

RHS News

M&G to sponsor RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Flower power; 2010 RHS Chelsea blooming with new headline sponsor, top designers and UK's best nurseries

M&G, the UK's leading fund manager, will be the new headline sponsor of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and the Charity Gala Preview for the next three years. Funds from the sponsorship will support the RHS as a charity.

The agreement will provide opportunities for M&G to continue to build brand awareness through the world's most famous gardening show. The Charity Gala Preview sells out in hours and is believed to be attended by more FTSE 100 Chief Executives than any other event.

RHS President, Giles

Coode-Adams, said, "This partnership with M&G will support our work to help millions of people to garden, fund vital horticultural research, brighten up communities and develop the next generation of gardeners.

"RHS shows

provide inspiration for people around the world. With a phenomenal response from specialist growers, top designers and leading lights*, including a show garden by M&G, 2010 RHS Chelsea will be bursting with horticultural delights and world-class displays."

Michael McLintock, chief executive of M&G,

said, "We see our sponsorship of RHS Chelsea as a natural partnership. Chelsea is about achieving the highest standards and it is that approach that has driven M&G to become one of Europe's leading active asset managers."

Show

garden highlights to date include the biggest ever garden by the Eden Project, the return of regular RHS best in show winner, Tom Stuart-Smith with a garden for Laurent-Perrier and a garden for Tourism Malaysia designed by celebrity gardener James Wong. M&G will also bring a show garden to Chelsea to celebrate its sponsorship. The final garden selection will be made on 7 December 2009.

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Birthdays, adventure, new plants, veteran showmen; get set for the 2010 Great Pavilion

The RHS Chelsea Flower Show, sponsored by M&G Investments, 25-29 May.

Tickets now on sale: www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea

The return of vegetable guru Medwyn Williams, 100 maples for a 100th birthday and a major display promoting "Adventures in Gardening" are some of the highlights in the Great Pavilion at the 2010 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

After a five year absence Medwyns of Anglesey will return to RHS Chelsea with a display of over 45 vegetables, 75% of these will be grown in containers including pots, tubs, pipes and wheelie bins.

Hippopottering Maples, a family firm, will celebrate "Grandmother Hippo's" 100th birthday at Chelsea (26 May), with a display of 100 maples. The feature will include traditional maples and new cultivars, including a miniature maple "Gibbons".

It's a double celebration for Raymond Evison who will be at his fiftieth Chelsea - he first helped stage an exhibit aged just 16 - and 2010 marks Guernsey Clematis Nursery's 25th anniversary. Raymond will unveil Clematis Diamantina (TMEvipo039(N)), a free flowering blue-purple, compact double clematis, at the show.

Another anniversary of note is W Robinson & Son, whose display will highlight 150 years and five generations of vegetable cultivation. Four areas will highlight the nursery's beginning (1860-1900); the war years, (1900-1920); The heyday of vegetables (1920-1960), reflecting the rising interest in allotments and today (1960 - 2010), with a modern display, including heritage varieties still grown by kitchen gardeners.

Hillier Nurseries & Garden Centres, sponsored by Scotts Miracle-Gro, aims to promote discovery and enjoyment in gardening with its "Adventures in Gardening" display and prevent new gardeners from fearing failure through giving encouragement and advice. The exhibit will include a forum for exchanging knowledge and divulging tips.

The Great Pavilion is the jewel in the RHS Chelsea Flower Show crown and will again be home to around 100 spectacular displays of plants and showcase the very best in horticulture.

The RHS Chelsea Flower Show, sponsored M&G Investments, is the ultimate gardening event. The show takes place between 25-29 May and tickets always sell out. Book now to avoid disappointment - www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea

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Take a walk on the wild side at RHS Gardens

To coincide with International Biodiversity Day on 22 May 2010, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is launching summer wildlife trails at each of its gardens to encourage the public to get out there identifying, monitoring, conserving and celebrating the astonishing variety of living things in our gardens. Visitors to each of the four RHS gardens (Wisley in Surrey, Harlow Carr in Yorkshire, Hyde Hall in Essex and Rosemoor in Devon) will be able to see things that the RHS is doing to attract and nurture biodiversity, with plenty of ideas that they can take home to use in their own gardens.

