



Inspiration In Bloom

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Since opening 10 years ago, Riverbanks Botanical Garden in Columbia, SC, has fully blossomed into what is now considered the jewel of the Midlands, and much more. Hailed by *Horticulture* magazine as one of 10 gardens that inspire and by HGTV as one of 20 great public gardens across America, the Botanical Garden boasts 70 acres of unparalleled beauty.

Dramatic and themed gardens showcase more than 4,200 species of native and exotic plants, providing a living classroom and an ideal location for weddings and special events. In contrast, natural river views and valley overlooks in the adjacent woodlands blaze a scenic trail to historic ruins from the 1800s.

Botanical Garden adventures begin in the entrance parking lot with the Dry Garden, which contains an array of plants that can tolerate extended periods with very little water. These plants are indicative of what you would find in desert to semi-desert regions and they are adapted to hot summers with little or no rainfall each year.

Just inside the garden gate is an enchanting Bog Garden where water cascades over a purple wall and falls onto large granite blocks before flowing into the bog. In and around the bog is a variety of interesting plants, and you might spy a turtle or frog sunning on a lily pad!

A leisurely walk over Treetops Bridge leads to the tranquil Shade Garden, located on the side of a wooded ravine sloping down to a stream. The plants in this garden are representative of ones that thrive in the shade. Lesser-known shade plants, including perennials, vines and woody plants, also have been incorporated into the garden.

The Old Rose Garden encompasses old roses with the perennials, annuals, vines and shrubs that complement them. One of the world's largest public collections of Noisettes is found here, and Chinas and Teas are among other classes of "old" roses featured. In

Whether it's a spectacular bloom, a mass of color or an unusual plant structure, there's always something growing on at Riverbanks Botanical Garden.

the spring, visitors can sit and relax in one of the wooden swings enjoying the shade provided by climbing roses and clematis while the sweet perfume of roses permeates the air.

Riverbanks' premier botanical exhibit is found in the 34,000-square-foot Walled Garden. Composed of several smaller themed gardens, it contains the majority of plant species found in the area. The garden features a main canal dividing it in half, with fountains at each end. The brick paths and geometric shapes of the beds create a very formal foundation, but these lines are softened as the plants are allowed to grow over the edges of their beds to create loose canopies over the pathways. The end result is a labyrinth of secret garden "rooms" and lush plantings where plants are cultivated to intertwine and complement each other.

Visitors can park at the garden entrance in West Columbia to enjoy the botanical buds and blooms before traveling down to Riverbanks Zoo by tram, or catch a tram ride from the zoo to the garden. Along the journey, consider exploring the Woodlands Walk. This serene nature trail holds significant historical value as the location of one of South Carolina's first water-powered textile mills and as the site of Sherman's march on Columbia during the Civil War.

Want to learn more about gardening and the fascinating world of plants? Come play in the dirt at one of the hands-on Garden Education Programs. The garden also plays host to free weekly demonstrations by the Clemson Extension Urban Horticulture Center, covering a broad range of topics from fire ant management to composting.

Wondering what to plant in your garden this spring? A trip to Riverbanks Botanical Garden can inspire and hold you in awe.

Find out more...
Riverbanks Zoo and Botanical Garden
www.riverbanks.org



www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com