

## The Exotic Garden – Sheet 1



The Exotic Garden was built in 2011 as part of the Sowing New Seeds project. It is a showcase for some of the non-traditional crops that are grown by immigrant communities in the Midlands. It was designed to provide a variety of microclimates for growing some less hardy plants which would otherwise struggle through harsh winter conditions at Ryton. The breeze-block walls act as giant storage heaters, with heat reflected from the painted surfaces and have dry sheltered conditions near their base.

*Much of the garden is used to display a range of non-traditional crops often grown by immigrant communities on allotments in the Midlands, such as this flowering okra*



### **The Cuban Organopónico**

Within the walls you will find a Cuban *organopónico* or kitchen garden.

Cuba is an interesting example of food production because its agriculture and horticulture is virtually self sufficient, using very little additional artificial fertiliser or pesticides. Throughout Cuba many small urban gardens or *organipónicos* are used to grow as much food as possible. The Cubans grow medicinal herbs, flavourings and flowers to attract insects as well as vegetables.

Our raised *organipónico* beds, within the outer wall where temperatures are greatly boosted, are made with recycled roof tile edging.

*Fenugreek and lablab are commonly grown Asian crops - lablab is also popular with Afro-Caribbean growers who sometimes use the leaves as a vegetable as well as the pods*



Older visitors to Ryton may recall the no-dig garden, which used to occupy this site. The new raised bed area is still cultivated under the same system, although the appearance has changed.

The dramatic paintings on the walls were created by Ryton staff and are taken from Cuban examples. A quotation from the famous revolutionary poet José Martí roughly translates as “*Earth, how much has to be cultivated, with various crops, never one alone.*”

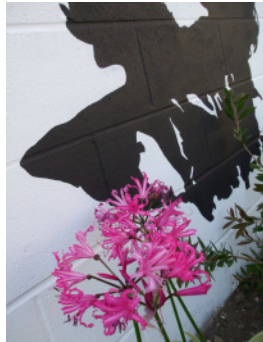
## Global Allotment Beds

Much of the area is devoted to multicultural allotment beds – these display what might typically be grown by ethnic communities on allotments in the UK. Three large beds represent Afro-Caribbean, Indian subcontinent and Far East Asian cultures.. Many of the plants you will see here, especially in summer, will have been collected as seed from plots across Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester and Nottingham by the Sowing New Seeds project during the last two years.

In summer, look out for crops such as calaloo, sharks fin melon, mustard and chickpeas. In winter fertility boosting green manures, a few perennial plantings and some more conventional hardy vegetables will make up the display.

Check the signboards for more information about plants grown here.

## Ornamental borders



*Indigofera heteranthera*, *Nerine bowdenii* and *Agapanthus 'Blue Lapis'* in flower, with an underplanting of *Alyssum* against *Yucca 'Bright Edge'*.

The perennial planting scheme along the walls has been carefully selected to give a flavour of the tropics yet still being hardy to minus 10° C. Instant height has been added with some very large *Yucca* plants, a kind Member's donation which had become too large for his home. These are unlikely to survive a very cold spell but might last through a mild winter; at least they will act as a temporary feature until the other plants have become established. During the winter you may notice that these plants have been thatched in an attempt to protect them from the worst winter weather – we don't know if it will work yet!

Amongst the trees growing in the borders are *Pride of India*, *Koleuteria paniculata*, *Chaste tree*, *Vitex agnus-castus* and a pomegranate, *Punica granatum*. Shrubs include *Clerodendrum tricotomum*, the blooms having amazing fragrance: brilliant purple flowered *Indigofera*, a highly scented *Daphne x burkwoodii 'Astrid'*, the rare *Rhaphidolepis umbellata* planted next to the glowing coral flowered *Spharealcea spp* and a lemon verbena, *Aloysia triphylla*. A number of tender bulbs are grown here, including *Agapanthus*, *Ixia*, *Nerine* and *Belladonna*.



*Venedium 'Jaffa Ice'* flowers and yams with lablab pods in a basket displayed in the shack

## The Exotic Garden – Sheet 2

At the end of the Cuban garden is a small shack roofed in corrugated iron. Look out for seasonal displays of some of our exotic crops here as they are harvested.

