

A POCKETFUL OF POSIES:

Exploring San Diego's Gardens

San Diego's temperate climate, with its weather of eternal spring, continues to lure international visitors and transplants alike, while treating residents to the local alfresco lifestyle; the abundance of outdoor living and cultural diversity are undeniably our greatest of treasures. And in true Southern California form, our garden landscape blossoms throughout the year, unveiling the expression of their very existence; a form that simply stems from their aesthetic, historical and environmental significance.

by Jeanne Ferris

photography by Jesse Aguayo



San Diego Botanical Gardens
Web: sdbgarden.org

Formerly the Quail Botanical Gardens, the San Diego Botanical Gardens is a frost-free habitat of fruit bearing sub-tropical trees and native California plants. 37 acres unfold four miles of trails offering secret gardens of rare bamboo collections, fire-safe landscaping, and growing herbs. And in continuing to expand its outreach, the Hamilton Children's Garden was opened in mid-2009; specifically designed for children, the exhibit has become the largest interactive garden on the west coast.

"I like that nature is interactive here," states Charista Eillers, mother of a 6-year-old boy and recent garden patron. "[My son] loves to use his imagination. [And] we love the Garden of Lights too."

A non-profit entity, the Botanical Gardens serve as an education site in horticultural and botanical preservation. The site, once a private estate of exotic plants from around the world, was the residence of Ruth and Charles Larabee; the estate was bequeathed to the County of San Diego in 1971, opening the gardens to the public.

Location

230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas
tel: 760.436.9466
hours: Open daily, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 19 & 20
Herb Festival, Spring Plant Sale, and Tomatomania
Offering a faire of speakers, guided tours, marketplace finds, and the SDBG Spring Plant Sale, the Herb Festival this year features honored guest, Susan Belsinger – a culinary herbalist, educator, food writer, and photographer, whose work has been widely published.
- April 16 & 17
Asian Arts Festival
Celebrating the art of Asian horticulture with outstanding displays, lectures, and demonstrations, the festival will feature: floral arrangements from the La Jolla Chapter of the Ohara School of Ikebana; displays of Tray Landscape, Saikei, Kusamono, Penjing, Hon Non Bo, Suiseki, & Scholar Rocks; a traditional tea ceremony, and a performance by The Shokenji Taiko, a Japanese-style drumming group from North County. Cost is free with admission or membership.

Balboa Park, San Diego

Web: balboapark.org

Through its entrance on Laurel Street, visitors are welcomed to the ever-famed Balboa Park – much like the experience of entering the Prado in Toledo, Spain. The rich culture of art, beauty and architecture of 15 world-class museums, theaters, and more than eight diverse, lushly landscaped gardens are essential to the historical fabric of San Diego's landscape: spanning 1,200 acres in Hillcrest, the park was originally landscaped for the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition, featuring Spanish-Renaissance architecture, fountains and foyers.

Popularized for its fronted Lily pond, the Botanical Building remains one of the most photographed and historic within the park; also noted as one of the largest lath structures in the world. Home to a growing collection of more than 2,100 species of permanent tropical plants, ferns, orchids and palms, the display also features seasonal flower arrangements as well.

Serene and tranquil, the Japanese Friendship Garden neighboring the Spreckels Organ Pavilion originated as a teahouse in the early 20th century; the two acre garden extends a Zen garden for meditation and koi pond, a bonsai exhibit and a Fujidana (wisteria arbor) – a balanced composition featuring specifically placed stones, water, plants and trees purposed for meditation and repose. Under the direction of Professor Takeo Uesugi, a stone placement specialist, outdoor space is currently expanding 11 acres to include a traditional teahouse, a pavilion for 300 patrons, an outdoor amphitheatre and wheelchair accessible paths. Weekend classes are available, offering sushi making, bonsai, calligraphy, and conversational Japanese; in addition, licensed practitioners from Japan host traditional tea ceremonies, free with admission.

According to Dominique Jordan, a Swiss resident on a world journey who recently visited the Friendship Garden, "I have been all over Asia, and never have I seen a tea ceremony" – simply noting the value of the garden's outreach. ♦

Location

1549 El Prado, San Diego
tel: 619.239.0512



UPCOMING EVENTS

■ March 19

Cherry Blossom Festival

Hosted by the Japanese Friendship Garden, the annual event features: Japanese food, a Little Miss Sakura pageant, entertainment, demos and exhibitions. Free with garden admission, food and games sold separately.

■ EVERY SUNDAY

Free Organ Concerts

John D. and Adolph Spreckels donated the Spreckels Organ, one of the world's largest outdoor pipe organs, to the City of San Diego in 1914 for the Panama-California Exposition. This unique organ contains 4,530 pipes ranging in length from the size of a pencil to 32 feet. Since 1917, San Diego has had a civic organist, who performs free weekly Sunday concerts, 2 p.m. at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion.