

## Malaysia's Flower Show – Floria 2015

The Royal Putrajaya Flower and Garden Festival or 'Floria' is Malaysia's largest annual flower and garden festival. Floria 2015 attracted 800,000 visitors.

By Elaine Yim



A bright and colourful start to Floria 2015

**M**y first experience with an international flower show was at Floria 2009 and ever since then I have been a faithful follower. I find that I can gain a lot of knowledge and ideas about flowers and landscaping and keep abreast of the latest developments in the horticulture industry by visiting flower shows. For instance, I was very inspired by Floria 2010 where I learnt a lot about the gingers and bananas which are members of the Zingiberales order of plants. It suddenly dawned on me that these plants are not only for eating and cooking but many are ornamental. What I like most about Floria is the massive amount of blooming flowers and plants that I can feast my eyes on. Gardening,

nature and photography enthusiasts like me look forward to this event.

### WHAT IS PUTRAJAYA FLORIA?

Putrajaya Floria is an international event hosted by Putrajaya Corporation (Perbadanan Putrajaya or PPj) in collaboration with the Federal Territories Ministry and Tourism Malaysia. Putrajaya Floria started as a biennial event in 2007 and became an annual event from 2010 onwards. It was given royal status in 2014.

Floria 2015 was the eight-edition. It was held at its permanent location on a 12 ha site at Anjung Floria along the Promenade in Precinct

4, Putrajaya from 30 May – 7 June 2015. The target was one million visitors. The dates coincided with the 2-week school holidays, just before the start of the fasting month of Ramadhan. I expected a big turnout for this event. The actual number was close to 800,000.

The theme was “Lily – Tapestry of Hues”. 100 varieties of lilies and 400,000 other plants and flowers were showcased during the 9-day festival. Floria 2015 received the Joyce White Award of Excellence by the World Flower Council International.

This annual event has garnered wide media coverage. Announcements about the upcoming Floria attractions were made as early as the start of the year. A website was dedicated to giving information and the latest updates about the event.

### AIMS OF FLORIA:

1. Promote Putrajaya as a Garden City, Floral City, Green City or “city within a park”.
2. Enable the public to:
  - a. learn more about plants and flowers, gardening products, new, innovative and/or eco-friendly techniques and DIY methods of planting, landscaping and flower arrangement
  - b. nurture an interest in landscaping and gardening activities towards a healthy life.
3. Develop the horticulture industry by providing opportunities and a strategic meeting place for growers, florists and landscape designers to
  - a. create awareness, promote and sell their products locally or break into overseas markets
  - b. network and exchange ideas
4. Provide exposure and learning experiences for school and university students in



Princess Head Wear design at Indoor Floral Pavilion

gardening and landscaping practices.

- Put Malaysia on the world map as a tourist destination on par with international flower shows such as the London's Chelsea and Melbourne's Flower shows.
- Give a boost to the horticulture, landscaping and tourism industry.

#### WHO ARE THE VISITORS?

I saw local and foreign tourists arriving by the busloads. Those who came in groups were families, couples, gardening societies, photography club members and school students chaperoned by teachers. The solo ones came complete with photography gear such as the latest cameras, selfie sticks and power zoom lenses. The participants came from many countries. There were floral designers, landscape architects, flower show organizers and also representatives from overseas gardening societies and international flower associations. Some of the foreign participants and tourists also took the opportunity to visit tourist attractions in Putrajaya city and other states of Malaysia.



Design by Lawrence Sun from China: "Romance of the Three Kingdoms"



Replicas of Clock Tower and Stadhuys Red Building, Melaka

Special visitor packages such as Friendship Package and Floria 2015 Package had been marketed in advance through local and foreign travel agents with the help of Tourism Malaysia.



Spring Garden allows visitors to experience the beauty of spring blossoms in temperate countries

#### HOW TO GO THERE

It was not difficult to get to the venue. Visitors who had their own transport could use WAZE mobile apps and typing the words "Anjung Floria Precinct 4, Putrajaya". Those who relied on public transportation could take the KLIA Express train from KL Sentral to Putrajaya/ Cyberjaya train station which is connected to Putrajaya Sentral Bus Station. Thereafter they could take feeder busses to the Floria site. The Floria bus at Platform 4 charged RM 0.50 per trip. For me, repeat visits were needed to cover the whole show.

Ticket prices were as follows: Malaysian: Adult (RM 5.00); Senior Citizen and Child (RM 1.00). Non-Malaysian: Adult (RM 10.00) Child (RM 5.00). One could also buy tickets online but there was an additional online fee of RM1 per adult ticket.

