

Features

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Finding Inspiration

Andrew Bunting



Throughout the country there are literally hundreds of botanic gardens, arboreta, public gardens and landscapes, zoos with gardens, cemeteries with outstanding horticulture, estate gardens, etc. The American Public Gardens Association (APGA) supports and promotes these institutions.

Pictured: The Chicago Botanic Garden.

Public gardens can be an amazing resource for garden centers, wholesale nurseries, designers and landscape architects, etc. to learn about the diversity of plants that can grow in a certain region; observe new approaches

to garden design and trends; and learn about popular approaches to gardening, such as gravel gardens, pollinator gardening, ecological approaches to gardening, deer-resistant plant, water-wise gardening and xeriscaping, and all the new, exciting work happening with edible gardening, vegetable gardening and urban farming.

What Public Gardens Offer

Most major cities have several botanic gardens, arboreta, and public gardens and landscapes, and they promote their plantings, gardens and horticulture through labelling, signage and interpretation, as well as a host of virtual and in-person education programming. And many have great plant promotion and introduction programs, such as at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's the Gold Medal Plant Program, (www.phsonline.org), which promotes great plants for the Mid-Atlantic states. Also, the Denver Botanic Garden has Plant Select, which introduces outstanding new plantings for the Mountain West. Meanwhile, Great Plant Picks has been promoting outstanding perennials, trees and shrubs for the Pacific Northwest for over 20 years.

As I think of my travels across the United States, these are some of my favorite public gardening institutions that I know are great sources of information and inspiration for the green industry. In my backyard in the Philadelphia area, we have our own public gardens and landscapes of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society that include the Azalea Garden, Philadelphia Navy Yard, and several pocket parks and gardens along the Delaware River. The Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania has great collections of trees and shrubs, as does the nearby Tyler Arboretum, Scott Arboretum, Stoneleigh Gardens and the Jenkins Arboretum. For world-class garden design, Chanticleer in Wayne, Pennsylvania, is unequalled, and nearby in Kennett Square is the world-renowned Longwood Gardens.

In Delaware, the Mt. Cuba Center promotes native plants, as does Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve to the north along the Delaware River in Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania.

In New York City, the New York Botanical Garden has an array of interesting gardens, including an extensive rock garden and a conservatory. Both Untermyer Gardens and Wave Hill are great locations to see summer annuals and tropicals in creative displays.

To the north in Boston, the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University is one of the best locations in the country for trees and shrubs, while the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden is a hub of information for all of the northeast.

Heading south to Washington, D.C., both the U. S. National Arboretum and the U. S. Botanical Garden have extensive gardens, plant collections, programming, and are free and open to the public. Additionally, the Smithsonian Gardens has over 10 gardens at various museums of the Smithsonian of varying displays. One of my favorites is the Ripley Garden.

In Virginia, the Lewis Ginter Botanic Garden has extensive display gardens and a conservatory with year-round displays. Exceptional for its collections of unusual shrubs, trees and perennials is the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina. The Sarah P. Duke Gardens at Duke University is one of the most beautifully designed gardens in the South. Atlanta Botanical Garden has great outdoor displays, especially camellias in the early spring, and one of the largest conservatories featuring tropical and arid displays from around the world.

In Florida, the public gardens abound with Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, and Viscaya in the Miami area. On the west coast of Florida is the Marie Selby Botanical Garden with wonderful collections of bromeliads and orchids, and the Naples Botanical Garden conserves many regional Florida natives.

Some favorites in Texas include the John Fairey Garden, just north of Houston, which was created by the namesake who was an intrepid plant collector in Mexico. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin features Texas native wildflowers and a host of educational materials on their ecological benefits.

Some of the greatest gardens and botanical institutions in the world are found in the Midwest, including the amazing Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis with literally every type of garden, from a Japanese Garden to a vegetable garden, and similarly the Chicago Botanic Garden has an array of gardens, including one of the best plant evaluation gardens in the U.S. To the west of Chicago is the Morton Arboretum, which like the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, boasts one of the best collections of trees and shrubs.

In the Mountain West, the Denver Botanic Garden has a stellar rock garden, great perennial borders and an extensive conservatory. And one of the best gardens display regionally appropriate rock garden plants is the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in Vail.

In the Pacific Northwest, both the University of Washington Botanical Garden and Bellevue Botanical Garden in Seattle have myriad inspirational plantings. California has an amazing diversity of gardens and arboreta from north to south. The Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens is a great source of information in northern coastal California. The Sonoma Botanical Garden in Glen Ellen has one of the best collections of Asian plants in the U.S.

In the Bay Area, the University of California-Berkeley Botanical Garden has displays of regional floras from around the world, including South American and southern Africa, as well as great collections of native California plants. The San Francisco Botanical Garden also has great global collections. The whimsical Ganna Walska Lotusland in Santa Barbara is an eclectic, one-of-a-kind uniquely designed garden, and nearby, the Santa Barbara Botanical Garden is a southern California botanical gem. Pasadena is home to the internationally famous Huntington Botanical Garden.

Some favorites in Arizona include the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Tucson Botanical Garden and the Desert

Botanical Garden.

These are just some of the hundreds of public gardens that are an amazing source of inspiration and information.

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Find Out More! Want to know more about public gardens in the U.S.? Visit www.publicgardens.org.

Andrew Bunting is the Vice President of Public Horticulture for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, which uses horticulture to advance the health and well-being of the Greater Philadelphia region. Andrew has decades of horticultural experience, ranging from his tenures at public gardens in the U. S. and abroad, as well as a published author, gardening expert and sought-after presenter. To learn more about PHS or to become a member and support greening initiatives in over 250 neighborhoods, visit PHSonline.org.