



TRENTHAM GOES DUTCH

Trentham is now a leading European tourist attraction, and Gardens Manager Michael Walker and his team are looking to fellow Euro gardeners for inspiration



Michael Walker amid the tulips of Trentham.



I have just returned from the Netherlands with two of my Trentham colleagues, visiting a very interesting garden festival. The weather was great – I believe I promised you that July would provide a month of warm sultry weather, but I cleverly didn't commit myself to which country! The journey entailed a ridiculously early (3am) start but that ensured we had all day to explore. We arrived at 10.30am and needed every minute to get around the majority of the site – not leaving until after 6pm.

The Festival is based at Appletern which is about two hours south east of Amsterdam. Although they apparently haven't counted all their gardens, there are in excess of 180 at this current time. All the gardens were well-maintained and looking very well presented – in a rather English way – but we were there on a mission to gain ideas and look for potential problems that we might incur if and when we develop our own festival (of course we will).

We have come back brimming with ideas. And so, we have returned home with a little more clarity in our vision to expand the gardens further at Trentham. If we are to develop an engaging range of show gardens then it is clear we must find an angle that will achieve this which remains in balance with the garden's unique integrity.

We have lots of ideas already which include a lakeside board walk and the further development of the woodland garden with some engaging features such as the 'Sound Stone'. A water bicycle aqua sculpture is planned alongside the existing show gardens which themselves will be better presented with new paths and improved screening. We have plans to immediately introduce at least one new garden, and replace the old tearoom which once served Trentham's caravan site by a contemporary new building to complement the iconic planting schemes in the adjacent Italian Gardens.

The first new garden will almost certainly be an edible garden and our team is already busy working on a theatrical entrance and layout.

Major work will commence later this season and while the main displays in the Italian Garden, Upper Flower Garden and Eastern Pleasure Gardens will be looking luxuriant and colourful throughout September and October, a gentle start to the new developments on the western side will almost certainly have, by then, already commenced in earnest. ■

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