

Irish Independent



IRELAND'S BEST-SELLING DAILY NEWSPAPER

www.independent.ie Friday 3 June 2011 €1.90 (£1.20 in Northern Ireland)

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Chinese garden gift plants seed of friendship between two capitals

Louise Hogan

THOSE searching for their inner 'zen' will soon have a new place to contemplate their spiritual side.

While Ireland has exported the likes of Enya, Riverdance and U2 to China in the past, the Chinese government is giving us a classical garden based on designs dating to the Song Dynasty 1,000 years ago.

The 'Ire-Su' garden - which is on display at the Bloom festival in Dublin - was designed by workers from the Suzhou Garden Bureau, which looks after nine famous UNESCO-listed gardens in China.

Yesterday, the Chinese Ambassador to Ireland, Liu Biwei, was among the visitors to the show and, specifically, the Chinese garden.

Parts of the garden will be relocated to St Anne's Park in Raheny, Dublin, after the festival as a gift to coincide with Dublin's twinning with Beijing in 2012.

Culture

"The garden can introduce the Chinese culture and the garden culture to our friends," Mr Biwei said.

Yesterday was the first official day of the festival in the Phoenix Park in Dublin.

There were those sauntering around who knew their stremmacantha from their lupinus - and plenty who didn't.



Left: Crowds at Bloom in Dublin yesterday. Top left: Garden designer Tim Austin with models Angelica Salomao and Isabelle Traber. Right: Chinese dancers at the Ire-Su garden.

STEVE HUMPHREYS