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The Chelsea Pensioner's Garden Receives People's Choice Award At Inaugural Singapore Garden Festival - Festival ends with a flourish with some 200,000 visitors over 10 days -

## **26 December 2006**

The much anticipated results of the People's Choice Award at the Singapore Garden Festival (SGF) were finally revealed this morning with United Kingdom (UK) designer, Julian Dowle receiving the honour in a neck-to-neck race with local designer, R P Jickky. Over the last 10 days, visitors to the show cast more than 13,500 votes for their favourite gardens. Julian's *The Chelsea Pensioner's Garden* received 33% of the votes, edging Jickky's *The Paradise* by a close margin of 2%. Both gardens won Silver awards at the Festival.

The inaugural Festival organised by the National Parks Board (NParks) concluded yesterday with some 200,000 visitors attending the 10-day long event. Visitors to the Festival came from Singapore and around the world, including Southeast Asian countries, Australia, China, Denmark, France, India, Japan, Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The biennial Festival was the first in the world to bring together a wide range of top international award-winning designers and Singapore designers to showcase their garden and floral creations all under one roof. The Festival featured 19 show gardens and 14 floral displays by 34 designers, and numerous orchid displays from 16 countries.

Mr Ng Lang, NParks' Chief Executive Officer, said, "For us at the National Parks Board, this has truly been a special Christmas. We were delighted by the strong interest and support not just from Singaporeans but also from overseas visitors. For a first garden show, the response has been an overwhelming endorsement."

On the retail front, while the most popular plants sold were orchids, exotic plants such as bromeliads, pitcher plants and a wide range of flowering shrubs were extremely well received. Some 4,000 copies of NParks' 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the book *1001 Garden Plants in Singapore*, a

handy guide for students, homeowners, gardeners, plant lovers and landscape professionals, were sold at the Festival.

Minister for National Development, Mr Mah Bow Tan, who turned up to celebrate the festive season with NParks staff at work at the Festival on Christmas Day, said “The staff told me that all participants - local and overseas, have given us very positive feedback on this inaugural Singapore Garden Festival. They said that they will be back for the next show. Visitors to the show have also given us a big thumbs-up for the show. This has given NParks confidence to make bolder plans for the next show in two years’ time. All those who love flowers, plants and gardening can look forward to an even better show next time.”

### **A snapshot of what participants and visitors say about SGF:**

#### **Designers & Contractors**

Mr Henry Steed, local designer of *The Philosopher’s Seat*, said, “It was amazing how diverse everybody’s thinking was. The same task was given to all the designers from different places and yet everyone came up with something radically different. No two gardens are vaguely similar. This was an enjoyable although trying experience, as it is not easy to design such a small garden. I hope to see more or larger gardens at the next Festival such that visitors would feel like they are walking through a large park.” Henry was awarded Gold and Best of Show for the Landscape Garden category.

Mr R P Jickky, designer of Fantasy Garden *The Paradise* who also supported fellow designer Henry in constructing his garden said, "It was challenging to be manning two sites; especially when one is a landscape garden and the other is a fantasy one. For *The Paradise* - the public's reaction, the long queues to enter the garden and the compliments I have received, made it all worthwhile. I enjoy being associated with nature and will never change my profession." Jickky was awarded Silver for his Fantasy Garden.

American designer Mr William Troy Taylor, whose creation *Home for the Holidays* was awarded a Silver in the Fantasy Garden category at the Festival, said, “The experience had been better than I ever imagined it would be. I had learnt a lot from the international designers as well as fellow designers from Singapore. This Festival is the best collection of international designs I have ever seen – the widest range of designs and ideas at one shot.”

Mr Damien Koh, local designer of *Passage of Time*, which was awarded a Silver in the Floral

Windows to the World competition, said, “I have been invited to many international shows and it sure feels good to finally be able to tell the world that we have a garden festival in Singapore. The Floral Windows to the World exhibition was a platform for international designers to share their crafts with us but most importantly, for Singaporeans to tell the world that we too; have world class designers. I have been told by local and overseas visitors and international designers many times in the past few days that we have one of the best shows in the world. Our efficiency, warmth, professionalism and organisation skills are flawless. They are already looking forward to the next festival.”

Mr Nico Wissing, designer from The Netherlands, of *The Green Jacket*, which was awarded a Bronze in the Landscape Garden category, said, “I am very happy as this feels like a gathering with very good designers from all over the world. This is a very high quality Festival and I am also very impressed with the local contractors and designers. You must be very proud of your people who are of such good caliber. I would like to return to the Festival again – in fact, I already have some ideas for a new design that is unique yet functional!”

Australian designer of *One Country*, Mr Jim Fogarty said, “Being a part of the first Singapore Garden Festival has been a great privilege for me. Competing on the world stage at an event that is now part of the International Gardening Calendar has been a huge experience for me and for the other international designers at the show. Singapore has been a great host and have set the bench mark for Garden Shows around the world.” Jim received Gold and the Royal Horticultural Society’s Royal Horticultural Excellence award for his garden in the Landscape Garden category.