*A view of the courtyard garden almost hidden by exuberant planting*



### *Colonial ruin*

There is also a walled inner courtyard to act as a heat store, thus allowing the cultivation of less hardy plants such as oranges, *Mandevilla* and richly scented *Pittosporum tobira*, which you will find growing outside in the summer. This courtyard has a Spanish-inspired balustrade and ironwork lattice window guard overlooking a small pond.

Winter plantings in pots here are of hardier ferns, bamboos and others to give a tropical feel: in early

spring or late autumn it is a pleasant sunny spot to sit in.



*Flowers of kaffir lime (*Citrus hystrix*) and pigeon pea, (*Cajanus cajan*) which need to be grown under protection as they are too tender to survive outdoors.*

### **The Alitex glasshouse**

Finally the tall Alitex glasshouse houses those plants which need protection at all times, as well as those which need to be kept under cover during the winter. In summer you may find lablab, chayote, cinnamon vine and *Datura* thriving here, while in winter the glasshouse protects our collection of citrus, chillies and palms. Hardy potted bulbs give welcome early colour and scent during spring.



Please note that the small heater also acts as a fan to improve air circulation, thus reducing the risk of fungal problems, so it's not running wastefully in sunny conditions.

If you would like to find out more about the Sowing New Seeds Project, take part, donate seeds or tell us about the exotic crops you grow, please pick up a leaflet from the display indoors or visit our website, [www.SowingNewSeeds.org.uk](http://www.SowingNewSeeds.org.uk)

## Perennial planting list

**Along boundary wall**, (starting from corner nearest the mound):

<i>Eryngium agavifolium</i>	<i>Koeleria paniculata</i>
<i>Trifolium rubens</i>	<i>Agapanthus</i> 'Black Panther', 'Peter Pan'
<i>Nerine bowdenii</i>	<i>Hibiscus</i> 'White with Pink Eye'
<i>Callistemon laevis</i>	<i>Daphne burkwoodii</i> 'Astrid'
<i>Yucca elephantipes</i>	<i>Coreopsis verticillia</i> 'Ruby Red'
<i>Panicum granatum</i>	<i>Romneya coulterii</i>
<i>Rhaptolepis umbellata</i>	<i>Spharalcea</i> spp
<i>Myrtus communis</i> 'Tarentina'	<i>Coreopsis</i> 'American Dream'
<i>Indigofera heteranthera</i>	<i>Jasminium officinale</i> 'Clotted Cream'
<i>Campsis radicans</i> 'Flava'	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>
<i>Liriope muscari</i>	<i>Clerodendron tricotomum</i>
<i>Salvia</i> 'Scarlet Pineapple'	<i>Malvastrum laterifolium</i>
<i>Agapanthus</i> 'White Heaven', 'Lapis', 'Big Blue'	
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i> 'Bright Edge'	<i>Baptisia australis</i>
Chaste Tree <i>Vitex agnus castus</i>	Lemon verbena, <i>Aloysia triphylla</i>
<i>Nerine bowdenii</i>	

**Under vine arches** – vines are *Vitis vinifera* – in archway order, from the Vegetable Kingdom building towards the glasshouse.

'Theresa', 'Regent', 'Phoenix', 'Queen Esther'	
Hart's tongue fern – <i>Asplenidium trichomanes</i>	Rusty back fern <i>Cetrarch affinum</i>
<i>Anthurium filix-femina</i>	<i>Antirrhinum</i> Anthiodora Yellow
<i>Trachelespermum jasminoides</i>	Sacred bamboo - <i>Nandina domestica</i>
<i>Astrolemmeria psittiacum variagata</i>	<i>Lbertia</i> 'Goldfinger'

## Pond area

<i>Solanum crispum</i> 'Glasnevin'	<i>Arundo donax</i> 'Golden Showers'
Lady fern <i>Anthurium felix femina</i>	Soft shield fern <i>Polysticum setiferum</i>
Royal fern <i>Osmunda regalis</i>	<i>Hosta</i> 'Sum and Substance'
<i>Carex oshimensis</i> 'Evergold'	<i>Rogersia pinnata</i>
<i>Ophiopogon planiscapus</i> 'nigrrscens'	<i>Acanthus spinosus</i>

Please note that several of these species are at the limit of their hardiness for Ryton's climate conditions, although they may be perfectly hardy elsewhere. As we cannot control the weather a number of them might need to be replaced at a later date

**PLEASE RETURN THE SHEETS TO THE HOLDER ONCE YOU HAVE FINISHED WITH IT FOR OTHERS TO USE – THANK YOU**