

Cherry on top for installations landscaper

Legend's successes range from the Lost City to the Erinvale golf course and Green Point's Urban Park and Biodiversity Gardens



LAST week Cape Town landscaper Eric Cherry received the highest honour that can be bestowed on a professional landscaper in South Africa when he received an Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award from the South African Landscapers' Institute.

The award, traditionally presented to legends of the landscaping world in recognition of their contribution to the green industry and South Africa, was presented at the annual South African Green Industries Council Annual Convention held at Silver Lakes, east of Pretoria.

Not surprisingly, on hearing the news Cherry modestly exclaimed: "But I'm too young to get this award."

In the past, the award has recognised landscapers who have pioneered the establishment of vast leisure estate gardens in places such as Zimbabwe, KwaZulu-Natal.

The honour has also been bestowed on landscapers who have turned highveld grasslands into forested gardens around Sun City or built internationally-acclaimed golf courses.

In recent years the honour has also been used to honour turf legends who keep lush emerald green lawns flourishing all year round in soccer stadiums, which take enormous strain from the partial shading in sections of the turf, and tons of stage equipment that roll in and out to support touring music icons.

The very public nature of Cherry's landscaping installations makes the nature of his national recognition an award that should be shared by all Cape Townians.

Cherry's footprints are to be seen on projects ranging from the Erinvale Golf Course in Somerset West to the six-star One&Only Hotel at the Waterfront, Green Point Urban Park and Biodiversity Gardens, the Lourens River Rehabilitation Project, MyCiti Integrated Rapid Transit bus system, and Khayelitsha's Harare Precinct 3 Park.

Cherry was born in Namibia in 1961 where his mother was a very keen gardener and his love of gardening and plants was instilled at an early age.

After matriculating from Vredenburg High School in 1979, Cherry enrolled at the South African Railways Horticultural Training



HONOURED: Eric Cherry receives the country's highest award for landscapers in Pretoria.

College in Pretoria, going on to complete his national diploma in horticulture at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

After working on a protea farm in the Boland, Cherry joined the landscaping team entrusted with creating the ambitious, visionary and complex 28ha garden paradise which Sol Kerzner named the Lost City. For two years Cherry worked full-time with teams of labourers, mountains of soil, incoming forests of extraordinary plant material, cranes, rocks, endless deadlines and loads of drama.

Cherry recalls the day when a giant crane, moving a 28-ton indigenous fig tree on to the Lost City site, simply fell over. Suspended 10m in the air, the fig tree came tumbling down and had to be planted where it landed.

Today that very fig tree is still thriving on Monkey Island at the Sun City resort.

On his return to the Western Cape, Cherry joined the Marina Landscaping team to install the gardens at the Somerset Mall, before moving to Top Turf to complete the Gary Player-designed Erinvale Golf Course in time to host the 1995 World Cup Golf Tournament.

In 2003 Cherry formed Urban Landscape Solutions, and as the Western Cape sizzled under a drought, purchased New Horizon Farm Nursery, which is situated on a unique patch of sandveld close to Malmesbury.

Many of the plants used in Cherry's large urban projects are now grown at the farm.

Passionate gardeners can only



QUICK FIX: Eric Cherry installed the gardens in and around the residential waterways of the Waterfront for the One&Only Hotel development.

marvel at the scale of gardening that Cherry and his teams have taken on board over the years.

True to form, the landscaping of Kerzner's One&Only Hotel at the Waterfront left an indelible mark on every member of Cherry's landscaping team.

"You have to be prepared to work ridiculous hours and be a bit mad in the head to work on this project," he told Kerzner during his interview for the contract.

These words came back to haunt him when the One&Only Hotel project was not only accelerated by a year, but the landscaping team was given an effective 10 weeks to install the entire ecosystem of connected gardens around the hotel, ahead of Kerzner's glittering international celebrity opening.

In the pressurised world of a 24/7 landscaping installation, even landscapers do their time on the proverbial "edge of chaos".

The Green Point Urban Park, Cape Town Biodiversity Gardens and the Cape Town Stadium Precinct gardens were also installed by Cherry.

Working with landscape architects such as OVP & Associates, and a team from the city's 30th, world-class garden development has

transformed Green Point into a giant green lung, and is the legacy of all who worked on it.

Today, Green Point Park is used by thousands of tourists, city dwellers and local visitors daily. A pioneering horticultural feat on many levels, the ecosystem of parks is the recipient of at least 10 combined awards from the South African Landscapers' Institute and Landscape Irrigation Association of South Africa.

Cherry's projects are as wide ranging as Cape Town's social fabric. His landscaping of the centrelane of the MyCiti route from Milnerton to Table View has created public gardens that delight hundreds of commuters every day. The landscaping at Enigma Mansion is frivolous and fun, while his current project involves the heliroom recreation of the Dutch Vegetable Gardens at the Company's Garden in central Cape Town.

As part of 400 official World Design Capital 2014 projects, it is hoped the new vegetable landscape at the Company's Garden site will spur interest in food gardens and urban agriculture.

