

# WIRROB

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## VISUAL ARTS

### Art eco

**Flora flourishes, vertical gardening and ircus acts offer a glimpse of Montreal's budding green-art scene**

by **CHRISTINE REDFERN**

**E**ighty per cent of Montreal's **E**land is either built on or paved. I read this information on a sign at **International Flora**, Montreal's garden festival. It's the hottest day of the summer and I swear I can feel my brain frying as I stand slightly stunned in the midday sun. Okay, I'm convinced; we need a lot more "green" in our urban environment.

The festival's setting is spectacular, though. Nestled between the massive silos at the Old Port and the beginning of the Lachine Canal, there couldn't be a better place to re-examine our relationship to nature. These impressive industrial remnants remind us of an era when the ecosystem was considered irrelevant to the onward march of human progress.

Let me say up front that I have a bit of a problem with some of the latest articles about gardening that I've read this summer, such as a piece about pruning, which offered the sage advice, "hire a professional," or an interview with a landscape architect whose design included \$180,000 just to buy plants for the hedge. Luckily for us, the **Flora** show is all about inspiring everyone, balcony-growers to mansion-owners alike. All the designers are proposing gardens that work more and more with, instead of against, nature. The ones that caught my eye were the slightly messy, unpredictable plantings that contain a bit of everything: flowers, vegetables, herbs, grasses and vines, or the wildflower meadows, grasses and plants, well-suited for growing on your roof or walls.

Until Sunday, Aug. 12, **Flora's** special focus is on residential gardens. Many of the designers and garden suppliers are onsite to discuss plants and ideas with the public one-on-one. From Aug. 17-26, it's the **Gourmet Garden Feast**, where

you can eat food grown in the **Flora** gardens, prepared by chef-cook **Sister Angèle Rizzardo**, as well as Quebec-grown produce and delicacies dished up by 12 invited chefs. There are also daily culinary

demonstrations for the **BBQ**. Lastly, from Aug. 30-Sept. 3, it's **Kyoto in My Garden**. Canada might not be able to meet its **Kyoto** commitment, but *you* can help. Learn about what's good to plant, alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers, how to conserve water and other sustainability issues.



NATURE FIGHTS BACK: International Flora