

By Kylee Baumle

Throughout the year, I attend various home and garden shows, flower shows, and other horticultural events. Some of them I return to every year, which might puzzle those who aren't as passionate about gardening as I am. If you've seen one garden show, you've seen them all, haven't you?

Not by a long shot. It's true that I've stopped going to a couple of them because the time, energy and the long drive to and from the events didn't garner enough return on my investment. Some shows are more home than garden. I'm there for the garden.

Local shows tend to be lean on actual design and landscaping ideas, but it's nice to attend early in the season, because it doesn't take much to get enthused about the prospect of digging in the dirt and implementing the ideas that have been percolating through the winter.

Bonus: you can usually enjoy the fragrance of hyacinths in the air as you walk through the displays.

Of the larger shows I've attended, one of my favorites is the Northwest Flower and Garden Show, held every February in Seattle. Even though the unique climate of the Pacific Northwest (similar to England's) allows them to grow many things we can't, it's also a very cultural area, home to artists of all sorts.

This flavors their garden environments as well as the inside of their homes, and basic design principles seen at the show provide inspiration for gardens of all types and locations.

The largest flower show in the country is the Philadelphia International Flower Show, going on now. Mom and I attended this show in 2011, when the theme was "Springtime in Paris."

It's a little difficult to describe the scope of this show, but I felt like I was in a Disneyland for gardeners. All gardeners should try to attend this show once in their lives.

Sadly, a couple of my favorite larger shows are no longer. The Cleveland Flower Show used to be held every two years at the Cleveland Botanical Gardens, but the last show was in 2008.

It was here that I first fell in love with gardening. So much lushness and beauty, all in one place. The Botanical Gardens themselves are well worth the trip to see them, but there's been no word that the show will ever resume.

Cincinnati used to have a pretty good flower show too, but that ceased in 2010. It's disappointing that the two best shows in our area have disappeared, with the explanation by people in the know that the economic climate is to blame.

The Chicago Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier runs from March 9-17 this year and if you've not ever attended this one, it's the closest location for a decent flower show available to us here. For more information, check their website at www.chicagoflower.com.

If you do attend one of the larger shows, keep in mind that the designs they show may be over the top and you might be tempted to look at them and think, "Well, I can't do this in my garden." I'm willing to bet, though, that you can find one or two great ideas that you can incorporate in your own landscape. If not, it's still fun to look at the creativity and dream.

Read more at Kylee's blog, Our Little Acre, at www.ourlittleacre.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre. Contact her at PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com.