The United Nations has proclaimed this year the International Year of Biodiversity, highlighting the importance of the Earth's biodiversity and encouraging everyone to take action to safeguard all living things, whether they are plants, animals or micro-organisms. The RHS, an official partner in the UK Year of Biodiversity, regards gardens as increasingly one of the most important havens for wildlife. The garden trails will provide ideas on how best to encourage wildlife by providing plants which provide food, shelter and nesting and breeding sites

At each garden a circular trail will be mapped out and visitors can take the self-guided tour at their leisure, making it a great way to see the gardens. Points of interest include ponds, compost heaps, log piles and hedges, which provide varied habitats for an array of wildlife. Visitors can learn how to make a success of home composting and how to make bug homes. And promoting biodiversity doesn't have to be hard work – having even a small, low-maintenance area where you don't cut the grass allows wild flowers to grow.

The trails are enjoyable for all the family, with plenty for children to spot and places to explore. A wide range of insects, birds, amphibians and other creatures make their homes in the rich environment of the RHS gardens. The Plants for Bugs research programme, currently running at Wisley, is investigating the role of native and non-native plants in increasing biodiversity in our gardens. Rosemoor is known for its dormice and bats. Hyde Hall has a healthy population of brown hares, as well as an array of birdlife including stonechats, which have been observed for the first time this year, kestrels and owls. At Harlow Carr, bees will be feasting on the flowers and there will be beekeeping demonstrations from the Harrogate and Ripon Beekeeping Association. Biodiversity does not only cover animal life, but plant life too and the trail at Wisley highlights the importance of conservation of our cultivated plant heritage through its famous fruit collection which contains over 650 cultivars of apple, some known to date from the sixteenth century which is as far back as definite records go.

Andrew Halstead, Principal Entomologist at the RHS said: "Gardens offer very valuable wildlife habitats, particularly in urban areas. We want to encourage everyone to celebrate the sheer variety of living things around us and think about the ways they can encourage biodiversity in their own gardens."

The trails will run throughout the summer at each garden, until the end of August.

For more information on the RHS Events please visit www.rhs.org.uk/gardens

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Global plant trade poses increased risk of alien

diseases attacking gardens and the countryside

Alien pests and diseases inadvertently imported on exotic plants are threatening the plants in our gardens and across the countryside, according to a report launched today (Tuesday 8th July) by a scientific working group led by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

The number of plant disease outbreaks is up by 60% on last year*. Increased global plant trade, coupled with evidence of rapid climate change, suggests that the problem will multiply.

Recent Defra reports have highlighted the worrying spread of disease on rhododendrons in the south west of England caused by *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae*, while many other diseases, including *Cylindrocladium buxicola*, [box blight] which is responsible for the destruction of native box hedges, and *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*, [Dutch elm disease] are well known to the working group.

The report, *Non-native diseases and the future of UK gardens*, is being published today. It proposes that the horticultural industry worldwide develops effective systems to manage the risks that growing and trading of ornamental plants are now creating. Suggested features of such a system would be similar to those, driven by the supermarkets, that are now familiar in relation to food assurance schemes.

The report suggests that new quality assurance systems, driven by a voluntary code of conduct, could sit alongside the current UK plant inspection programme and offer further reassurances to the plant buying public. In 2005, £870 million was spent on imported plants by the British public, three times as much as in 1988. The current inspection scheme only applies to plants known to play host to diseases and does not provide the opportunity to capture evidence of new diseases symptoms throughout the plant production, transportation and selling process.

Dr Simon Thornton Wood, Director of Science and Learning at the RHS, explains, "The current plant inspection programme works exceptionally well for diseases we already know about. But it is the unknown diseases on plants that would not normally be considered problematic that are the real cause for concern. *Phytophthora kernoviae* and *P. ramorum* entered the UK because they were not known about and so not checked for. They have wreaked havoc with cultivated rhododendrons and now threaten to spread to our native heath land.

"However, an industry code of conduct could provide the answer, with every stage of the production and transport process managed with disease risk in mind. We would then be able to avoid another situation like sudden oak death or Dutch elm disease that has changed the face of the Britain's countryside."

