



Media Release

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23rd Taranaki Rhododendron & Garden Festival scheduled for Oct 29 to Nov 7

The 23rd annual Taranaki Rhododendron & Garden Festival will open its garden gates for a 10-day Festival of private and public gardens, jazz & wine parties, guided walks and celebrated guest speakers from October 29 to November 7 this year.

As one of the longest running garden festivals in New Zealand, Festival organisers are expecting to confirm that 49 high quality private and public gardens, including nine new gardens, will be open to visitors when the Festival is officially launched on July 8.

Offering an exclusive peek into some of Taranaki's top private gardens, five gardens from the first Festival in 1988 are still part of this year's festival.

The original six are Pukeiti, Ratanui and Tupare gardens in New Plymouth, Tikorangi The Jury Garden in Waitara, Ostlers Garden in Stratford, and Hollards Garden in Kaponga, says Festival manager, Lisa Ekdahl.

"Gardens and their gardeners are ever- changing, which makes the Festival a fresh experience every year," says Ms. Ekdahl.

"What we aim for each year is to give visitors a diverse range of high quality gardens that are among the best in the country. Visitors can enjoy strolling through large park-like country gardens, geometric gardens, intimate inner city potager gardens, sub-tropical or rainforest gardens – we even have an authentic Japanese tea house garden!"

Called the New Zealand Garden Experience, final details of gardens, guided walks, events and guest speakers will be revealed when the Festival is launched by "bug man" Rudd Kleinpaste in New Plymouth on July 8.

Also under wraps is this year's landscape design project. For the last five years, Festival organisers have invited leading national and international landscape designers to create a unique garden just for the Festival.

Entries have included a whale bone sculpture garden on the New Plymouth coastal walkway and even a multi-media virtual garden.

“Each year we try to inspire and challenge visitors with the landscape design project – and this year will be no different as we are undertaking a type of garden that has virtually never been seen before in New Zealand,” reveals Ms. Ekdahl.

Last year’s Festival attracted thousand visitors from right around the country. Garden gate statistics and respondents to an independent survey revealed the following:

- **59,000** garden visits (2008= 46,420)
- **75%** of visitors were from outside of Taranaki (2008 = 74%)
- **97%** approval from Festival visitors (excellent, very good) (2008 = 97%)
- **80%** of visitors were female (2008 = 86%)
- **7,299** Visitor nights (2008 = 7,280)
- **\$5.4m** contributed to the Taranaki economy

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