



2026 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Grand-Métis, Québec, Canada, September 3, 2025 – The **International Garden Festival** is launching a call for proposals to select designers to create the new temporary gardens for the Festival's 27th edition, which will open on June 20, 2026, on the site of **Les Jardins de Métis | Reford Gardens**.

2026 Theme – MAPPING SENSITIVITY

In the wake of the triennial thematic cycle initiated a year ago, *Mapping Sensitivity* pursues an ongoing reflection on the poetics of space – namely, how we relate to our physical surroundings and, more broadly, to the world. While *Borders* focused on the challenges of organising and representing geographical space, immediately raising geopolitical concerns, the theme of this 27th edition takes the *tournant sensible* ["the sensitive turn"].

It draws its inspiration from sensitive mapping, which, far more than a simple alternative to traditional cartography, is distinguished by its consideration of the subjective and immaterial dimensions of a place. Sensitive mapping thus traces the shared representations of a space that is described, lived and felt. It considers the real experience that users have of a given space and the emotional relationship they develop with it, considering cultural, phenomenological, experiential, cognitive and contextual factors.

For its 27th edition, the International Garden Festival invites designers from all backgrounds to design a garden using a sensitive, fundamentally inclusive and relational approach. At once real and fantasized, this garden will take on its full meaning thanks to the users who frequent it, shaping it in turn.

Eligibility of Candidates

This call for proposals is open to all landscape architects, architects, visual artists and multidisciplinary teams from Canada and abroad. The Festival encourages participants to form multidisciplinary teams. Applicants are limited to one proposal, either as individuals or as a team. Participants can be from a single city or country or cross international boundaries.

Designers are invited to design a garden that can take place in one or other of the axes of the Festival. The artistic and technical committees of the Festival will identify, in collaboration with the designers, the site that will best showcase their project. Designers will be asked to imagine their garden for exhibition for at least two summers and to propose strategies for the repurposing or recycling of the garden or its materials after the end of its exhibition.

Deadline to Submit Proposals

The deadline to submit proposals electronically is **MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2025 at 17:00 EST.** Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

Further information:

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GUIDELINES

Selection Process

The gardens will be selected by a jury on the basis of:

- The creative response to this year's theme: ***Mapping Sensitivity***;
- The originality of the concept and the innovative nature of the garden;
- The sensory and intellectual scope of the garden (user experience);
- The contribution to the field of garden art and to the diversification of landscape architecture practices;
- Rigorous research and critical approach;
- The constructability of the garden / feasibility of the project;
- The integration of sustainable design strategies.

During its deliberations, the jury will also consider, where applicable, the composition of the team involved and any safety issues raised by the project.

All participants will receive the results of the competition by email. In addition to designers selected by this international call for proposals, the Festival may also select designers by invitation.

International Garden Festival: Forum for Innovation and Laboratory for Experimentation

Created at the turn of the new millennium by Marie-Josée Lacroix, Denis Lemieux, Philippe Poullaouec-Gonidec and Alexander Reford, the [International Garden Festival](#) is recognized as one of the most important contemporary garden festivals in North America. Since its inception, more than 180 contemporary gardens have been exhibited at Grand-Métis and as extramural projects in Canada and around the world. Presented at Les Jardins de Métis / Reford Gardens, at the gateway to the Gaspé Peninsula, the Festival is held on a site adjacent to the historic gardens created by Elsie Reford, thereby establishing a bridge between history and modernity, and a dialogue between conservation, tradition and innovation. Each year the Festival exhibits over 20 conceptual gardens created by more than 70 landscape architects, architects and designers from various disciplines.

The Festival encourages participating designers to explore all facets of the garden, from the physical setting (site and context) to creating a range of sensory, emotional and intellectual experiences for the visitor. The Festival sees the garden as a space for creative interaction, while not negating its botanical and horticultural dimensions. The Festival imagines the garden as a multisensorial space and encourages designers to consider the visitor's experience in the design of the garden, provoking interaction, participation, exchange and reflection.

The Festival Site

Located in Grand-Métis, in the Gaspésie region of Québec, Canada, the International Garden Festival is held on a site adjacent to the Jardins de Métis | Reford Gardens, the historic gardens created by Elsie Reford from 1926 to 1958, a National Historic Site and Québec heritage site.

The Festival site is delimited on the north by the St. Lawrence River, on the west by a mature forest of deciduous trees (trembling aspen) and on the east by a field that opens onto a forest of conifers. The site is articulated around two perpendicular axes.

The north-south axis is defined by a geometric grid of identical rectangular spaces that are 10 x 20 meters. These sunny and open spaces possess one entry/exit from the West and/or the East. They are separated from each other by a filter of trees (birch, maple and linden) underplanted with ground covers or inert materials.



The west-east axis consists of a series of garden rooms that are variable in size and of irregular configurations (from 150 m² to 250 m²). Surrounded by mature conifers (mostly white spruce) and poplars, these garden rooms are shadier than those on the grid. They mostly have a single entrance/exit from the access road. Some offer filtered views to the St. Lawrence.

The natural soil is clay and the water table is about 1.5 meters below the surface. Excavation is possible, but extensive excavation should be avoided. All the sites have adequate soil and subsurface drains. All sites have access to water and electricity.

The summer climate in Grand-Métis is temperate, with temperatures varying from 15°C to 30°C from June to September. Most plants flourish in this climate (hardiness zone of 4b). The hardiness zone map (www.planthardiness.gc.ca) outlines the different zones in Canada where various types of trees, shrubs and flowers will most likely survive based on the average climatic conditions of each area. Most annual plants and several varieties of exotics can be used for the summer months.

