



best IN SHOW

— Or perhaps more accurately, this garden with sustainability at heart is one of a number of bests from the Ellerslie International Flower Show

WHAT'S IN A NAME? AS MOST EVERYONE is well aware, Ellerslie, as in the flower show, no longer resides in Auckland. Mind you, it hadn't resided in Auckland 'proper' for some time. In a case of preternatural subsidence, the event's slow slippage southwards to Manukau was followed by a semi-seismic shift to the mainland's flatlands. Presumably the brand is so strong that the owners were too scared to change the name to 'Manukau' or 'Christchurch' or 'Hagley Park'.

Happily for garden and landscape enthusiasts, the transition south seems to have been well received. The Hagley Park-based Ellerslie International Flower Show attracted numerous visitors: 75,000 over five days. This feat prompted the show's organisers to label it a phenomenal success – "absolutely outdoing Auckland", said the show's managing director Dave Mee in an impromptu display of provincial charm, before going on to wonder where the recession was: "Many retailers have had to courier in extra stock from Auckland and even from Australia to replenish supplies."

The show's judges reported an extremely high standard of exhibitions. The One Earth Matters display featured on these pages was one of four

gardens that picked up a gold medal. The garden, says landscape architect Carl Pickens, was entitled Take Five, a reference to five themes woven into the fabric of the design. The five areas of focus were wise water use, sourcing sustainable materials, restoring native plants, going organic and minimising waste.

"We were interested in designing and building a reasonably compact garden that showed that sustainable design doesn't have to be scruffy," says Pickens.

The garden's built elements include a central pergola, constructed from Northland redwood finished with Organoil. Rain from the pergola roof feeds a water feature, gradually overflowing and being redistributed back into the environment. Other elements include custom-built green walls, native plants eco-sourced from local nurseries, and beds with organic certified vegetables. One of the most commented-upon features, says Pickens, was the semi-circular lawn planted with a native grass substitute ground cover called selliera radicans. The plant is semi-tolerant of salt, so can be sprayed with salt water to inhibit weeds: it is also lush and requires little maintenance. Sounds absolutely ideal.

PHOTOGRAPH CYNTHIA VAN DE LOO