



Reflections at GardenTech 2007 and Borneo Exotics

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GardenTech is a one-stop trade fair showcasing various innovative gardening products and plants from more than 100 local and international vendors. This year, GardenTech 2007 was held at HortPark, which is a newly opened park for gardening events at Hyderabad Road, linking Kent Ridge Park and National Parks Board's (NParks) Pasir Panjang Nursery.



Above: The GardenTech sign board – BE's booth 99.

Back in 2002, I visited the last GardenTech which was then located at Pierce Road, opposite the Singapore Botanical Gardens. I was clueless at that time about gardening and was not so much into plants yet. Nevertheless, I remember being excited about the event and took home 3 pots of mini-plants given out by NParks, which included an *Epipremnum aureum* which is still growing well at my place now.

This year, Hong Rui and I had the honour of being an exhibitor helping out at Borneo Exotics' booth. Borneo Exotics' occupied booth 99, which was near the Pasir Panjang Nursery. Helping out at Borneo Exotics was quite a different experience as compared to when I was helping out other vendors at the Singapore Garden Festival 2006, because I was more involved this time.



Above: The partially done up booth with the bamboo frame in place.

The Borneo Exotics' booth set-up took a total of 3 days, from 4 December 2007 (Tuesday) to 6 December 2007 (Thursday). Rob and Diana from Borneo Exotics personally arrived in Singapore to prepare for GardenTech 2007. Phill Mann, the owner of Southern Carnivores, also came to Singapore to help in selling the plants, as well as his *Cephalotus*. Upon reaching the booth set-up location, I was rather impressed by the design and plan that Borneo Exotics had in mind for the booth – with this impressive set-up they clearly stood a high chance for the Best Booth Display award!

We soon got to work to construct a 3 metre by 3 metre frame using bamboo poles and ropes provided by the NParks' contractor. The booth construction took almost 2 days! Next, we added the decorative stuff, such as the lantern-like red pitchers on the top of the structure and the hanging coir pots inside the structure itself.



Right: Hong Rui securing the bamboo frame.



Above & Right: Diana and Cindy putting up the decorations at the booth.

Throughout the set-up period, there was a lot of movement of lorries and trucks, which sometimes interrupted the booth's setting up process. We could also see what were the various plants and equipment brought in for the event itself.



Above: A lorry moving past the Borneo Exotics' booth.

Though busy with preparing with the various plant orders and settling other stuff for Rob and Diana, Cindy was also present to help out with the set-up. Together, all of us ensured that the booth was attractive and perfectly done up for the exhibition.

Next, we started to pot up the display plants which were to be shown to the public. Most of them were *Nepenthes ventricosa* plants which were flowering! These plants even attracted the local bees to the booth during the exhibition.

Borneo Exotics' plants were all stored in the warehouse provided by NParks to keep the plants out from the heat. This ensured that the plants sold to the public would be in excellent condition. The shed was nearby and hence it was quite convenient to retrieve plants when they are required for sale.



Left: A large *Nepenthes ventricosa* in the coir pot for display.



Right: *Nepenthes ventricosa* inside a foam box.



Left: The boxes of plants which were stored in the shed.

In GardenTech 2007, there was one plant from Borneo Exotics which was in the limelight. Named after the event, *Nepenthes* 'GardenTech' is a hybrid tropical pitcher plant which featured bright red pitchers with deep red peristomes. This plant attracted lots of 'woos' and 'wows' from the public as it was displayed prominently in front of the Borneo Exotics' booth. Another plant was presented as a gift for the Guest of Honour and NParks Chairman, Mrs Christina Ong, during the opening ceremony. *Nepenthes* 'GardenTech' is a cross between *N. ampullaria* and *N. ventricosa*.



Left: The display plant of *Nepenthes* 'GardenTech' at the Borneo Exotics' booth.

Throughout the 5-day long exhibition, many people were attracted by the booth display and were interested in the pitcher plants. The booth was usually one of the more crowded ones despite the rainy weather. Some customers kept coming back to check out the plants!



Right: Members of the public at the Borneo Exotics' booth.

There were plenty of mouth-watering plants that we saw during the exhibition, and one of them was definitely the large pot of *Cephalotus* that Phill brought! The pitchers of *N. clipeata* x *eymae* were big too!



Left: A large pot of *Cephalotus follicularis*.



Left: Pitcher of *N. clipeata* x *eymae*.

I felt that I thoroughly enjoyed the 8 days at GardenTech helping out at Borneo Exotics. It was an unforgettable experience tying the knots on the bamboo poles and convincing people to try growing pitcher plants. I also learnt valuable lessons from working at the booth and interacting with customers, and made new friends through interacting with members of the public. Rob, Diana and Phill were very nice and I thoroughly enjoyed talking *Nepenthes* and *Cephalotus* and having dinner with them. If given a chance I'll definitely like to help out in future events like the Singapore Garden Festival next year.

It was also a great experience giving two talks at GardenTech 2007 and seeing so many people picking up the hobby of gardening. The turnout at the talks were encouraging and some of the questions asked were also very interesting ones. It's great to see more members join Green Culture Singapore after the GardenTech 2007.



Above: Xuan Hong at one of the two talks delivered during GardenTech 2007.

Hong Rui too felt that it was really fun and rewarding to introduce carnivorous plant growing to members of the public and to share his growing experience. When people commented that the booth looks great, it made all the work during set up period worthwhile.

Lastly, we would really like to thank Borneo Exotics for giving us the opportunity to help out throughout the GardenTech event!

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