

# HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



## In the garden with Wendy Matheson

Travelling down the A9 on a ridiculously early Sunday morning in June we didn't expect thick fog and depressing drizzle, however this didn't detract from the brewing excitement and anticipation of what the culmination of this Scottish horticultural year was to offer.

Gardening Scotland 2010, held at The Royal Highland Centre in Edinburgh, was to prove to be one of the best years for show gardens and exhibits yet. Having been involved in the preparation of a Chelsea show garden in the past, I fully appreciated the immense amount of hard work, dedication and underlying angst and tension that comes with the design and build of a show garden. With space so restricted in a show garden, every inch has to matter and show off the merits of the design plus the quality of the workmanship and plant choices. This year didn't disappoint with several outstanding exhibits.

The "Reinforcing Nature" Show Garden struck gold at this year's Gardening Scotland. It scooped a gold medal but was also named Best Show Garden with a display which, according to RHS judge Lesley Watson, would have looked perfectly at home at Chelsea.

BALI Grand Award winners, Water Gems, designed and built the show-stopping garden (pictured below). The sculptural centre-piece of woven reinforcing bars (Rebar) swooped and flowed through clouds of wildflowers and tranquil water creating a garden which was both relaxing and dreamy. Luxurious curves, beautiful reflections and stunning planting combinations made this a garden which was instantly appealing. The central larch deck and wildflower roof offered to cocoon, protect and entrance. A generous fire pit and comforting pillows beckoned at the centre of this peaceful haven leaving the visitor with visions of late summer evenings spent in a spell-binding setting.

Sam Lowndes of Water Gems formulated the intricate and sensitive design of the garden last autumn. It then took five months to prepare the four-and-a-half tonne Rebar structure which had to be craned onto an articulated lorry and escorted to the showground by police outriders. The use of a biodiverse wildflower matting in the garden was complemented by drifts of *Stipa tenuifolia*, *Astrantia major* Ruby, *Ranunculus aconitum* "Pleniflorus" and *Geranium sylvaticum* "Mayflower". *Rodgersia pinnata* "Superba" combined with *Carex*



*buchananii*, *testacea* and *comans* "Bronze" to mimic the colours of the Rebar while one of the most popular borders of the garden contained a dreamy mix of *Paeonia* Claire de Lune, *Sanguisorba* and *Salvia nemerosa* "Caradonna". The quality of the plants was down to the skill and experience of fellow exhibitor, Billy Caruthers of Binny Plants, who supplied them.

Another outstanding, small but perfectly formed exhibit, "21st Century Croft" (right), designed by Amber Goudy at the Scottish Agricultural College, Edinburgh, won Best New Show Garden. This garden was originally shown at Chelsea and attained a Silver award. In this 21st century croft garden, the ancient Scottish way of life has been injected with some contemporary style. Reflecting concerns about sustainability and renewable energy, the garden demonstrates how to make the most of natural resources without impacting heavily upon them.



The design incorporated modern lines and technology within the natural landscape, bringing ancient traditions comfortably into the 21st century whilst retaining their unique appeal. Native planting, a water rill and insect homes provide ideal conditions for birds and insects, including the bees from the hive.

Fife Council went home with two awards. Not only was it named Best New Floral Exhibitor but it was also the favourite of visitors who named them the winner of *The Sunday Post* People's Choice Award.

Gold medals were also bestowed upon some of the stalwarts of the show including the Scottish Rock Garden club. A notable inclusion was "Billy's Garden" from Binny Plants (right). Kevock Garden Plants continued with its run of five Gold medals in as many years with wonderful alpine, bog and woodland plants.



Outside in the show ground there was a full range of gardening accessories, including beautiful furniture and garden buildings as well as some of the best greenhouses on the market. A couple of interesting exhibits that caught my eye were wonderfully cheerful and contemporary garden seating from Ma Maison in Inverness and the very practical and cute Woodie Wagon from East Lothian ([www.woodiewagon.co.uk](http://www.woodiewagon.co.uk)).

A number of us Scottish garden designers pooled our resources and manned a stand next to the show gardens to highlight the merits of commissioning a designer and advised on how to create beautiful and inspirational gardens. Over the three-day period we spoke to hundreds of motivated and enthusiastic people both experienced and novice and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their garden options.

If you didn't manage to get down to the show this year, don't feel too disappointed as there are still plenty of opportunities to get inspiration and delectation from gardens all over Scotland. Consult this year's edition of the National Garden Scheme's *Yellow Book* for times and dates of wonderful gardens open to the public this summer.

## CONTACT WENDY

If you know your garden could look better than it does but you are struggling to achieve its potential, or you would like to discuss any forthcoming or current garden project with Wendy, please contact her on 07703 737 530 or email: [info@wmgardendesign.com](mailto:info@wmgardendesign.com)