It will also be used to help educate school groups on the medicinal and nutritional value of fresh herbs and



PICTURE PERFECT: Lion's Head creates a backdrop to the Enigma Mansion gardens.

vegetables. As a graduate of Cape Peninsula University of Technology Cherry takes a keen interest in the university's horticulture and landscaping curriculum.

He serves on an industry advisory panel and last year chaired the horticulture science department

advisory board committee meetings. Landscapers, by nature, do not seek the limelight and retire to places far from the city to recharge their batteries. However, highlighting the importance of landscaping and landscapers to Cape Town reminds everyone of how much pleasure they give to so many



WINTER-flowering aloes

Events

PLANT HACK: Attend an invasive alien vegetation plant hack on the second Saturday of every month. Today, 8-10am. Helderberg Nature Reserve in Somerset West. To take part, contact James Silberbauer on 078 306 1660 or 021 851 4060, or visit www.invasiveplantreserve.co.za.

GARDEN WALKS: Join daily walks through the gardens at Kirstenbosch. Today, 10am. Mondays, 10am and 2pm. Tuesdays, 10am, 11am and 2pm. Wednesdays, 10am and 2pm. Thursdays, 10am and 2pm. Fridays, 10am and 2pm. Meet at Info Desk, Kirstenbosch. Walks free, but garden fees apply. Contact Kirstenbosch Info Desk on 021 799 8763.

BOTANICAL ART: Plant traveller John van der Linde leads a talk on botanical art Marianne North. Wednesday, 10.30am. Talks are free, but normal gate entry fees apply. Kirstenbosch Gardens, Sanlam Hall, Gate 1. Tel: 021 799 8763 or 021 799 8627.

OPLESKOP WALK: Join a morning walk to Oplekopp and the slopes of Devil's Peak. June 18, 9am. Meet at the last parking area on Tafelberg Road. Contact Margriet on 021 763 2170 or Margie on 021 655 5579.

BEES FOR BEGINNERS: The Pink Geranium Nursery invites you to a family day filled with fun activities including a "bees for beginners" workshop, as well as an olive tasting and pests demonstration. Next Saturday, 9.30am to noon. Cost: R75. Includes light refreshments. Call 021 884 4313 or www.thepinkgeranium.co.za.

PRUNING: Join a talk on winter pruning. June 25, 10am. Moore's Super Plants, Main Rd, Tokai. Entrance free. Contact 021 715 4666.

HERBS: A talk on how to effectively grow and use herbs during the winter months by Bridget Kiley. June 26, Stodels Bellevue at 10am and Stodels Milnerton at 1pm. No charge. Tea. Contact Deirdre at 021 919 1108 or www.stodels.com.

GARDENING FOR BIRDS: Marina Delport explains what to plant to attract birds to your garden. June 26, Stodels Kenilworth at 10am and Stodels Constantia at 1pm. No charge. Tea. Contact Deirdre on 021 919 1108 or www.stodels.com.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW: A talk on the Chelsea Flower Show by exhibition designer David Davidson. July 2, 10.30am. Talks are free, but normal gate entry fees apply. Kirstenbosch Gardens, Sanlam Hall, Gate 1. Tel: 021 799 8763 or 021 799 8627.

FYBIBS ID COURSE: A fynbos identification course. June 30 and July 4, Gold Fields Centre, Kirstenbosch. Contact Wendy Hitchcock at Hitchcock@web.co.za or 021 712 3388 or 021 881 4343.



FIND YOUR WAY: The newly completed labyrinth at the Green Point Urban Park makes use of grasses.

Tips

● Celebrate Father's Day tomorrow. A bird enthusiast or naturalist may adapt his garden to accommodate his hobby, and would appreciate shrubs to attract birds and other wildlife to the garden. Plants for nectar-feeding birds include ichthya, erythrina, tree fuchsia (halliera), protea, pincushion, Cape honeysuckle, red hot poker, Leonotis leonurus and aloe. Fruit-eating birds will visit wild olive, wild peach (*Xylocarpus africana*), water berry (*Syzygium cordatum*), dogwood (*Rhamnus prinoides*) and Mickey Mouse bush (*Ochna serrulata*).

● A potting shed in the garden would be a place where Dad could enjoy his own private space and would be a refuge from sudden storms and midday heat, a place for pricking out seedlings on rainy days, for repotting house plants in early spring and

dividing perennials in autumn. Include a workbench and stool for easy working conditions.

● If Dad specialises in growing a particular plant family, such as aloes, orchids or cacti, he would appreciate a new plant to add to his collection. As well as garden centres, there are specialist nurseries that would be fun to visit.

● For a dad who likes plants, but is short of time or space, visit your local garden centre and let him select some attractive large containers, potting soil and suitable plants for pots. Then treat him to lunch.

● UN World Desertification Day on Tuesday stresses the need for a healthy ecosystem for future generations. For Youth Day on Monday, encourage young people to take an active part in protecting the environment, natural resources and conservation.



BUY a bird feeder for Father's Day.