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MEDIA RELEASE



Award winning Australian Garden on show at the Chelsea Flower Show

Visitors to the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show in London will have the chance to marvel at the Australian Garden which is featuring for the first time ever in the world-renowned show.

It will be the centrepiece of the display promoting Spring Gardens of Victoria by Ross Garden Tours, owned by television personalities Graham and Sandra Ross.

The exhibition stand will feature the dramatic Red Sand Garden, one of the highlights of the award-winning Australian Garden at RBG Cranbourne.

Graham Ross said he was delighted to be sharing the stage with RBG Cranbourne.

“The Australian Garden is a standout example of what Australian landscapers and horticulturists do best: promote this country’s fantastic plants in settings like no other,” he said.

Chris Russell, Director, RBG Cranbourne said the link between the Ross Garden Tours and the Australian Garden makes sense.

“The Australian Garden is about showcasing Australian flora and landscapes and Ross Garden Tours is about introducing wonderful public and private gardens to garden lovers: it is a perfect fit, ” said Mr Russell.

He said he was particularly pleased to promote the Australian Garden as a destination for international travellers.

“Being a part of an exhibit at this show offers us the opportunity to reach garden lovers who may be planning or considering trips to Victoria,” said Chris Russell.

“With the show’s national and international media coverage, plus attendance by major UK and European tour operators, we look forward to promoting Victoria and ourselves as the place to visit.”

During the show, there will be an exciting competition taking place on the Ross Garden Tours and Australian Garden stand that will see the winner walk away with a fabulous holiday for two adults, including return flights from London to Melbourne, the Ross Garden Tours 8 day ‘Spring Gardens in Victoria’ tour, a 7 day self-drive holiday in Melbourne and Victoria to experience some of Victoria’s leading tourist attractions and regions – including the Great Ocean Road, Phillip Island, the Mornington Peninsula and the Goldfields regions and finishing with a 5 day self-drive holiday in Tasmania.

The Ross Garden Tours and Australian Garden stand will be one of 600 exhibitors. The Chelsea Flower Show this year will feature 50 gardens and more than 100 floral exhibitors in the Great Pavilion.

The Chelsea Flower Show will be held from May 20 – 24 2008 on the grounds of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, England. The grounds are transformed into the fabulous show gardens, inspirational small gardens and vibrant horticultural displays making up the world's most famous flower show.

The Royal Horticultural Society organizes the Chelsea Flower Show and has done so since its inception in 1852, when it was held in the Society's gardens in Kensington, London. The show moved to Chelsea in 1913 and its original name "The Royal Horticultural Society's Great Spring Show" was changed to its current name. Due to the capacity of the grounds attendance is limited to 157,000 visitors over its five day run each year.

The Australian Garden

The Australian Garden at RBG Cranbourne sets out to offer a greater understanding of Australia's remarkable natural world and how the plants have helped develop our Australian identity. In seeking to do this, the Australian Garden is unique, and is distinctively different from other botanic gardens displaying Australian plants.

The Australian Garden is a place of beauty, enjoyment and education that can be appreciated at several levels – as a celebration of the diversity of Australian plants, as an exploration of the influence of plants and landscapes on Indigenous and European cultures, as a source of knowledge about our environment and its management, and as a demonstration of sustainable practices for home gardeners.

The first eleven hectares of the Australian Garden opened in May 2006 and includes spectacular landscape features such as the Red Sand Garden, Rockpool Waterway, Escarpment Wall sculpture and Eucalypt Walk. These features are complemented by a Visitor Centre incorporating information and educational facilities, a café and shop.

The Australian Garden was designed by leading landscape architects, Taylor Cullity Lethlean with Paul Thompson.

The design won the State Award for Landscape Architecture in 2007, the Landscape Excellence Award in 1997 and 2007 and the Landscape Master Plan Award in 1997 from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (Victorian and Tasmanian Chapters). It was also successful in the 1998 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects' national awards, by winning the national Landscape Masterplan award. It was named the Best New Tourism Development in Australia in the 2006 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards,

The Australian Garden is at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, which is approximately 45 minutes south-east of Melbourne, Victoria.

Ross Garden Tours

Ross Garden Tours has been operating for more than 25 years under the watchful eyes of Graham and Sandra Ross, Australia's leading television and radio personalities on gardening and horticulture. Offering a diverse programme of unique garden tours, Graham, Sandra and their team hosts trips to the very finest private collections and estates on offer all over the world.

Having unrivalled and long-standing contacts with horticultural friends and governments in leading Botanic Gardens, private estates and museums, Sandra and Graham Ross return year after year to visit old favourites and new finds.

Tours available include the Classic Gardens of France, the Gardens of England, Classic Gardens of Italy, the Gardens of Scandinavia & St Petersburg, Tasmania in Spring, the Wildflowers of Western Australia, Spring Gardens of Victoria, Wine & Roses in South Australia, Canada in the Fall as well as several tours covering the exotic flora of Japan and China.

Graham Ross explains: "Ross Garden Tours is 100% family-owned and run, so we pride ourselves on the truly personal service we offer. Our tours are very different and don't follow the traditional tourist track. We tailor each of our tours to ensure everyone really experiences the charm, food and culture of each location, meeting our horticultural friends and local guides across the globe.

"I challenge you to find another tour company that is able to unlock the gates to the number of gardens and private plant collections that we can!"

The small, fully-escorted tours comprise accommodation in superior hotels, whether they are small and luxurious boutique hotels, or historical châteaux in the country. Likewise, transport is all pre-arranged, providing guests with peace of mind and allowing them to relax and enjoy the gardens, food, wine and culture along with like-minded company. What's more, you can be sure that a qualified horticulturist from Ross Garden Tours will be on hand at all times throughout the trip. In fact, both Graham and Sandra still regularly host tours themselves.

Almost three-quarters of those who experience one of the Ross' tours return to travel with them again, proving that Ross Garden Tours truly offers a world-class opportunity for discerning travellers to visit some of the most breath-taking locations the world has to offer.

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For further information, please contact Matt Jones at RBG Melbourne on (03) 9252 2494 or by email at matt.jones@rbg.vic.gov.au or Kent Ross at Ross Garden Tours on (02) 0484 5100 or by email at kent@rosstours.com

Notes to Editors

With more than thirty years experience in international and Australian garden tours, the Ross family, Graham, Sandra and their children, Linda and Kent, are experts. The business expanded when Peter Whitehead, Michael McCoy and Libby Cameron, all qualified horticulturists, joined the team. Each member of the Ross Travel Team shares his or her own experiences as you enjoy the food, ambience and culture of each exciting destination.

Ross Garden Tours range from one-day coach trips and relaxing weekend rambles to over two week fully escorted tours around the world. Highlights of the programme include Members' Day at the Chelsea Flower Show; the Cherry Blossoms in Kyoto, Japan; deserts of wildflowers in Western Australia; Monet's water garden at Giverny in France and many more. Meet local gardeners and learn about their inspiration.

International travelers can choose to join Ross Garden Tours within Australia or link up in Europe, America or Asia where itineraries are carefully planned with luxury accommodation. Bus, train or ferry travel is all pre-arranged. National guides share their insights into history, culture and local knowledge. The Ross Tour Leader is your personal escort, coordinating all travel arrangements and providing plant and garden information.