

Society Outing

Royal Horticultural Society Summer Flower Show Hampton Court Palace Sunday July 10th 2016

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So far 2016 had been cool, with a lot of rain and not many sunny days, but flowers in our gardens seem to have bloomed well so we were looking forward to the Dover Society trip to the RHS Summer Show at Hampton Court Palace to see what the experts had achieved this year. We were not disappointed.

Our coach left Dover at about eight in the morning, we picked up a few more gardening enthusiasts at Sellindge and after a good journey we arrived at Hampton Court at about eleven o'clock. Our coach was parked alongside dozens of others and hundreds of cars. It took about 25 minutes to walk from there to the flower show site. As we passed through the palace grounds we admired the immaculate kitchen gardens full of well growing vegetables and wondered at the large conically sculpted yew trees alongside the lawns beyond. We joined an ever growing mass of people converging on the entrance gates to the Garden Show area of the palace grounds. But everything was so well organised that we all passed through easily.

At this point the weather turned a bit showery and umbrellas appeared but it was not serious and we had to decide where to go and what to see. This was not as simple as it might seem. There was so much to see and so many people that progress was slow. Fortunately the grass underfoot was well trodden and the wide metal temporary trackways made walking fairly easy. Those of us with an interest in particular types of plants could head for those areas but we wanted to see everything. That was a mistake given the size of the show. It is the largest flower show in the world and an average of 130,000 people visit every year. So we saw what we could as the pathways led us onward.

The Floral Marquee, a huge tented area, was full of every kind of plant you could think of. We could recognise some of the flowers and perhaps even put names to them but they were far from ordinary. The show had then been on for the whole week but the shape and colour range of the blooms was still perfect. Every variety of flower or plant was there and displayed with artistry. We saw antirrhinums with



A Giant Wave in the Hythe Garden



Garden for Crohns Disease Best Summer Garden



*Rocket Science
Model Outside Floral Marquee*



*Dogs Trust
- A Dogs Life Show Garden*



*UNHCR Border Control
Best Conceptual Garden*

yellow and red stripes as well as in the normal shades of pink and orange and lilies and orchids of every hue. There were ferns and dry desert plants, varieties of grasses, clematis and many other climbers, too many to mention individually but all of the flowers were displayed to show them to their best advantage.

The Festival of Roses Marquee featured roses of every colour and habit, be it for appearance, perfume or suitability for a particular situation. The 'Rose of the Year' is called 'Scent of Heaven'. It is a classic tea-shaped hybrid with orange-salmon blooms and has a rich perfume. The Butterfly Dome was full of wildlife friendly plants which would encourage the insects to the garden. Butterflies were free flying here in abundance.

There were so many aspects to the whole flower show that it is impossible to list and describe everything. There were conceptual gardens, water gardens, botanical gardens, city gardens, feel good front gardens, vegetable boxes, gardens from the USA, gardens supporting the many different charities and one from the Dogs Trust to show how man's best friend can enjoy a garden safely. The 'Best Garden of the Show' this year was designed for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and showed how growing the right plants can hold back heavy rainfall, release it slowly through a

series of water features and reduce flash flooding and help wildlife. This was in contrast to the Drought Garden which used plants which survive in very dry conditions.

It was so hard to see in detail everything which was on offer owing to the large area of the site. But we found places where we could eat on straw bales and other seats to sit on to rest our weary legs. There were jazz bands to listen to and a children's scarecrow competition to look at. Everything was immaculately clean and tidy and well organised, quite surprising given the number of people moving around. This was the last day of the Show. Many were queuing to buy folding plastic boxes on wheels in which to carry away their final plant purchases. After 4 p.m. when exhibitors were dismantling their displays their redundant plants were being offered for sale to the visitors. Happy customers were soon trundling away their loaded trolleys or hugging waving plants to their chests as they made their way back home to their own gardens.

It was a full and busy trip and really too much to be able to see in one day but we had a good journey back to Dover with several plant trophies safely stowed away in the luggage hold of the coach. We had learned a bit more about flowers and plants and confirmed again that gardens are wonderful and life enhancing.