

# Gracious Gardens of the South

Sandra Friend

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Making memories with Mom while visiting gardens through the Deep South during azalea season, a mother-daughter journey of reconnection and reflection.

(c)2020, Sandra Friend

*Abridged Version*



COVER: Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston SC



Sandra Friend and Linda Friend, Bellingrath Gardens, March 2011

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# Introduction

Welcome to the story behind my love of gardens. I've been visiting gardens all of my life, thanks to my parents. This book both introduces you to my journey and showcases the beauty of the gardens of the Deep South over two azalea seasons.

I've been an author for more than 20 years, with over 40 books published. While my mother and I took these trips in 2010 and 2011, I was juggling a guidebook update for a national publisher with a consulting job.

My original intent behind these trips was to blog about them and then write a detailed book about the gardens we visited. But as the years have passed and readers dig more deeply into the Internet for planning their trips, I felt a website would be more helpful for garden lovers.

In 2020, I built a website called Gardens Visitor and offer the ebook to newsletter subscribers. I've since blended the handful of garden destinations I wrote about on that website into TrailsandTravel.com.

John and I hope our ongoing discoveries and photos lead you to explore more public gardens and enjoy the comfort that being in nature brings.



*John Keatley and Sandra Friend  
Ormond Memorial Gardens, Ormond Beach FL, 2019  
Photo by Sally White*

# MY GARDEN STORY

Mom and Dad introduced me to gardens at a very early age. When we moved from a small apartment in the city to a house in the country, Mom made a rock garden in the backyard and a rose garden along the fence in the front yard.

Dad planted forsythia, which burst into bright yellow blooms that signaled spring was here, and tiger lilies that waved their orange blooms when summer came. They put in a fern forest under my bedroom window, and a vegetable garden next to the house.

We frequented nurseries, but we also visited gardens. At nearby Ringwood Manor State Park, Dad would grill burgers in the picnic grounds while we played in the woods and the woodland gardens. We walked the formal gardens at Skylands Manor. We lived on the other side of the mountain from Sterling Forest Gardens in New York, so we were regulars there as well.



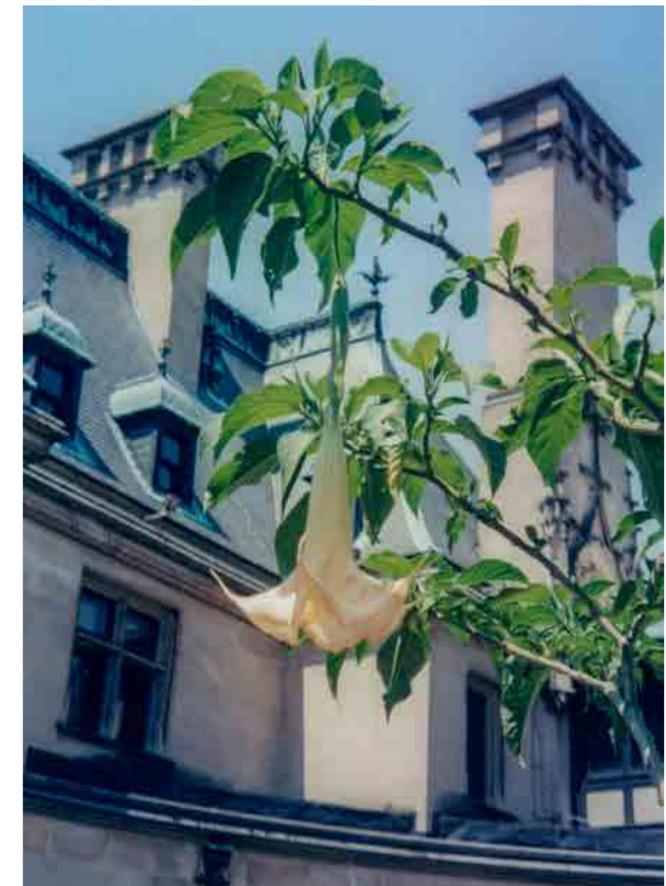
Mom at home in NJ with hydrangeas, 1960



Sterling Forest Gardens NY, 1973



Ringwood Manor State Park, NJ 1980s



Skylands Manor NJ, 1980s



*Me at Cypress Gardens, FL, 1966*

Once my parents began planning an annual trip down the East Coast of the United States each winter, gardens were part of our travels.

