

HorticultureWeek

Islam Chelsea Flower Show garden designer reveals further details

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Islamic culture will be celebrated this May 19-23 at Chelsea Flower Show, with 'The Beauty of Islam' by Emirati landscape designer Kamelia Bin Zaal, which is based on a traditional Islamic pattern and melds modern and classic materials and planting from countries influenced by Arab and Islamic culture.



Bin Zaal is the ever Emirati landscape designer to appear at the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show.

She is the creative director and head of marketing for the Zaal Group and is charged

with ensuring the landscape designs and planting schemes for 'Al Barari' make it a benchmark for sustainable green planning in the Middle East.

The Beauty of Islam is designed to be a sanctuary in which to feel inspired and relaxed.

Bin Zaal said: "I have channelled the movement and sound of water to draw visitors into a mix of sensory experiences, directing them through the garden" commented Zaal. "The use of poetry, calligraphy, sculpture, textures and a play of shade and light come together in the garden to celebrate Islamic and Arabic culture. Poetry, which is heavily rooted in Arabic tradition, is engraved into marble and aims to pull visitors further into the garden."

The garden is based on a traditional Arabic pattern that is set into a 45-degree angle and breaks away from the typical traditional courtyard quadrant. A juxtaposition of multi-purpose spaces and pockets of calm forms the layout of the garden.

A combination of modern and classic materials from countries touched by Arabic and Islamic culture forms the foundations of the garden's design and flow. Four walls create different rooms in the garden and enhance the theme of discovery, with water flowing throughout each section. Dividers of stainless steel and cement add a contrast of textures, off-setting the diversity of plant life throughout.

Planting and hard landscape patterns reflect those found within Islamic culture. Orange, olive, fig and pomegranate trees and plants such as cardamom, pepper and jasmine reflect the growth of the Arab empire through the spice trade. All the plants have been specifically chosen as they have adapted to the UAE environment and require less water than other varieties.

Bin Zaal is using Kelways to provide the plants for her Chelsea garden, The Outdoor Room are her contractors and Emirati calligrapher Hamda Abdulla Al Hashmi will create the Arabic calligraphy for her garden.

She added: "I am continuously inspired by my heritage and I love the desert environment. Traditional Islamic gardens were a representation of the relationship between humankind and the earth, not only through the gardens productivity, but also through the use of the senses and in its beauty. Creating space of multiple uses but yet still a place of calm and reflection.

"It is important to pass on our culture and heritage to the next generation but that doesn't mean that it can't be interpreted in a new way to make it more appealing to new generations. This is what Al Barari stands for and is represented in this Chelsea show garden – sustainable luxury living."

Bin Zaal said the budget "falls within the norms of a main avenue show garden. With family links to the sponsor there is considerable scrutiny and challenge to ensure the garden provides value for money and spending is prudent.

On plant sourcing she added: "Of course, not every species I wanted has been found but we have chosen some beautiful alternatives," said Kameela. The weather can be very hot or very wet so we will need to have a lot more tender care during the build and the show to ensure they are looking their best."

Bin Zaal is now overseeing the final stages of landscape design for the second phase of development at Al Barari.

She said: "For me a garden is like a gift you're giving. I love the relationship you develop with your clients to create their dream, and I still love to be on site at every stage. It is fascinating watching lines that you once drew on paper as your vision for a garden, come to life."

Al Barari, meaning 'Wilderness' in Arabic, is a luxury residential estate adjacent to the royal enclave of Nad Al Sheba, Dubai spanning 4.2 million square feet. The US \$3.2

billion Al Barari development is the lowest density development in the UAE. Some 80 per cent of its landscape dedicated to greenery, lakes, freshwater streams and waterways. Phase 1 of the residential community features a collection of high-end stand-alone villas. Phase 2 will see the development of Seventh Heaven (sky villas, duplexes, penthouses, and garden homes), Ashjar (low rise apartments), a 6-star boutique hotel, retail offerings and further residential development. The six themed gardens (Balinese, Contemporary, Woodland, Mediterranean, Water and Renaissance), waterways and freshwater lakes and more than four million plants on the estate, contribute to Al Barari's microclimate. The typography, use of water and shade creating planting means it is on average five degrees cooler than the rest of Dubai.

Work on the second phase of development should be completed by the end of 2016 making the man-made waterway, which runs through the whole development, the largest continuous watercourse in the Middle East.

She said: "Al Barari was actually not born out of the villas; it was born out of plants.

"The initial concept for Al Barari was to start a plant producing nursery, because my father's heart lies with plants. He thought that there must be like-minded people out there who appreciate their environment, not just internally but externally as well. We realised that there was a real lack of family homes set in beautiful green environments.

"In Al Barari we have created a whole environment in which to live which goes beyond the four walls of a house. My father really broke the mould with this vision, there was nothing else like it in Dubai or the UAE.

"It was also important that Al Barari revived the tradition of people coming together in their communities. Given the high numbers of international people who live and work in Dubai many residential communities don't provide an environment for people to meet, talk and mingle. At Al Barari the way the properties are grouped, in their verdant settings, encourages communal life. Here people from all over the world - Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Switzerland, India, UK, Saudi Arabia and the UAE - come together."

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