10 Best Botanical Gardens In The U.S.

Portland Japanese Garden in Oregon
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Botanical gardens offer a captivating escape into the realm of natural beauty and tranquility. From vibrant floral displays to diverse plant collections, these stunning gardens across the country are a testament to the incredible biodiversity and horticultural expertise that exists within the United States.

As voted on by TravelAwaits readers in our annual Best Of Travel Awards, we present to you the 10 best botanical gardens in the U.S., each offering a unique and unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages.

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1. New England Botanic Garden At Tower Hill (Winner)
Boylston, Massachusetts

Congratulations to this year’s winner of Best Botanical Garden in the U.S., New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill! Nestled in Massachusetts, this hidden gem showcases 171 acres of stunning gardens and woodlands. Visitors can stroll through the picturesque grounds, admiring its 18 distinct gardens, including the breathtaking Secret Garden and the enchanting Garden of Inspiration. With its charming landscapes and seasonal flower displays, this garden is a must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts.
New England Botanic Garden is one of the prettiest places in Massachusetts to enjoy fall foliage. With views of the Wachusett Reservoir and Wachusett Mountain, the breathtaking garden provides ample photo ops.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Combining art and nature, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a true marvel. Boasting an impressive outdoor sculpture collection, including works by renowned artists, this garden offers a unique blend of horticulture and artistic expression. Visitors can explore the vast Japanese Garden, immerse themselves in the serene setting of the Michigan Farm Garden, or marvel at the intricate beauty of the Carnivorous Plant House. The gardens host a summer concert series as well as a fall festival each year. Here's everything you need to know before you visit one of the best gardens in Michigan.

3. Desert Botanical Garden

Phoenix, Arizona
Just 10 minutes from Sky Harbor airport, the 55-acre Desert Botanical Garden showcases the extraordinary beauty of desert flora. With over 50,000 plant displays representing more than 4,000 species, this Phoenix garden offers a captivating journey through the vibrant colors and unique adaptations of desert plants. Visitors can witness the breathtaking cacti and succulent collection (such as the crested saguaro cactus), embark on dusty, scenic trails, and enjoy engaging exhibits that showcase the region’s rich cultural and botanical heritage.

Avoid going in the heat of the Arizona summer. In December, thousands of flickering luminaria bags line the garden paths for Las Noches de las Luminarias. Here are some more tips for visiting Desert Botanical Garden.
4. Denver Botanic Gardens

Denver, Colorado

Spanning 24 acres, Denver Botanic Gardens in Colorado is a lush oasis in the heart of the city. Its diverse gardens include the Japanese Garden, the Orangery, and the Romantic Gardens. Visitors can lose themselves in the tranquility of the Monet Pool water garden or explore the enchanting Conservatory, home to exotic tropical plants. With its stunning landscapes and educational programs, this garden provides a delightful experience for all.
While the peak bloom occurs from June through September, there's an abundance of reasons to visit the botanical garden throughout the year. Particularly during the holiday season, visitors can marvel at the garden's illuminated flora and naturalistic landscapes, brought to life by the enchanting Blossoms of Light event.
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Nestled in Pennsylvania, Longwood Gardens is a horticultural masterpiece that has captivated visitors for over a century. With its sprawling 1,077 acres, this garden boasts an array of awe-inspiring features, including the stunning Italian Water Garden, the breathtaking Flower Garden Walk, and the magnificent Main Fountain Garden. Visitors can also immerse themselves in the beauty of the Orchid House or stroll through the serene tranquility of the Meadow Garden.

During the holidays, this beloved destination captivates garden goers with an enchanting display of over 500,000 lights illuminating over 100 beautifully decorated trees. A miniature railway and 140-foot-long tunnel of light round out the festivities.

6. Missouri Botanical Garden

St. Louis, Missouri

Founded in 1859, the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis is one of the oldest botanical institutions in the U.S. This 79-acre garden houses an extensive collection of plants, including the iconic Climatron conservatory, which simulates a tropical rainforest environment. Visitors can explore the serene Japanese Garden, marvel at the vibrant blooms in the Kemper Center for Home Gardening, or enjoy educational programs and events throughout the year.
The Doris I. Schnuck Children’s Garden area and children’s programs at the Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House keep little ones busy. In the summer, MoBot hosts the Whitaker Music Festival, while the holiday season brings the annual Garden Glow. This year, the garden is proud to present the works of Dale Chihuly in Chihuly in the Garden 2023.
7. San Diego Botanic Garden
Encinitas, California

Nestled on 37 acres in California, the San Diego Botanic Garden is a delightful destination for nature lovers. Four miles of scenic trails connect 29 themed gardens from around the world, including the iconic bamboo grove, desert gardens, a tropical rainforest (complete with a spectacular waterfall), and an interactive children's garden.
With its mild climate and stunning botanical displays, the San Diego Botanic Garden is a true paradise for plant enthusiasts.

8. United States Botanic Garden

Washington, D.C.

Situated in the nation's capital, the United States Botanic Garden was established in 1820, making it the oldest continuously operating botanic garden in the U.S. Within this living plant museum's conservatory, you'll find a diverse collection that includes native Hawaiian plants, a rich array of medicinal plants sourced from around the globe, as well as an exquisite selection of rare and endangered plant species.

Just across Independence Avenue, Bartholdi Park awaits, offering a serene setting complete with a stunning fountain and an opportunity to witness sustainable gardening practices in action.
Meanwhile, the National Garden houses remarkable features such as the First Ladies Water Garden, a tribute to the esteemed spouses of American presidents. It is free to visit, but if you’re unable to go in person, you can always take a virtual tour.

**Pro Tip:** Ask for directions to the *really* old ferns.

9. **Fort Worth Botanic Garden**  
**Fort Worth, Texas**

Fort Worth boasts the enchanting Fort Worth Botanic Garden, spanning over 100 acres of breathtaking landscapes. With its extensive rose garden, featuring over 2,500 rose bushes, and the stunning Japanese Garden with its serene ponds and waterfalls, this garden is a visual feast. Visitors can explore the vibrant Fuller Garden or wander through the picturesque Botanical...
Research Institute of Texas, making it a must-visit destination for nature lovers in the Lone Star State.

10. Portland Japanese Garden

Portland, Oregon

One of the most authentic Japanese gardens outside of Japan can be found in Portland's Washington Park. Spanning 12 acres, the Portland Japanese Garden exemplifies the principles of Japanese gardening, featuring meticulously pruned trees, serene koi ponds, and traditional tea houses. Visitors can experience the contemplative beauty of the Strolling Pond Garden, immerse themselves in the Zen-inspired Sand and Stone Garden, or enjoy breathtaking vistas from the hilltop viewpoints.

These botanical gardens in the U.S., as voted on by TravelAwaits readers, offer an exquisite blend of natural beauty, horticultural artistry, and cultural exploration. Whether you're captivated by vibrant floral displays, fascinated by desert flora, or drawn to the serenity of Japanese gardens, each of these locations provides a unique and immersive experience. Embark on a journey to these botanical marvels and discover the captivating world of plants that awaits you.
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Laura Ray has lived in Atlanta, the Bay Area, SoCal, and Austin. After moving from Texas, she and her husband rambled about the Midwest in a camper for a couple of years before finally settling on 35 acres in their home state of Kentucky. When she isn’t clacking around on the keyboard (cat in lap), you...