Striking the balance between plant health and providing the variety of plants that inspire this nation of gardeners, is at the forefront of the RHS's mind. The UK's leading gardening charity believes that consumer awareness could be the key to ensuring that a code of conduct, underpinning true quality assurance, is developed by the plant importing trade.

Dr Simon Thornton Wood continues, “Working together gardeners can help the RHS to track the emergence and spread of pest and disease problems and together we can all take responsibility for the health of our gardens and the wider environment. Everyone has an interest in ensuring that high-quality; disease-free plants arrive at our shores and reach our gardens.”

For help and advice on identifying plants pests and diseases visit www.rhs.org.uk/advice and to view a copy of Non-native diseases and the future of UK gardens contact the RHS press office on 020 7821 3044.

A DEFRA consultation on the problem of Phytophthora is being launched at RHS Garden Wisley on 15 July 2008.

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RHS Science Flies into Focus

Heliconius Melpomene – credit Stratford-Upon-Avon Butterfly Farm

The exotic setting of the Glasshouse at RHS Garden Wisley will be home to over 1,000 bewitching tropical butterflies from this month. This fluttery arrival comes as part of the charity’s commitment to wildlife conservation and its participation in the national Rothamsted moth survey.

An exhibition in the gallery next to the Glasshouse underlines the RHS’s dedication to the scientific understanding of the interaction between garden plants and wildlife, including moths and butterflies. The Rothamsted survey is a monitoring network throughout Britain that uses light traps to record the UK’s moth population throughout the year. The light trap at Wisley Garden has been run nightly since May 1975. Each week a RHS volunteer, Maureen

Wilson, identifies and counts the numbers and species of moths before entering the data into the survey to give a long term picture of changes in the UK's moth population.

Andrew Halstead, RHS Principal Entomologist, “Tracking the distribution and abundance of moths across the country over a period of years can indicate how changes in climate and loss of habitat are affecting populations. One way to counteract this is to be more tolerant of caterpillars in gardens. The other is to educate people into seeing moths as beautiful creatures, much like their cousins the butterflies. Unfortunately moths are often seen as the ugly sisters of the Lepidoptera, when in fact they are really the Cinderellas.”

Visitors to the Glasshouse can observe at close hand the fascinating life cycle of the beautiful butterflies. They can watch as exotic species from around the world feed from fruit platforms and descend on nectar-rich flowers, such as Lantana, Canna and Zingiber. The butterflies will emerge from pupae in a special behind-the-scenes heated home before being released into the Glasshouse.

Andrew Halstead continued, “Apart from seeing some beautiful insects, there will be opportunities to watch butterfly behaviour, such as courtship flights, egg-laying and feeding from both real and artificial flowers and over-ripe fruit. However, visitors should be prepared for close encounters as the butterflies may choose to alight on them.”

Families can learn more about their garden butterflies and moths and how to help them from the exhibition in the Glasshouse Gallery. Children will enjoy butterfly-inspired art activity sheets from the Art Cart.

Butterflies in The Glasshouse will be open from 10am–3.45pm daily (last entry 3.30pm). The experience is free with normal garden entry. Visit www.rhs.org.uk/wisley to find out more.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR GARDENERS

If there's a gardener in your life, tickets to an RHS flower show or RHS membership will make the perfect gift this Christmas.

Even the gardener who has everything will find something new to love at an RHS flower show whether it's a celebration of spring at the RHS Show Cardiff, or cutting edge design at the world famous RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Gardeners wanting a taste of the good life will relish the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in July, and the RHS Show Tatton Park brings together the best in quality craftsmanship and community gardening.

Ticket prices range from just £8 to £45 with further discounts and privilege days for RHS members.

As well as providing discounted access to the world famous flower shows, RHS membership is a gift that will keep any gardener busy all year round. RHS members have free access to over 140 recommended gardens across the UK, including the four RHS Gardens, a monthly copy of The Garden magazine, access to gardening advice from RHS experts and much more.

RHS Gift Membership costs £49 and comes in a presentation wallet containing gardening goodies, including plant vouchers, seeds and postcards featuring iconic garden landscape images. Order online at www.rhs.org.uk/gift.

For further information about the benefits of RHS membership and the RHS flower shows, or to purchase either, visit www.rhs.org.uk.