

# Epcot in Bloom: 2011 Epcot Flower & Garden Festival

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

As fairly regular visitors to Walt Disney World, we tend to try and visit at times of the year when there's a little something extra on offer.

□ One of those periods is in the spring, when Epcot blooms into life for the Flower and Garden Festival.

For a few weeks the park is filled with topiaries, many of Disney characters, but some specific to their locations around Epcot, while flowerbeds show familiar Mickey-headed shapes in spectacular colours. Floating flowerbeds in the water between Future World and World Showcase add to the theme, while there are often additional gardens added in to pique everyone's interest. Of course, being Disney, you'd expect many of the attractions to appeal to a younger market and that's always the case, with children's play areas scattered around.

□ This year was my third visit to the festival in the last seven years and, of course, after a while, you get used to seeing your old favourites, but as always with Disney, they add in something new every year. As you enter the park, you come face to face with some of those latest additions, the characters from Toy Story 3, including Lotso, who was much publicised in press releases issued by Disney before the festival began. The topiary is supposed to smell of strawberries, just like his alter ego, but we were disappointed to only get a scent once or twice when we walked past him. Poor Lotso had a chequered history during the festival, failing to make his expected debut over the opening weekend. The rumour is that he had a nasty accident while being transported to Epcot and lost an arm!

□ The next major set of topiaries you come to, just opposite the tip board behind Spaceship Earth, is of Mickey, Minnie and faithful hound Pluto, setting up for a picnic and flying a kite. Obviously Donald and Daisy upset someone, or Donald was playing his usual tricks, as they've been separated to either side, which seemed a shame.

The next major sets of topiaries both promote upcoming movies, with the characters from Winnie the Pooh, including my beloved Eeyore, depicted as you head from Future World to World Showcase. Right at the entrance to World Showcase was Lightning McQueen, star of the upcoming Cars 2, who interestingly was joined halfway through the festival by Tow Mater. We were told that the reason for his late arrival was because Pixar wanted to ensure he was perfect, and my goodness,

he was! The work that went into him was quite something.

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□ Many of the old favourite topiaries can be found around World Showcase, with the pandas back at China and Lady and the Tramp re-appearing in Italy. Peter Pan, Captain Hook and Tic Toc make their way to the United Kingdom this year. One obvious omission were the geese in Canada, which we found are now installed far outside the park, at the entrance to the Wilderness Lodge. I was disappointed not to see them in their familiar spot. Somehow, the displays in Canada this year didn't seem to be as stunning as previous years.

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□ I was also sad to not see the dragon in the water in front of the Temple of Heaven in China, as that was absolutely stunning a couple of years ago. Instead, they have small topiaries, each representing every year of the Chinese zodiac. These, like so many things at Disney, took a bit more work, as they were easy to miss on a first flying visit.

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□ A new addition this year was the Tangled tower, in the model railway section in Germany. Look closely and you'll see that in the tiny town square, they're even holding their own mini Flower and Garden Festival, which was a lovely touch. France seemed to have a vast array of topiaries, including the princesses, Belle, Beast and other characters from Beauty and the Beast, such as Lumiere. As a result, France's annual perfume garden seemed to have a little less prominence.

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□ We had a wait to visit Bambi's Butterfly Garden, due to the intense heat Orlando was experiencing during our stay. There was no way I wanted to be going inside what was effectively a large tent, but when it finally cooled down a bit to allow us in there, we found more butterflies than we had a couple of years ago.

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□ The fairies' garden remains, although I didn't find this as spectacular as in 2009, partially because some of the garden just had displays along the side of the path, rather than allowing you to walk through the whole thing.

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□ Close by are the flowerbeds between Future World and World Showcase, some showcasing Mickey heads, while others are just stunning blocks of colour. This was one of the aspects that I enjoyed most when we first visited the Festival, but a couple of years ago, they were looking less than fresh, shall we say? I was delighted to see that, this year, they were returned to their former glory, although sadly the same couldn't be said of the floating flowerbeds in the same area. On one day, we spotted one that looked as if it had been flattened by a bird sitting on it!

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□ There's much more to the Flower and Garden Festival, with all sorts of seminars and presentations, although we usually find we don't have time to see them. Sadly, as we're not from the States, we also tend not to know many of the speakers involved. The same applied to the Flower Power concerts, although when we passed by, they seemed to be well attended.

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□ Small booths around the park also sell a range of festival merchandise, including clothes and pins, garden items, and artwork, although sadly we weren't as impressed as we had been in previous years by the selection of items. I would personally have liked a shirt or blouse that said Flower and Garden Festival on it prominently, but the designs were more subtle this year. Unless you'd visited the festival, you wouldn't have a clue where the clothing had come from.

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□ If you haven't made it to the Festival yet, it's an excellent time of the year to visit Epcot. It's our favourite park year round, but during this few weeks, it really comes into its own, thanks to nature and the wonder of Disney's magnificent horticultural team.

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*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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