#### ATTRACTIONS

At Floria 2015, I had the chance to see, touch, feel and sniff many temperate flowers such as daylilies and hippy lilies. Gorgeous Kenyan Roses were sold at very low prices. For the first time, we saw the world-famous high-altitude Ecuadorian Roses. Both types of roses were specifically air-flown for the flower show and are not available at any Malaysian stores yet.

The attractions at Floria 2015 can be summarized as follows:

- Permanent Gardens – these gardens will remain even after the flower show is over
  - The China-Malaysia Friendship Garden which is a Lingnan-styled garden developed in collaboration with the Malaysia-China Friendship Association
  - English Garden in summer



A vertical flower wall using foliage plants such as bromeliads, syngonium, tradescantia (boat lily), aglaonema and money plant (*Epipremnum aureum*)

- c. Fantasy Garden with structures in the shape of candy canes, cupcakes, mushrooms and toadstools.
  - d. Heliconia Walk which features members of the Zingiberales order of plants.
  - e. Pinwheel Garden which features a sea of multi-coloured pinwheels around an ornamental clock tower.
  - f. Galeria D'Floria where Floria souvenirs are sold.
2. Semi-Permanent Gardens – of which part of the structures will be maintained
    - a. Royal Garden, which is a replica of Istana Sri Menanti of Negeri Sembilan with Minangkabau architecture, fountains and meandering pools.
    - b. Spa Garden inspired by the hanging gardens of Babylon, with a foot spa and jacuzzi.
    - c. PPj Kufic Maze Garden in the form of a maze with a 7m high green wall and an atrium
  3. What's new and aggressively promoted were the Winter Garden with simulated snow falls, and a Spring Garden with flowering roses, lilies and tulips
  4. An Indoor Floral Pavilion which showcased floral arrangements by international floral designers and landscape architects. The new addition this year was the Embassy Row which saw the participation of Republic of Kenya (Kenyan Roses), Republic of



The Flower-Pot Man

5. Ecuador (Ecuadorian Roses), Republic of Indonesia, and Oman.
5. Lily Garden, Cats Pavilion with cat shows and cat products, Kids Garden, Tea Party Garden
6. Outdoor garden ideas such as the Outdoor Furniture Garden, Picnic Garden and Glamping (Glamour Camping) Garden showcasing modern camping equipment for outdoor lifestyle.
7. Garden Bazaar and Horticultural Market where plants, flowers, gardening products and accessories, furniture, equipment, and related services were sold.
8. Food & Beverage – there were ample sitting places and adequate stalls selling all kinds of food and drinks.
9. Floria Arts and Crafts with retail lots selling handicraft and art inspired by plants, nature and landscapes.
10. Show Gardens by government agencies, corporatebodies, private sector, associations, growers, primary and secondary schools and universities.
  - a. Melaka state authorities featured a replica of the well-known Stadhuys Red Building with Clock Tower, Windmills, Victoria Fountain and Melaka River
  - b. Brightmark Sdn Bhd put up a Whimsical Garden with annuals such as celosia, marigold and petunias.

c. Famcon Strength Sdn Bhd & Risda Semaian dan Landskap Sdn Bhd created The Bucolic Garden that mimics Hollywood movies “The Hobbits” and “Lord of the Rings”.

11. Daily activities such as floral arrangement and gardening workshops, live entertainment (musical DJs, cultural songs and dances, magic shows, stilt walkers), face painting, arts and crafts demonstrations.



Theme of Floria 2015 : "Lily – Tapestry of Hues"

## 12. Competitions

- a. Royal Floria Putrajaya (RFP) International Cup for the winning design among international participants at the Floral Pavilion
- b. RFP Garden Cup for outdoor garden designs
- c. RFP International Designer Garden Award
- d. International Orchid Competition
- e. Watercolour art contest



Kufic Maze Garden by PPj

the heat. There should have been a system for replacement.

## MY DISAPPOINTMENTS

1. Delicate flowers like Asiatic lilies and roses that had withered were not replaced during the show. Some floral bouquets and arrangements had also withered off under
2. There was a separate charge of RM 3.00 for each entry to the Winter Garden and Spring Gardens but visitors had to endure an extremely long wait queuing for tickets and



Replica of the Royal Garden of Istana Sri Menanti of Negeri Sembilan

for entrance into the venue. The simulated presentations lasted only a few minutes and visitors were given another few more minutes to take photographs before the lights were turned off and the audience ushered out. When it was my turn to see the show, all the tulips had died and they were not replaced.



Garden design by the Johor State Government

3. One had to arrive early or park at quite a distance away. The distance to the car park must have deterred many visitors from buying from the vendors of plants and other garden products. Better

arrangements could have been made for car parking and for easy pick up of purchased

items. A fee for car parking could have been levied to pay for better parking arrangements.

