

31 August 2007

## Media release



### Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne turns Canna Bed into rain garden

The historic Canna Bed in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne has been turned into a rain garden in a bid to improve the water quality of the Ornamental Lake.

A joint venture between Melbourne Water, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Ecodynamics and GHD (engineering consultants), the rain garden has been designed in line with urban water design principles.

Michael McNabb, Manager of Horticulture, said: "Putting in the rain garden has been an important part of the Gardens' commitment to water conservation management program."

"The aim is to divert the stormwater run-off into the rain garden where the water will be filtered naturally before entering the lake system and, in turn, the Yarra."

"A rain garden is a natural way of solving water pollution problems as well as protecting our water resources," he added.

Mr McNabb said that the transformation of the Canna Bed into the Garden's first rain garden had unearthed some unusual objects, some dating back to the mid 1800s.

"Until the Cannas were planted in the area in 1906, the site was used as a rubbish tip," said Mr McNabb.

Objects found include crockery, old glass bottles complete with glass bottle stoppers, horseshoes and a dog collar.

"It has been a fascinating insight into early European settlement and how the Gardens were used," said Mr McNabb.

Cannas typically grow in tropical regions, in forests and alongside rivers. The brightly coloured canna is native to South America and the West Indies. They have been popular plants since European settlement in Australia, used to give a tropical effect to European gardens.

William Guilfoyle, the fourth Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, conducted a census of the Gardens in 1888 in which he listed 72 species and cultivars of canna.

#### About rain gardens

Rain gardens were first trialled in the United States in the early 1990s. Rain water is directed from drains and trenches into a planted garden bed where the water is filtered and absorbed by the soil. Plants that can stand up to excess moistures are usually used. Water not used by the plants percolates into the ground round the rain garden. The combination of plants and soil acts as a filter allowing the planting of a greater range of plants, improving groundwater quality and water flowing into creeks and lakes. It also uses waste water better.

**Media enquiries: Penny Underwood on (03) 9818 8540.**