

GRAHAMSTOWN FLOWER FESTIVAL

Now for a festival of natural colour

GRAHAMSTOWN is looking forward to yet another dose of festival fever when the Grahamstown Flower Festival takes over the Makana Botanical Gardens below the 1820 Settlers' Monument later this month.

This year's event boasts a programme of events as diverse as the myriad plants and flowers that bring life to gardens all over Grahamstown this time of the year.

Festival convenor Sharon Richner says that besides the ever-popular and keenly-contested flower competition that has been the highlight over the years, the 2011 festival will boast two speakers, workshops, the 'Gardens of Grahamstown' competition, commercial garden stalls, children's section, musical entertainment and refreshments.

An undoubted highlight this year will be the national launch of the eagerly-awaited and richly-illustrated coffee table book *Veld, Vlei & Rose Gardens* edited by Jacqueline Kalley and rose legend Sheenagh Harris, and published by Johannesburg-based Otterley Press.

One of the rose gardens featured in the book is that of Grahamstonian Vernon Marais, whose Arequipa estate outside town is home to over 4000 rose bushes.

Soon, the judges in the Pam Golding Properties 'Gardens of Grahamstown' competition will be going about their task, adjudicating the entrants in the four categories – small, medium, large and township gardens.

The three judges are landscape architects Warren Lange of HortCouture and Jo Clinton of Clinton Landscape Design, as well as horticulturist/landscaper Jo Skae.

The gardens entered in the competition, as well as other Grahamstown gardens and homes, will be open to the public the

weekend of the festival. Proceeds will go to charities of the homeowners' choice.

Richner is upbeat that *The Gardener* magazine editor Tanya Visser will be one of the guest speakers this year. "She was due to speak at last year's event, but family illness saw her withdraw at the last minute. However, we are excited that she will be with us this year, talking about the 2011 Chelsea Flower Show, as well as a fun-filled take on ways to be a better gardener."

Kirstenbosch horticulturist David Davidson of Chelsea Flower Show fame will give two talks during the course of Grahamstown's flower festival - "The Chelsea Experience" and "Floral Festivals in the Far East".

For the first time at the flower festival, an art exhibition will be held and this should attract keen interest among festival goers to the 'Glass Box' in Eden Grove next to the botanical gardens.

Competition will be fierce as usual among the numerous varieties of blooms on show in the flower competition, with the rose section always a popular attraction.

The shaded areas of the botanical gardens will see marquees erected, and these will house almost thirty commercial garden stalls, displaying and selling everything from plants, shrubs and fertilizers to garden furniture, lawnmowers and paving stones.

Workshops covering a wide variety of topics will also be on offer to festival goers over the weekend, including indigenous medicinal plants, fun with plants for children, using flowers and recyclable items to add a special touch to gifts and arrangements, and preventing insects from becoming pests.

Musical entertainment will be provided by the St Andrew's College pipe band on the Saturday, and the St Andrew's Prep marimba band and the Kingswood College jazz band on the Sunday.

For more flower festival information visit website www.grahamstownflowerfestival.co.za

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