- The absence of horticultural innovation was striking. What has happened to plant breeders who used to compete in showing off new orchids? Why is there so little

interest in breeding and displaying new horticultural varieties? Innovation is what makes Chelsea the world's leading show, attracting horticulturists from all over the world to see what is new each year. To drive innovation, it would be necessary to set up knowledgeable panels of judges, with competition rules and standards.

(actual: 500,000). The theme was "Orchid – A Celebration of Colours" to coincide with the spirit of the 1Malaysia concept.

#### Floria 2010

The third Floria was held on 10–18 July 2010 at the Waterfront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya on a 90 ha site. The theme was "Heliconia – Tropical Splendor" and the target was 500,000 visitors and 400,000 flowers to be exhibited. The scale of this event was 50% bigger than the two previous ones. It had the largest number of international participants, from 9 countries. The actual number of local and overseas visitors reached 660,000. I saw the most number (200) of heliconia and Zingiberaceae species exhibited and today I still say that it was the best floria I had attended.

#### Floria 2011

The fourth Floria was held on 9–17 July 2011 at the Waterfront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya. The theme was "Roses are Forever" and the target was 800,000 visitors. 12,000 hybrids and cultivars of roses and 400,000 other plants and flowers were exhibited. The participants came from 13 countries. For the first time, there was the night attraction of 1Malaysia International Tourism Night Floral Parade with fireworks display on every night.

#### Floria 2012

The fifth Floria was held on 30 June–8 July 2012 at the Waterfront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya. The theme was "Bougainvillea – Enduring Beauty".

100 varieties of bougainvilleas were exhibited. 10 international participants displayed their landscape and floral designs. Floria 2012 entered the Malaysia Book of Records for "The Most Collection of Bougainvillea". It was able to meet its targeted 800,000 visitors and achieved earnings of RM 2 million for exhibitors.

#### Floria 2013

The sixth Floria was held on 22–30 June 2013 at the Waterfront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya. The theme was "Orchid – Tropical Treasure" and the target was 1 million visitors. 5,000 orchid plants from more than 100 species and 200 hybrids were showcased. Participants came from 18 countries. The visitor turnout fell short of target at 800,000 due to the haze that blanketed the country.

#### Floria 2014

The seventh Floria was held on 14–22 June 2014 at a new location, Persisiran Tasik, Precinct 4, Putrajaya. For the first time, an entrance fee was charged. The theme was "Begonia – Mesmerising Colours" and the target was 800,000 visitors. 43 participants comprising of garden designers and landscapers from 24 countries took part in the festival. The reported total earnings were RM 2.1 million from the sales of flowers, handicrafts, food and beverage products. Floria 2014 entered the Malaysia Book of Records for the most number of international participants in a flower festival. It also received royal status and the flower show became known as Royal Floria Putrajaya.

### HISTORY OF FLORIA AND LAMAN, THE LARGEST LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN FESTIVALS IN MALAYSIA

#### Before Putrajaya Floria: Laman 2004, 2006 and 2008

The largest landscape and garden festival from 2004 to 2008 was The Malaysia International Landscape and Garden Festival also known as Laman held at the 29 hectares (72 acres) site of Perdana Lake Gardens, Kuala Lumpur. It started with Laman 2004 with a target of 50,000 visitors and was themed "Colours Amidst Greens". The festival was the brainchild of then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad as part of his vision of making Malaysia a Garden Nation by 2020. Laman was a biennial event organized by the National Landscape Department under the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and hosted by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL). Laman 2004 was a 9-day event held on 17–25 July 2004 and it attracted 140,000 visitors.

This was followed by Laman 2006, an 11-day event, themed "Oasis of Beauty" held on 6–16 July 2006 with a target of 500,000 visitors and the aim was to make Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia a must-visit tourist destination comparable to the London Chelsea Flower Show and Holland Floriade.

The last, Laman 2008, was held on 19–27 July 2008. The theme was "Rhythm of Nature" with focus on nature and the environment and the target was also 500,000 visitors.

#### Floria 2007

This inaugural event, known as Putrajaya Flower and Garden Festival was held on 25 Aug – 2 Sept 2007 at the Lakefront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya on a 12 ha site. Entrance was free. Floria 2007 was held in conjunction with Malaysia's 50th National Day celebration and the 44th International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) World Congress. The theme was "Hibiscus – Rainbow Serenade". It was visited by 300,000 people (target: 200,000). The organizer was Putrajaya Corporation (PJC) and PJC Landscape and Parks Department. The main exhibits were the Indoor Floral Pavilion and Outdoor Exhibits with Showcase Gardens, Garden Square and Bazaar.

#### Floria 2009

The second Floria was held on 1–9 August 2009 at the Waterfront, Precinct 2, Putrajaya on a 6 ha site. The target was 400,000 visitors