

RHS CARDIFF FLOWER SHOW 2008

Friday 18th April

The Cardiff Flower Show day began with a train journey from Swansea High Street Station to Cardiff Central. The train was fine, but the passengers were on the noisy side – four Welsh ladies of mature years swigging the Pimm's, vodka and orange, rum and coke, at 9-something in the morning!

However, we arrived in reasonable weather – no rain, although no sun either. It had been a bit nippy in Swansea, but in Cardiff it was definitely, no question about it, cold. In fact, as we walked from the station to Cardiff Castle (the venue of the flower show and a good atmospheric setting) we took refuge in the first coffee shop we came across and ordered a steaming great cup of finest hot coffee, but not quite in those words.

Continuing on our way to the castle, a strangely symbolic used gardening glove lay on the pavement, as if a deranged gardener had run screaming from the flower show. I wondered briefly if there would be a trail of used gardening gloves, but there was only just the one.

It was quite painless entering the show, as we'd already ordered our tickets online and could go straight in. Admittedly, the queue buying tickets at the entrance wasn't long enough to cause pathological impatience, but we did feel a tiny bit privileged.



Straight in on the right!

My first impression on entering was that there was space for more show gardens. It's probably very unkind to Cardiff to compare it to the only other flower show I've visited so far – Chelsea, May last year. This is only the fourth current RHS Cardiff Flower Show (the last one prior to 2005 being held in 1920) whereas Chelsea is now in its 85th year, having run since 1913. Also, the odds are higher that the weather will cause a problem in April for Cardiff.



Choices – Group 4 Securicor

Kay Santillo, 2008.

All the same, there was a good crowd of people braving the chill factor. The show gardens were well worth the effort and left me wanting more. I really hope that there will be more contenders for the coveted RHS medals in future years. I was very happy to use my digital camera (having come to the realisation at Chelsea Flower Show last year that digital was definitely the way to go among crowds of people).



Has Spring Court Up With Us Yet? – Gale’s Landscape & Garden Creations

Inside the two floral marquees, the temperature was a little kinder. We wandered around the displays and plant sales very happily – plenty of interest in unusual plants and good specimens of favourites. It’s always particularly intriguing to see how different people place different plants together for different effects.

Without meaning to, we found ourselves quite early on buying quite a large floppy *Grevillea Lanigera Mount Tamboritha*, completely caught up in the atmosphere and totally forgetting our train journey back to Swansea. Leaving this acquisition behind the stand for later collection, we continued wandering.

There were many excellent displays of trees, shrubs, plants, succulents and flowers of particular varieties – far too many to mention. For anybody with a particular horticultural interest, I’m sure there was a good chance of satisfaction being guaranteed. For myself, I particularly loved the displays involving spring bulbs and acers.



Spring bulbs



Acers

As midday approached, the crowd of visitors increased and there was a certain amount of accidental bumping into people and having to wait for them to move along from your intended viewpoint of interest. Rather a sad sight was a more or less deserted area with al fresco tables and chairs – it was just far too cold and I couldn't help imagining how much more lively and enjoyable it would have been if only the sun could have shone a little to add to the upbeat atmosphere of live music throughout the day.

I have to confess that we left the flower show to find lunch outside (knowing Cardiff a little, this wasn't at all hard). I was amused to see the symbolic used gardening glove still adorning the pavement en route!

Suitably warmed up after lunch, we retraced our steps past the symbolic used gardening glove and headed once more into Cardiff Castle. It was no trouble to re-enter, as we'd been given a wrist pass each on our way out for lunch.

We headed for the *Experience Wales* marquee this time and realised there was plenty of food on offer in the café. There were plenty of interesting and quite diverse stands, from fudge, meat, cheese and nuts to cider, jewellery, toys and wooden products, to name but a few. While in this marquee, we came across two ad lib walkabout performers – two ladies rather eccentrically dressed and having a good old laugh, even if some of the onlookers looked at them askance!

Once outside again, the weather seemed to be a little more unsettled, as if rain wasn't far away. We walked around the outside gardens again and then the stands, many of them displaying and selling plants. Yes OK, we bought another couple of plants, but smaller ones this time!



***A Taste of the Orient* – Caerphilly County Borough Council Park Services**



A Garden In Time – Cardiff County Council



A colourful favourite

There was rather obviously a lot more going on than we actually saw, such as guided walks, talks and demonstrations. However, the cold and the encroaching rain led us to have one last quick walk around to look at the show gardens and then we took our leave of the flower show (remembering to collect our earlier purchased *Grevillea Lanigera* - I wonder how many people have left plants behind?)



**The Cardiff University Research Garden
Cardiff University**



An iconic Welsh dragon

As we headed for the train station in drizzly rain, clutching our delicate purchases protectively, I was once again amused to see the symbolic used gardening glove still lying in stately solitude on the pavement. I wonder whose it was, who eventually picked it up and how many people wondered about it like I did?!

The train back to Swansea was crowded, but as I sat cuddling the *Grevillea Lanigera* and watching the weather change from rain to sun as we travelled west, I pondered upon the day. I wished I could have read the guide properly before going to the show, as it contained some useful information and I could have understood and appreciated the show gardens more. Maybe closer inspection of the website would have been a good idea! However, despite this and the unseasonably cold weather, I would be quite happy to go to other Cardiff Flower Shows and until then, this one has inspired me to go home and create a really great garden!



A spring flower display



Another colourful delight