

NEWS



Immediate release

Country's gardening legacy marked -- New South Downs Heritage Garden opens April 2008

THE legacy of gardening in Britain is being marked with the opening of a heritage garden in April (2008) as centrepiece of the new South Downs Heritage Centre, just outside Brighton.

We have a fantastic gardening heritage throughout England. From the arrival of the Romans in Britain to the present day, gardening has been a vital part of our culture and survival.

Prior to the Romans, plant cultivation was minimal. Wheat, beans, flax and barley would have been farmed, and native berries and nuts would have been collected from woods and hedgerows. Over the centuries, with foreign settlers coming and going, more and more plants and even animals have been introduced to our land.

The new Heritage Garden, at South Downs Nurseries based in Hassocks, West Sussex, will explain how plants have been used over the centuries throughout England and especially in Sussex.

"Sussex has always had a wonderful growing climate, and for hundreds of years the land has produced fruit, vegetables, herbs, cereals, wine and beer", says Jonathan Tate, the man behind the new garden. "For all of this we think that the growing heritage of Sussex is worth celebrating", adds the Heritage Garden's boss.

The garden charts the introduction of various plants to our shores. It begins with the Romans who predominantly imported medicinal and aromatic herbs and food crops, through to the plant hunting Victorians who were keen on bringing across anything they could find abroad that didn't already exist in this country!

"A variety of plants will be displayed that are linked with Sussex by name, association or origin", says Tate. "The fruit trees are all English varieties, and the apples are all from Sussex. The vegetables are old-fashioned 'heirloom' varieties that would have been more widely grown in days gone by but are still very important for our future."

The new garden will also contain several features including an impressive wild boar sculpture, panels demonstrating local building materials, water features, and a pebble mosaic illustrating historical Sussex. Aside from heritage and history, the new visitor attraction will show how plants can be used both practically and aesthetically to create a beautiful garden.

Most of the plants and materials used to build the garden will be available from the South Downs Nurseries next door. "We hope that the heritage garden will inspire visitors to nurture their own little bit of Sussex and keep our gardening heritage alive," says Tate.

Rather than charging for entry, the Heritage Centre will ask for donations, which will be given to charities in the area.

Details about the development of the new attraction are being posted on the website at www.south-downs.co.uk
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Further media information and interview requests to Karen Sexton, Marketing Manager at South Downs Nurseries on 01273 616011 or email Karen.sexton@south-downs.co.uk.

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heritage@tbutlerpr.co.uk **IMAGES** – a selection may be downloaded from www.tbutlerpr.co.uk/southdowns