We produce most of the plants in our greenhouses beginning in March. Planting is done in June. Designers should thus expect to use mature plants or plants with a rapid growth rate if they wish to assure bloom during the time the temporary garden is exhibited.

Project Oversight and Construction

The construction of each garden is the result of close cooperation between the Festival and the designers' teams. The technical coordinator and horticultural foreman oversee the construction and planting of each garden by a team of staff, interns and volunteers. The construction of the gardens will begin in May and must be completed by Friday June 20, barring *force majeure* (such as adverse weather conditions). The Festival and its crew assure the maintenance of the garden after the opening and for the duration of the event.

Designers will be required to travel to Grand-Métis to participate actively in the construction, to the best of their abilities, during the week leading up to the opening of the Festival (Sunday, June 14 to Friday, 19 June, 2026). During this period, they will be housed in summer cottages in nearby Métis-sur-Mer at the Festival's expense.

Honoraria and Budget

The budget for the creation and construction of each garden is **\$27,000 CAD**. This budget is divided in the following fashion:

- **\$7,000 CAD** for the team's honorarium, which is paid to the designers in two instalments;
- Up to **\$15,000 CAD** for the purchase of materials necessary for the realization of the project (including engineering or other fees if required). This budget is managed jointly by the Festival and the designer(s);
- A team of Festival staff build each garden. The budget for labour is **\$5,000 CAD**. This sum is managed by the Festival.

The Festival assumes for each garden, upon presentation of supporting invoices, the travel expenses up to:

- **\$1,000 CAD** for Quebec-based designers;
- **\$2,000 CAD** for designers from other Canadian provinces and territories;
- **\$3,000 CAD** for designers coming from abroad.



Designers are encouraged to solicit donations or grants for materials or other expenses (travel, printed material, etc.) for the realization of their garden from arts councils, sponsors or private partners. The Festival offers a range of visibility for donors and sponsors depending on the magnitude of the contribution in cash or product.

Presentation of Entries

Registration is first required in order to submit your application. You can register at any time. To complete your registration, go to: www.projects.internationalgardenfestival.ca.

The deadline to receive proposals electronically is **MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2025 at 17:00 EST.**

The proposal (in French or English) must be sent electronically as 3 separate files:

A 1 PDF (maximum 10 MB, 300 DPI and RGB mode), presenting the PROJECT with the following documents, in this order (making sure to present the information without the name of the designers):

- A schema 11" x 17" or A3 with:
 - A 180-word text describing the concept and presenting the experience offered to visitors in the proposed garden;
 - A layout plan of the garden (at minimum scale of 1/100);
 - A list of suggested plants.
- A schema 11" x 17" or A3 with:
 - 2 main views or elevations of the garden (candidate is free to choose the scale);
 - A perspective, sketch or rendering, showing the garden in its entirety.

B 1 JPG IMAGE presenting the PROJECT:

- An overall view of the project in JPG. Maximum size: 13 MB or 3000 x 4500 pixels.

C 1 PDF file (maximum 5 MB) identifying the DESIGNER or the members of the TEAM and presenting the following documents, in this order:

- Presentation page 11" x 17" or A3 with:
 - Title of the project;
 - Name of the designer or the members of the team with their profession (architect, landscape architect, visual artist, etc.);
 - City and country of residence;
 - An 80-word presentation of the designer or the team;
 - Your answer to the following question (70 words): How does your project resonate with this year's theme, ***Mapping Sensitivity***?
- A schema 11" x 17" or A3 presenting up to three recent projects by the team and/or its designers;
- *Curriculum vitae* of the designers (2 pages maximum per person);
- Complete information (address, telephone, email, website) of the primary contact for the team.

Please avoid compressing your texts or images to Bitmaps (BMP) in the PDF files.

By taking part in this call for proposals, candidates authorize the International Garden Festival to make public, exhibit and disseminate their proposals.

The Festival website will present all projects submitted during this competition.



Summary Schedule 2025-2026

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| September 3, 2025 | - Launch of the call for proposals |
| October 27 | - Deadline to submit proposals |
| November | - Selection process and jury deliberations |
| December 19 | - Contact made with all candidates |
| January 2026 | - Transmission of text and image files required for the preparation of contracts and content intended for media/promotional purposes
- First virtual meeting with the artistic and technical committees
- Contract signings |
| February | - Distribution of the press release presenting the selected projects
- Online publication of the proposals submitted to the call for proposals
- Submission of preliminary sketches
- Issuing of comments and recommendations by the Festival's technical committee
- Revision of plans and estimates |
| March – April | - Final approval of plans, estimates and budgets by the Festival's artistic and technical committees
- Period for requesting quotations, purchasing materials and ordering shrubs and trees
- Start of the preparation of plants in the greenhouses |
| Early May | - Dismantling of gardens not returning for another year of exhibition
- Start of construction and landscaping work by the Festival team |
| June 14 to 20 | - Designers are on site to supervise the completion of their garden, actively participate in its construction, attend the opening and meet with the media |
| June 19 | - Inauguration of the 27 th edition of the International Garden Festival |
| June 20 | - The Festival opens to the public |
| October 4 | - Last day to visit the installations of the 27 th edition of the Festival |

This schedule may be modified without notice. The International Garden Festival reserves the right to not respond to this call for proposals.