

Londoners win top prizes in Toronto

CANADA BLOOMS: London entrants fare well at big garden fest

By JANIS WALLACE SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY

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**Kathleen Middleton with her entry.
(Special to QMI Agency)**

Kathleen Middleton danced her way to first place.

Rather than dancing with a star, she danced with a plant, or materials from several, to win the Martin and Meredith international design award in the Contemporary Dance category at Canada Blooms, the nation's largest garden and flower festival, in Toronto last month.

Her entry was up against others from the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Korea, South Africa and the United States. It also won a Judges' Choice best of show award.

Middleton, a member of the Garden Club of London, said she was inspired by dance shows on television and Martha Graham's bold, erratic movements.

"Floral design has changed over the course of the last 10 to 20 years from traditional to abstract," she said. "So the category contemporary led me to the abstract."

Realizing the concept and conforming to rules of the competition is a challenge. The world association of floral arrangers sets out what can and can't be used. Then there is the week-long duration of the show to consider.

Middleton started with a sketch, then a mock-up to "see how it will present in 3D. Then I sweat. The mechanics to execute the design are the hardest part. On paper, it looks great. You have to determine what to use for support and . . . keep it alive."

Her entry focused on a bird of paradise leaf. "The leaf dictated the design. It had dried in a curved spiral and was my inspiration for a dancer." She added corrugated paper and balsa wood strips.

Middleton has competed before, but this was her first entry in the international category.

Fellow members of the London club brought home three golds, two bronze, one honourable mention and a Judge's Choice award in the Flamenco collage class.

Irina Code won a gold ribbon and Judge's Choice award for her entry. Gold ribbons also went to Eleanor Huber and Jeanne Anne Goldrick, while Janice Maciver and Simpson got bronze ribbons, and Stella Sinclair drew honourable mention.

Janis Wallace is a London writer

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