

Florida, South Carolina, Oregon in spotlight at major U.K. flower show

Brand USA, in tandem with three of its U.S. destination-marketing partners, created individual custom gardens that mirrored aspects of each of those destinations at the world's largest annual floral exhibition, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, July 4-9, at historic Hampton Court in Surrey, England.

The three partners were: Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau (Florida); Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (South Carolina); and Travel Oregon. (Lee County highlighted "the beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel.")

"Visitors to this prestigious event could see for themselves the diverse, majestic beauty that is inherent among these magnificent U.S. destinations," said Chris Thompson, Brand USA's president and CEO. "From our urban green spaces to our national parks, the USA landscape has

an abundance of environmental wonders."

Individual gardens for each of the Brand USA partners – designed by Sadie May Stowell, an award-winning UK landscape architect – made up the show's "Great Gardens of the USA." The gardens were each 49 square meters in size. Gardens representing Charleston and Oregon both won silver medals at the show, and the Lee County garden won a bronze. Here are elements of all three gardens:

- The **Lee County** garden design reflected the Moonlight Garden of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers, Florida – a garden designed by Ellen Biddle Shipman, the first female landscape architect in the United States.

Stowell's design included a central water source, trellises of bougainvillea, and an array of white and blue flowers. It also featured an interpretation of Thomas Edison's office.

- The **Charleston** garden epitomized the romantic elegance associated with that destination. Stowell used the

iconic Pineapple Fountain at Charleston's Waterfront Park as inspiration. (Pineapples have long been symbols of hospitality.)

Lemons and cycads, along with box, ivies and hydrangeas, evoked Charleston's subtropical climate. A pair of lemon trees framed the garden's entry.

- Stowell's **Oregon**-inspired garden was a tribute to the Portland International Rose Test Garden, a popular attraction that has its centennial this year. The Stowell design used a water feature that was reminiscent of the Portland garden's central fountain, and an East-meets-West theme that reflected the Oregon city's Japanese and Chinese gardens.

A rocky backdrop was indicative of the state's rugged landscape. With its range of scented roses, the garden offered a palette that featured deep reds, cream and pinks.

Of note, Oregon and the UK share a similar climate, which

allows the same kind of plants to thrive in both locations. And, perhaps, to further encourage UK visitors to come to Oregon, Brand USA representatives at the show pointed to a new direct route that Delta Air Lines launched at the end of May, from London to Portland.

Media coverage

BBC filmed a three-part series on the overall flower show. The U.S.-inspired gardens appeared in the final episode of the series. BBC highlighted the Oregon garden, and also featured the Charleston garden. The total three minutes of coverage of these U.S. gardens had a media value of \$400,000.

The "Great U.S. Gardens" also received substantial coverage in social media. Individuals and media outlets published posts on Instagram (39), Pinterest (9) and Twitter (29).

Country Living, UK posted a video of the Charleston pineapple fountain on Instagram, which had 3,753 views among its 55,000 followers. Overall, the Charleston Garden's fountain was the most popular subject for social-media posts.

The (London) Telegraph had a special supplement to feature the USA gardens. It also created an online hub for a variety of features and information pertaining to the U.S. destinations represented at the flower show, including a series of advertorials.

140,000 visitors

First held in 1990, the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show draws about 140,000 visitors. About 95 percent of the visitors reside in the UK.

Brand USA representatives at this year's show gave out 2,000 "USA Inspiration Guides." Also, Brand USA's office for the UK and Ireland

distributed 10,000 brochures, titled "Great Gardens of the USA," which featured the U.S. destinations and gardens depicted at the flower show, and accompanying plant information.

The week-long event kicked off with an invitation-only preview evening and a press day for media outlets. These outlets included an assortment of national UK publications, lifestyle and travel magazines, and individual bloggers and freelancers.

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