Mr Michael Bruce, American designer of *Cool Celebration – A Flurry of Excitement!*, which was awarded a Bronze in the Fantasy Garden category, said, “The experience has been wonderful! I have broadened my horizons through my participation and I believe visitors who came to the Festival would have broadened their horizons too. Creating a display half way around the world is challenging and we thank all the partners who have made this possible. The efficiency and planning that went into making this possible is truly amazing.”

Mr Kenny Eng, Director of Garden Asia Pte Ltd said, “This Festival is long overdue! It has not only broadened the scope of the industry, creating awareness that there is a holistic approach to

landscaping but also created many opportunities which the industry should take advantage of. It was also a great learning experience to have not only worked with an international designer but also met with so many from around the world.” Kenny partnered Australian designer Mr Jamie Durie in *Garden Impressions* which won Gold in the Landscape Garden category at the Festival.

Mr Shang Wong, Director of Environmental Landscape Pte Ltd said, “It was really fun and I enjoyed every minute of it. In fact, I look forward to participating in the next Festival in 2008. The festival was very professionally organised and I also learnt a lot from my participation in it. One key aspect is that I was able to experience the different perspectives from various designers around on the world and from Singapore on their interpretation of landscaping.” Shang had partnered UK designer Mr Christopher Bradley Hole in *Garden Island*, which was awarded a Silver in the Landscape Garden category.

Ms Carol Chen, Sales Manager of Hawaii Landscape Pte Ltd said, “We had a very good experience working with an overseas designer and enjoyed the exchange of experience and culture. We were able to share with them our knowledge of tropical plants and at the same time learn about plants unique to their country.” Carol had partnered Australian designers Carolyn and Joby Blackman on *Convicts Fantasy* which won Gold in the Fantasy Garden category.

### **Visitors**

57-year old Mrs C Chan from Malaysia who spent 2 hours at the Singapore Garden Festival with her husband and son, commented, “This is such a wonderful show! I wish I had more time to spend here. Please let me know when your next Singapore Garden Festival will be and I will schedule a trip to Singapore.”

“I was thoroughly impressed during my visit. The Singapore Garden Festival was very professionally run and the exhibits were just beautiful. I’ve heard many positive comments about it from people around me as well. I particularly liked that the exhibition area on the 6th floor was not cluttered with exhibits and had lots of room for visitors to move around freely. Space is such a premium in Singapore, especially greenery space, so your bold step to resist cramming the space with stuff, thereby underscoring the need for Singaporeans to set aside space for greenery & leisure pursuits really speaks volumes with its subtle message.” commented 30-year old Mr Fong Wei Kurk, a lawyer based in Singapore.

“The orchid show at the Singapore Garden Festival was truly spectacular, and I doubt if there would be much you could do to make it better. Obviously it is a well-established feature, and should continue to be popular year after year. The international exhibition in 2011 will be a

special highlight, and we're delighted that Singapore was selected as the venue for it.” commented Professor Peter H. Raven, President of the Missouri Botanical Garden in the United States.

Sree Narayana Mission Home gave feedback that “To most of the residents of our Home, it was an eye opener. They have never experienced such wonderful feelings of joy and peace to be in a garden with so many flowers. Their faces brighten up when they described the beautiful experience. Many thanks also to NParks staff for providing our elderly a hassle free visit. Keep up the good work.”

24-year old educator, Ms Chen Feng Yi commented, “I especially like the orchid show at the Singapore Garden Festival as it showcases a huge variety of orchids, many of which I have never seen before. In particular, I adore the showcase of orchid displays by various schools in Singapore. If I have not come to the Singapore Garden Festival, I would not have known that our students could come up with such creative and original floral designs!”

9-year old Eliezer Ong exclaimed, “I love the astonishing Chelsea Pensioners Garden!”

Mr Ning De Guzman, in his 50s, said, “Garden designs on Level 6 were all very good! The lighting was excellent, cohesive and comfortable. There’s a wide variety of orchids on Level 4.”

Ms Chen, in her 60s, commented, “Reasonable price for such outstanding displays! Designers have his or her own style owing to their culture. We have allowed them to express it here. Natural setting in an enclosed environment is very well done. The various plants and good crowd makes this event very well planned out.”

### **Retailers**

Managing Director of Crystalene Product(s) Pte Ltd, Mr Richard Ng said, “Business was very good at the Singapore Garden Festival 2006! We did not expect such an overwhelming response to our products. There were lots of trade enquiries from both local and overseas visitors, including designers, architects and developers. Our customers have given feedback that the inaugural Festival is an excellent show. We will definitely be back for the next Singapore Garden Festival.”

Ms Anna Ruth P. Conde, proprietress of Purificacion Orchids & Ornamentals from the Philippines added, "The number of visitors for this show has certainly exceeded our expectations. It is quite evident that this show has been well promoted. We are also surprised on how knowledgeable the young orchid hobbyists of Singapore are on orchid species and their cultivation. We are already looking forward to the next Singapore Garden Festival!"

Dennis and Linda Cathcart from Tropiflora, one of the largest collector-oriented exotic plant nurseries in the United States said, "The opening day of the Festival was probably the best day we had at any show!"

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