

### **30-Minute Guided tour of the Houston Botanic Garden**

**Goal:** Mention all the major areas of the Garden so that people know they exist and are worth seeing!

#### **I. Garden History**

- a. We are on “the Island,” a 70-acre piece of land surrounded by the Sims Bayou meander (the original waterway). You drove over the bayou as you entered off Park Place Blvd..
- b. There is a flood control channel to the south/southeast that creates the Island, and there is one pedestrian bridge over this channel to the South Gardens.
- c. Following a couple decades of dreaming and early planning, the project really started progressing toward what you see today beginning in 2015. The city and the non-profit reached a long-term lease agreement for the 132-acre former Glenbrook Golf Course site in 2017.
- d. Construction on the 30- year master plan by Dutch landscape design firm West 8 started in the spring of 2019, and the Garden opened to the public on September 18, 2020.
- e. Phase I of the master plan includes approximately 25 acres of development, including the Global Collection Garden, Culinary Garden, Susan Garver Family Discovery Garden, Woodland Glade, Pine Grove, Coastal Prairie, and Stormwater Wetlands.

#### **II. Our Major Collections / Gardens**

Year-Round Gardens – we have ~1,200 plant taxa at the Garden [a taxon is any unit used in the science of biological classification (species, family, class)]

##### **a. Main Entrance**

1. Abendshein Family Fountain – the Calypso coral stones for Alcove wall & fountain were sourced from Dominican Republic quarry; all the natural material was utilized, not wasted from the process
2. Alcove Wall – 52 planters along the football field length wall are changed out twice a year

##### **b. Global Collection Garden**

1. Nearly half of the diversity of plants in the Garden can be found here
2. There are plants from every continent except Antarctica
3. You can go around the world in 3 acres! Asian Hillside, Tropical Heart, Arid Valley, etc.

##### **c. Culinary Garden**

1. Seasonal produce grown for display – harvested produce made available first-come, first-served to visitors on select Saturday mornings
2. Pollinator Garden and Apothecary Corner recently updated (Spring 2025) for more biodiversity

##### **d. Native Areas**

1. Stormwater Wetlands – meets requirements for floodwater detention while also serving as habitat for all kinds of plant and animal life
2. Coastal Prairie – Texas native plants in our landscape that thrive along the Gulf Coast

##### **e. Susan Garver Family Discovery Garden**

1. Interactive water play, loblolly pine forest, rainbow garden, & native aquatic plants around a pond.
2. Let visitors know it is about a 10 minute walk to the south/southwest beyond the Culinary Garden (show them how to get there on the map or by describing the path)

##### **f. Seasonal Collection Highlights – we have year-round blooms!**

- a. **Winter** (January – February)
  - 1. Camellias and Azaleas in Asian Hillside in Global
  - 2. Bamboo Forest before any freeze(s)
- b. **Spring** (March – May)
  - 1. Louisiana Irises in Family Discovery Garden (~end of March/early April)
  - 2. *Hippeastrum* blooming throughout the Garden
  - 3. Botanists' Alley & wildflower areas
  - 4. Arid Valley / Cactus Garden: Prickly pear, Yucca, and Agave blooms
- c. **Summer** (June – August)
  - 1. Alcove wall, summer annual display (sunflowers & sorghum) in Confetti Garden
  - 2. June – plumbago and crocosmia in Mediterranean Garden
- d. **Fall** – (September – December)
  - 1. Pollinator Alley
  - 2. Bananas, possibly if they have had time to mature to fruit since winter
  - 3. Savanna – grasses mature and have their moment

### III. **Festivals**

- a. Five Festivals a year (free for Members!) – three in the Spring and two in the Fall
  - 1. **Bayou Blues** in March; 2) **Flower Power** in April; 3) **Beyond Bouquets** in May (Mother's Day);
  - 4) **Go Bananas** in September; and 5) **Monarchs & Marigolds** in October

### IV. **Current & Example of Past Exhibits**

- a. **Radiant Nature** – runs November through February (2025-2026 will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> year)
- b. **Habitat** – ongoing interpretive signage from the Smithsonian throughout the Garden, through Sept 2026
- c. **Rich Soil** by Kristine Mays – 7 groupings of wire sculptures (29 pieces total) through Sept 2025
- d. ZimSculpt (spring 2024) – two hand-carved stone sculptures in water features
- e. Alex Hever's Glass in Flight (fall 2023-spring 2024)- steel-and-glass monarch butterfly in the Upland Forest
- f. Steve Tobin's Intertwined (spring-fall 2023) – yellow Dancing Steelroots in the Savanna
- g. Tree of Life by local artist Gerardo Rosales (spring 2022) – from our very first exhibit, in partnership with Lawndale (in Tropical Heart)

### V. **Memberships**

- a. If you are local, this is a great way to see the Garden through every season; includes no-charge tickets to 5 annual festivals. You can apply today's general admission ticket toward membership level of your choice at the ticket window on your way out today. Garden members also receive 10% off in Garden Shop; receive a ticket(s) to the Radiant Nature opening weekend, and are invited to monthly Botanic Beat lunch-and-learn program every 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday.
- b. We participate in American Horticultural Society's Garden Network, which gives our members reciprocal privileges at 380+ participating public gardens across North America;

### VI. **Volunteer with Us**

- a. We welcome individuals and groups to volunteer every day of the week at the Garden. Go to our website "volunteer" page and apply online.