



Celebrate Public Gardens

Honor your local public garden by attending National Public Gardens Day events and showing your support throughout the year.

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Courtesy Desert Botanical Garden/ Adam Rodriguez

To celebrate National Public Gardens Day, the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Ariz., is offering workshops about plant and water conservation. Gardens play an important role in the community, offering locations for social gatherings, learning opportunities, and water and plant conservation. This week, the more than 500 gardens that serve the American public will be honored in the second National Public Gardens Day.

This year's celebration, on May 7, 2010, will focus on teaching people how to keep sustainable gardens through plant management and water conservation.

"The best action people can take to support gardens and arboreta is to attend NPGD activities to learn more about what their local organization is working toward and adopt, if even a few, important steps to reduce their impact on the Earth," says John Sallot of the Desert Botanical Garden, one public garden to host events throughout the weekend.

The Desert Botanical Garden was founded in 1939 to preserve a piece of the Sonoran Desert's land for future generations and boasts more than 50,000 desert plants. According to Sallot, the garden has promoted the idea of water conservation since its beginning.

"Water supplies in the desert are limited, and we encourage residents to plant desert and arid adapted plants in their yards," he says. "Many people move here and bring plant selection and care ideas from environments that have more water. We work to retrain people to think of native plants."

The gardens at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia are used year-round for educational purposes. They give backyard gardeners gardening skills, provide students and teachers with information on rare and endangered plant species, and display native plants and flora from the region's treasured mountain and coastal-plain-bog landscapes.

"Public gardens are more than pretty places, though we all enjoy strolling through beautiful gardens," says Connie Cottingham of the Georgia garden. "Through classes and displays [at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia] visitors get ideas on how to transform their own garden to not only provide a relaxing place and a great hobby, but also fresh food and flowers and a healthy environment to support birds and other fauna."

Cottingham recommends four ways to support public gardens during National Public Gardens Day and throughout the year: Become a member of your local public garden. In addition to financially supporting the public garden's mission, this will help you feel rooted to your community and the local ecosystem.

Introduce a friend to the public garden. Gardens offer bonding opportunities for friends and family, in addition to housing a wealth of knowledge. Take a friend along to a seed-starting class or another event your local public garden offers.

Be a public garden volunteer. "I repotted orchids [as a volunteer] every Wednesday afternoon before I joined the staff at SBG and learned so much," Cottingham says. "Volunteers are vital for the operation of a garden, and they often form deep friendships among themselves."

Donate. Give a financial contribution to your local public garden as a gift, in the honor of a friend or loved one, or in a will. During National Public Gardens Day, people will have the opportunity to learn more about what plants and water conservation practices work best in their surrounding ecosystem, as well as celebrate the beauty public gardens offer.

"Regardless of their size, all public gardens share a common commitment to providing outreach programs aimed at engaging their communities and educating future generations on the irreplaceable value of plants," says Dan Stark, executive director of the American Public Gardens Association, the organization sponsoring the observance.

To search for a public garden near you, visit the American Public Gardens Association website.