



# Les Florales internationales de Montréal

Du 17 mai au 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1980

## A world first

JAMES BAY PEAT-BOG TRANSPLANTED TO ILE NOTRE-DAME  
FOR LES FLORALIES INTERNATIONALES DE MONTREAL 1980

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Between March 15 and April 15 this year, half an acre of peat-bog lifted from the taiga surrounding James Bay were transplanted to Ile Notre-Dame, part of the former site of Expo 67. A delicate operation, it was undertaken in preparation for the Florales internationales de Montréal, which will take place from May 17 to September 1, 1980.

According to Pierre Bourque, chief horticulturist for Montréal's Botanical Gardens and horticultural consultant to the Société d'énergie de la Baie James (SEBJ), this adventurous concept began with the cutting, by ice-saw, of frozen blocks of peat at Hélène Lake, near the site of LG2. These were then quickly transferred to trucks returning to Montréal after dropping cargoes at the James Bay site.

The blocks were finally re-assembled in a specially-prepared pond near the former Canadian pavilion on Ile Notre-Dame. When they eventually thaw, gardening experts from the Botanical Garden will closely follow the resuscitation of the peat, taking care, for example, to give the pond's water a proper level of acidity.

Few people have had the opportunity to see a real peat-bog with its spongy consistency and carnivorous plants. This project, then, is expected to have a major scientific and educational impact, as well as contributing to tourism.

This coming summer the peat-bog will slowly come back to life but it will not reach full "bloom" until 1980 because of the shock of transplantation. Next summer visitors to Montréal's Florales internationales will enjoy its full meaning and find themselves in an environment typical of the taiga.

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Special care has also been taken with the "scar" left when the blocks of peat were torn from the James Bay environment. SEBJ environmental specialists have carefully planned the "re-naturalization" of the area, which represents around one per cent of the Hélène Lake peat-bog.

#### FROM THE BARREN LANDS TO MAN AND HIS WORLD

How would like to get to know a pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia purpurea* L.) or a Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* L.), two carnivorous plants that grow in northern peat-bogs? Or a leather-leaf (*Cassandra calyculata* L.), some Labrador Thea (*Ledum groenlandicum* R.) and others ericaceous shrubs and more common species like the common (*Larix laricina*) and the black spruce (*Picea mariana*) which the winds have stunted and twisted like oriental bonsai?

You can, next summer, thanks to the expertise of Pierre Bourque, chief horticulturist for Montréal's Botanical Garden and horticultural consultant to the SEBJ, who has earned the nickname of "Christian Barnard of peat-bogs".

"The idea of creating a peat-bog on Ile Notre-Dame came to me during the summer of 1978 when we began to seriously discuss the Florales internationales", says Mr. Bourque. "It seemed essential to me that we show Canadians and visitors a living example of this flora so representative of the northern regions of our country".

After consulting other experts such as bio-ecologist Jacques Ouzilleau and internationally-recognized ecologist Pierre Dansereau, Mr. Bourque had to convince the SEBJ to supply the required manpower. "They thought I was joking, at first, when I proposed transplanting a peat-bog from James Bay to the Florales", he says with a smile.

They had to act quickly, when to go-ahead was given, as time was short. "We realized that the whole operation had to take place between March 15 and April 15", Mr. Bourque commented, "because it was impossible to work on Ile Notre-Dame before the former date and the northern roads can't handle heavy loads after the latter".

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In addition, as the metre-cube blocks of peat were in danger of melting like snow in the sun, they could only be transplanted if cut up while still frozen. According to plans, the summer of 1979 would allow to plants to adapt to their new environment.

One problem remained, however: how to transport the frozen blocks from LG2 to Montréal. This was as much a matter of cost as logistics until four transport companies - Magny, Lamothe, Brazeau, and Léo Tremblay - stepped in to assist the SEBJ and the Botanical Garden in creating this technical and scientific achievement which will bring a major ecological dimension to the Floralties.

#### THE PEAT-BOG IN FIGURES

Area: half an acre

Site: pond situated south of the former Canadian pavilion on Ile

Distance traveled: 1,500 km from LG2 to Montréal

Duration of trip: 36 hours

Number of trips: 50

Number of blocks: about 1,300<sup>2</sup>

Measurement of each block: 1 m<sup>2</sup> at the start; 1 m by 1 m by 40 on transplanting

Required acidity level: pH 3,8

#### MONTREAL'S FLORALTIES INTERNATIONALES

The event will take place from May 17 to Septembre 1 at two locations. The indoor Floralties will be held at the Olympic Velodrome on an area measuring 6,000 m<sup>2</sup>, followed by the outdoor Floralties on 40 hectares of Ile Notre-Dame at Man and His World, an island created for Expo 67.

The Floralties internationales will be the first exhibition of its kind held in North America; an international exhibition in the special category recognized by the International Bureau of Expositions in Paris. The Québec government has contributed a budget of \$4,200,000 to its success.

The exhibition has, as its goals, the encouragement of the development of all areas of international and national horticulture; familiarization with Québec's flora; the stimulation of cultural research and horticultural teaching; and the sensibilization of the public to ecological problems and the importance of living in a natural, healthy environment.

Under the general authority of the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, the exhibition is organized by the city of Montréal through the Association montréalaise d'action récréative et culturelle (AMARC), with horticultural coordination by the city's Botanical Garden.

The Commissioner-General is André Boily, well-known in journalism and public relations circles, who was named by the federal government overseers on the recommendation of Québec's ministère des Affaires intergouvernementales.

Organizers expect some 20 nations to participate and special arrangements have been made to allow entry into Canada, after inspection, of flowers and plants imported by foreign participants.

Thanks to this exhibition, Ile Notre-Dame will become a permanent floral park, among the largest in North America and devoted to the popularization of ecology and its cultural side effects.