



Garden designer Kamelia bin Zaal. (Pawan Singh / The National)

How to make the desert bloom

National Editorial

November 20, 2014 Updated: November 20, 2014 06:49 PM



Related



Bringing the 'beauty of Islam' to Chelsea

For a garden designer, being chosen to display at the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show is the very pinnacle of achievement, the sweetest fruit of success. For that reason alone, Emirati [Kamelia bin Zaal](#) deserves to be congratulated for being selected to create a garden for next year's event. The fact that her intended design will reflect themes prominent in UAE and Islamic culture is a bonus.

Ms Zaal, who studied at the Incbald School of Design in London and runs her own landscape architectural practice, is following in distinguished footsteps. The country's founding President, Sheikh Zayed, a passionate gardener, was a patron of the Royal Horticultural Society. He won multiple gold medals at Chelsea – in 2003, 2004 and, posthumously, in 2005. His first winning entry, titled "Garden from the Desert" and designed by Christopher Bradley-Hole, continues to serve as an inspiration to gardeners in the UAE and beyond.

It is undeniable that it is a bigger challenge to create a vibrant and sustainable garden in arid conditions, than, say, in lush Kerala in southern India. This is an even bigger issue now that the distribution companies in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain have announced they will begin charging Emiratis for

the water they consume, for the first time ever, and introduce higher rates for expatriate residents.

Keen gardeners will have to learn new ways to do what they love, perhaps by letting the cherished idea of the water-guzzling tropical-style oasis wither away. Instead, there might be more of a chance to experiment with native plants that consume less water than imported species. It may be time to employ innovative irrigation techniques, which borrow both from the falaj system used at the Al Ain Oasis for centuries and modern concepts such as the use of recycled “grey” water. Such “water-wise” practices, as Ms Zaal illustrates, allow for the creation of beautiful spaces that reflect the culture, religion and national identity of the UAE.



[Add your comment](#) | [View all comments](#)

More Editorial



Plastic surgery



Let's keep fog delays in perspective



Time to reduce fuel subsidies?



Shadi Ghanim cartoon for 6/11/2015

MOST VIEWED

[OPINION](#) | [ALL](#)

1. How Mosul went from carefree to conservative

2. The truths Muslims can speak are compromised by the West's power

3. Istanbul is slowly but surely getting on its bike

4. Let's keep fog delays in perspective

5. Time to reduce fuel subsidies?

6. Give cyclists an incentive to park their cars

7. Emiratisation in education must succeed

8. US makes a mockery of the rule of law on Palestine

9. ISIL's rise was an unexpected gift for both Obama and Rouhani

10. Do not judge us by our 'cover'

[More Most Viewed](#)