

PRESS RELEASE
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Chelsea Flower Show 2008

'The Medicinal, Mythical and Magical World of Herbs'

Organic herb farmer and 12-times Chelsea gold winner, Jekka McVicar is again set to inspire visitors to attend this year's Chelsea Flower Show with an exciting display that shows how the herbs of yesteryear are the herbs of our future.

This exhibit illustrates the medicinal, mythical and magical properties of herbs and shows how these are relevant today. For example:-

***Anethum graveolens*, Dill, Aneth (French) Sowa (Indian)**

Medicinal use: Carminative, diuretic, to treat dyspepsia, flatulence, hiccups and other digestive disorders.

Myth and Magic: It was believed to protect one from witchcraft. One particularly popular myth was that if one placed the seeds of the plant in one's shoe before entering the court room, one would win the case.

***Artemisia abrotanum*, Southernwood, Abrotano (Italian), Fu ngaai (Chinese Cantonese)**

Medicinal use: Bitter tonic, to treat menstrual disorders and as a vermifuge to rid children of threadworm.

Myth and Magic: It was a most potent antidote against magic potions. It also repelled demons, kept snakes away and protected people from thieves *but* was reputed to cause impotence.

***Carum carvi*, Caraway, Carvi (French) Siya jeera (Indian)**

Medicinal use: scorpion stings, snake bites, fever, respiratory diseases, flatulence, breath deodorant, tonic.

Myth and Magic: This herb has been in use for over 5,000 years. It was reputed to ward off witches, protect one from the evil eye, prevent thieves from entering the house and was an important ingredient in love potions.

***Foeniculum vulgare*, Fennel, Fenouil (French), Imboziso (African), Saunf (Indian)**

Medicinal use: Carminative, expectorant. Used to treat menstrual disorders, dyspepsia, flatulence and coughs.

Myth and Magic: The ancient Greeks thought it conveyed longevity and gave strength and courage. In mediaeval times, it was a preventative against witchcraft and other evil influences and was hung over doors on Midsummer's Eve to ward off evil spirits.



***Laurus nobilis*, Bay,** Laurier d'Apollon (French) Alloro (Italian) Tej Patta (Indian)

Medicinal use: Digestive tonic, indigestion, dyspepsia and flatulence.

Myth and Magic Culpeper (1652) wrote that 'neither witch nor devil, thunder nor lightening, will hurt a man in the place where a bay-tree is'. He also said that the berries were effective against the poison of venomous creatures.

***Levisticum officinale*, Lovage,** Liveche (French) Yuan ye dang gui (Chinese Mandarin)

Medicinal use: Carminative, diuretic, treatment for inflammation of the lower urinary tract and to prevent kidney gravel.

Myth and Magic: It was reputedly a good aphrodisiac that no witch worthy of the name could be without. It deodorised the skin, so was a latter-day odour eater. It was planted outside houses as protection from all evil forces, the plague, snakes and insects.

***Mentha spicata*, Mint,** Menthe, Douce (French), Pudina (Indian)

Medicinal use: Digestive disorders, catarrh. Peppermint is antibacterial.

Myth and Magic: Various species prevented drunkenness and protected people from the evil eye. Mints were also considered an aphrodisiac.

***Ruta graveolens*, Rue,** Binnewortel (African), Sudapa (Indian)

Medicinal use: To treat fevers, toothache and earache and used in veterinary medicine as an antispasmodic and antiepileptic.

Myth and Magic: The ancient Greeks regarded this herb as an anti-magical herb. In the Middle Ages it was considered a powerful defence against witches and was thought to bestow second sight.

***Thymus vulgaris*, Thyme,** Baak leih heung (Chinese Cantonese)

Medicinal use: Expectorant, antibiotic. Used to treat coughs, colds, and bronchitis.

Myth and Magic: In the Middle Ages, drinking it was part of a ritual to enable one to see fairies. It was said to protect one from witchcraft. It was also claimed that eating thyme increased courage, whereas the smoke of the burning herb was believed to offer a protection from poisonous bites.

***Valeriana officinalis*, Valerian,** Phu (German)

Medicinal use: An important herbal sedative, a non addictive tranquilliser.

Myth and Magic: It is said that the Pied Piper of Hamelin carried the root to attract the rats. It was thought to deflect evil away from either the house it was planted near or the person carrying it. Cattle, if washed with the juice of valerian, were protected from earth sprites. The plant was also said to be an aphrodisiac and when mixed with neat wine it was supposed to turn even the most virtuous woman into a vamp.



The herbs will be displayed in a spiral herb garden, at the centre of which will be a sundial created by Joanna Migdal, www.sundialsomething.com. The sundial is held by a sculptured hare. In the Chinese horoscope, Jekka was born in the Year of the Hare, and in Chinese numerology 8 is the luckiest number, thereby creating a supernatural slant for the 2008 exhibit. The sundial is not only full of Myth and Magic but is also scientifically accurate, and is thus ideally suited: not only because it is a beautiful *and* functional piece of work but also because it befits the symbolic theme of the garden.

Herbs are not only versatile and beautiful; they are one collection of plants that encourage and increase the biodiversity in the garden. Here on Jekka's Organic Herb Farm we have noted many birds regularly visiting the farm including charms of Finches, flocks of Long Tailed Tits, Fieldfares, Redwings, Green and Great spotted woodpeckers, Little and Tawny Owls. Because the farm has been established for over 20 years there are many Hedgehogs, Greater Crested Newts, Toads and Frogs that happily meander through our poly tunnels giving the unsuspecting visitors a fright and keeping the pests under control.

Notes to Editors

1. The plants included in the Chelsea display are: all of those mentioned above. A full detailed list will be available in March 2008
2. Photographs of plants are available upon request.
3. To find out more about Jekka's Herb Farm visit www.jekkasherbfarm.com or call Vicki Young on 0845 2903256.