



King's Jurassic perk

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GARDEN GIFT

Usually it's enough to say it with flowers, but when the gift is for the Saudi monarch something grander is called for such as the largest series of botanic gardens in the world.

The 160ha gardens will re-create the 400-million-year history of the Earth's plants, trees and flowers at a cost of \$240 million.

Nick Sweet of **Barton Willmore**, a British company designing the project, said it would be like "Jurassic Park without the dinosaurs".

The landscapes will be five times larger than the similar Eden Project in England.

The complex the King Abdullah International Gardens is a gift from the city of Riyadh.

To be built by 2010 outside Riyadh, the project will include four types of garden: scientific; water; international, sponsored by individuals and foreign embassies; and paleo-botanic, which will recreate the history of plants.

"There was a danger of being pompous about the scientific aspect," Sweet said.

"People should respond like they would, for example, in London, taking their family to the Kew Botanical Gardens, throwing a Frisbee around."

The project is taking shape in the middle of an arid landscape, but three million years ago the same place was forest.

"It illustrates how climate change can affect plant development," Paul Kenrick, project science adviser, said.

On that theme, a section called The Garden of Choices will attempt to warn of what may happen to the Earth in the future as a result of different possible scenarios resulting from human activity.

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