

Garden railways a new perspective

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Above: The gardens on the loop of Denges yard. They really did a superb job!

Ticket: The special ticket for the "very special" train. Original size 3 x 4 inches. I have 4 to give away (see text).
Photo: Goerge Hoekstra

This year from the 17th of June until the 17th of October, the city of Lausanne is celebrating its second garden festival "Lausanne Jardins". 28 gardens will be featured all over the city. 18 of the gardens were the result of an international competition, 4 were planted by Lausanne's own city gardeners, a further 3 by local primary, secondary and higher education schools. The final 4 gardens have artistic themes arranged by local artists. The gardens are situated all over the city of Lausanne and the event is free! The SBB, as one of the twenty sponsors, took the opportunity to help launch this event by what is regarded as a world first: gardens on wheels. Over two dozen elderly two-axle departmental open wagons have been transformed into rolling gardens. Benedikt Weibel, SBB's CEO, thought it was quite fitting. In his inaugural speech he mentioned that the environment of steel and stone might seem hostile to natural vegetation. Actually, the contrary is true. Some plants like the high level of iron, deposited by the application of brakes, for others, the long intervals of maintenance give them time to develop in the first place. Even exotic species develop along the line. Some seeds do not spread with the help of wind or

birds....they simply take the train! The wagons will be exhibited at the stations of Lausanne and Renens, as well as Basel and Luzern. Several other wagons will visit about twenty stations as an exhibition train.

A very special train was formed for the opening day: historical locomotive Ae 4/7 No. 109769 from the early 1930's pulled a mixed train of meadow flower gardens on wheels and the colourful wooden open wagons used in the 1997 Jubilee and several official openings. The route took us around Lausanne's large marshalling yard at Denges. A nice touch was the admission to the train was not limited to the officials and the press. Anybody could apply for a limited number of tickets issued by the local radio station "rsr la première". I managed to beg four of these tickets from people in my carriage for you ticket collectors. If you are interested, send me a postcard: P.O.Box 140, CH 3718 Kandersteg, Switzerland. If I get more than four cards, I will pull the winners out of a hat at the end of October 2000. Internet info is available on the site of the French speaking Swiss newspaper "Le Temps": www.letemps-ch/jardins