

Media Contacts:

Sarah Long
Tel: 1 212 850 0312
Email: sarah.long@visitbritain.org

Paul Chibeba
Tel: 1 212 850 0311
Email: paul.chibeba@visitbritain.org

Online: www.visitbritain.com/mediaroom

February 24, 2004

BRITAIN BLOOMS IN 2004, OFFICIAL 'YEAR OF GARDENING'

This year, the British celebrate their love of gardening as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) – the UK's leading gardening charity – marks its 200th anniversary with a year of special events and activities. To share its celebrations with gardening enthusiasts everywhere, the RHS has designated 2004 the "Year of Gardening".

Britain's world famous gardens are a key draw for American visitors to travel to Britain. To further encourage Americans to get their fingers green in 2004, VisitBritain has published a new brochure dedicated to the beautiful and historic gardens of Britain. The brochure includes information on: events and festivals, insider tips from head gardeners, garden tours and holidays, courses throughout Britain and seasonal information on which gardens to see and when. Visitors to the accompanying website - www.visitbritain.com/usagardens - have the chance to win a trip for two, courtesy of United Vacations, to experience the blossom of Britain first hand (nose).

To celebrate 'Year of Gardening', exhibitions, lectures and shows will be held throughout the country including the RHS' famous 18 annual flower shows including those at Chelsea, Hampton Court Palace and Tatton Park.

Other floral events planned include:

- A series of six inspirational evening lectures, "The World in Our Gardens - Two Centuries of Plant Introductions" - hosted by the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (January to December).
- The 'Secret Garden' of Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, will be unveiled to the public in May after having been hidden for over 30 years. Blenheim Palace is set amidst 2,100 acres of parkland landscaped by Capability Brown.

- An exhibition at London's Tate Britain art gallery, "Art of the Garden" (June 3 – August 30) celebrating British paintings of plants and gardens.
- An International Lily Show and Conference at RHS Horticultural Halls (June 29 – July 3).
- A series of exhibitions at the RHS Lindley Library, at 80 Vincent Square, London SW1 -- the world's finest gardening library -- the subjects including Mediterranean plants in Britain (May 15 – 29) and Frederick Warne's "Flower Fairies" paintings and drawings (September 14 – October 30).
- A special bicentennial exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show (May 25 – 28).
- The Hampton Court Flower Show (July 6 – 11) – the world's largest annual flower show.
- More than 80 museums, gardening organizations and community groups around Britain will take part in the Year of Gardening by holding exhibitions, displays and other events.

The new VisitBritain brochure is available free from VisitBritain's Travel Center in New York at: 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 701, (at 45th street), in New York City, Mondays through Fridays between 9.00am and 6.00pm. VisitBritain's Travel Center can also be reached via email at: travelinfo@visitbritain.org or telephone on Toll Free: 1 877 899 8391.

Notes to Editors

- Founded by seven friends in March 1804 as the Horticultural Society of London, the RHS now has more than 330,000 members around the world.
- Full details of the RHS program available online: www.rhs.org.uk
- There are hundreds of gardens open to the public in Britain, many of them in the grounds of stately homes, castles and historic houses. VisitBritain's Great British Heritage Pass offers great savings for visitors and allows unlimited access into over 600 historic sites and properties. For more information: www.visitbritain.com/world/heritagepass
- A CD of high-resolution images from the brochure is available. For a copy contact Rachael Atkins, tel. 1 212 850 0371, Email: rachael.atkins@visitbritain.org.
- Visit VisitBritain's online media room – www.visitbritain.com/mediaroom – for inspiration and information on all aspects of travel to Britain, including story ideas, free images to download and PR contacts.