in KZN	Janine Smith
11h30	How Can we Help the Cape Parrot Survive?	Meyrick Bowker Scientist who is dedicated to environmental research with a keen interest in birds
12h00	Something about fish	Gillian Rhodes
12h45	Basic Butterfly ID and the SABCA Butterfly Atlas Project	Steve Woodhall: President of Lepidopterists Society of Africa and author of Struik's "Field Guide to Butterflies of SA" and "What's that Butterfly?"
14h00	Threatened Plants: How you can get involved	Isabel Johnson Manager of Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wild Flowers
14h30	Sand – everyone needs it, but so do our rivers. A vision for sand mining in the Umgeni Catchment	Andrew Booth Chairman of the uMsunduzi Catchment Management Forum

Maritzburg is easily accessed; only 45 minutes from greater Durban, a gentle 4½ hour drive from Johannesburg, or a one hour flight from O R Tambo International (there are five each day).

Safe, convenient parking is available on the adjacent Voortrekker sports fields at R15 per vehicle and entry to the show is R35 for adults and R20 for pensioners and children under 12.

Why not think about a weekend in the KZN midlands and take in the Sunday Tribune Garden & Leisure Show; South Africa's Chelsea will not disappoint.

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