In Florida, before Walt Disney World existed, we visited gardens in February and March. I have many fond memories of visiting Cypress Gardens and Rainbow Springs, Masterpiece Gardens and Washington Oaks Gardens.

Florida was our destination on every road trip south, but on the way, we'd stop and tour gardens in the Carolinas and Georgia in azalea season.

To me, this was nothing short of magic, seeing the sun sparkling in streamers through the Spanish moss, illuminating azalea blooms in pink, purple, and red beneath the immense and ancient live oaks.



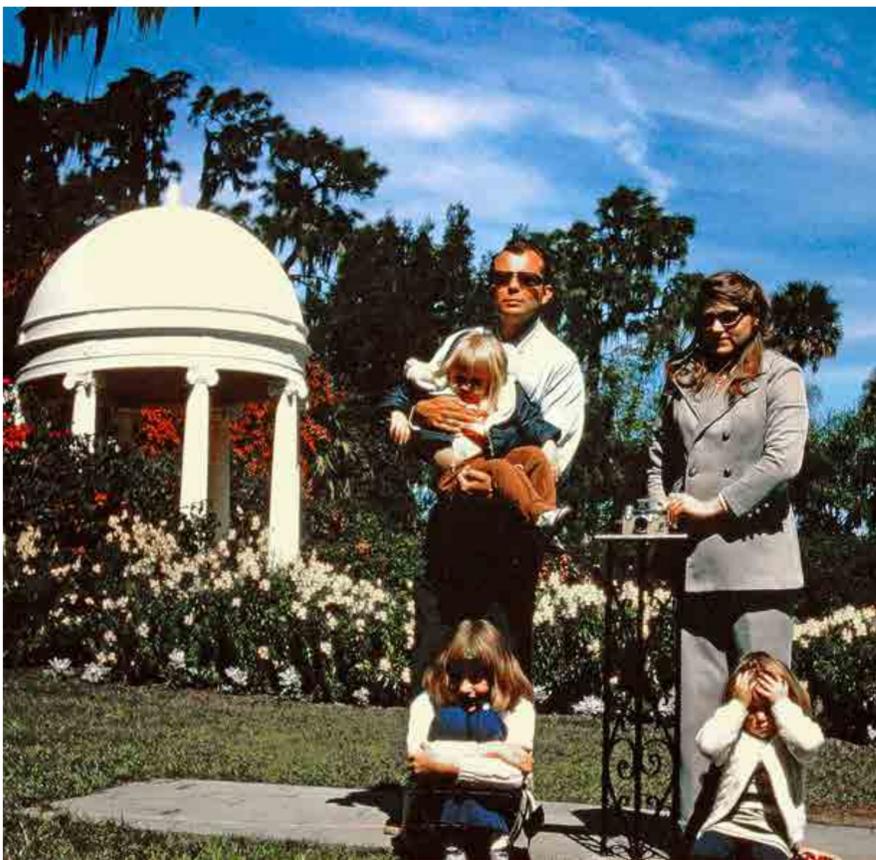
*Me, Dad, and sister Susan in Florida, 1968*



*Me in our New Jersey front yard, 1968*



*Susan at Brookgreen Gardens SC, 1972*



Family portraits at the photo mirror  
in Cypress Gardens, Florida  
in 1972 and 1974

Left: Dad holding Sally, Mom, me and  
Susan sitting.

Right: Susan and Sally, Mom holding  
camera, me, and Dad with stroller in  
which brother Scott is sleeping

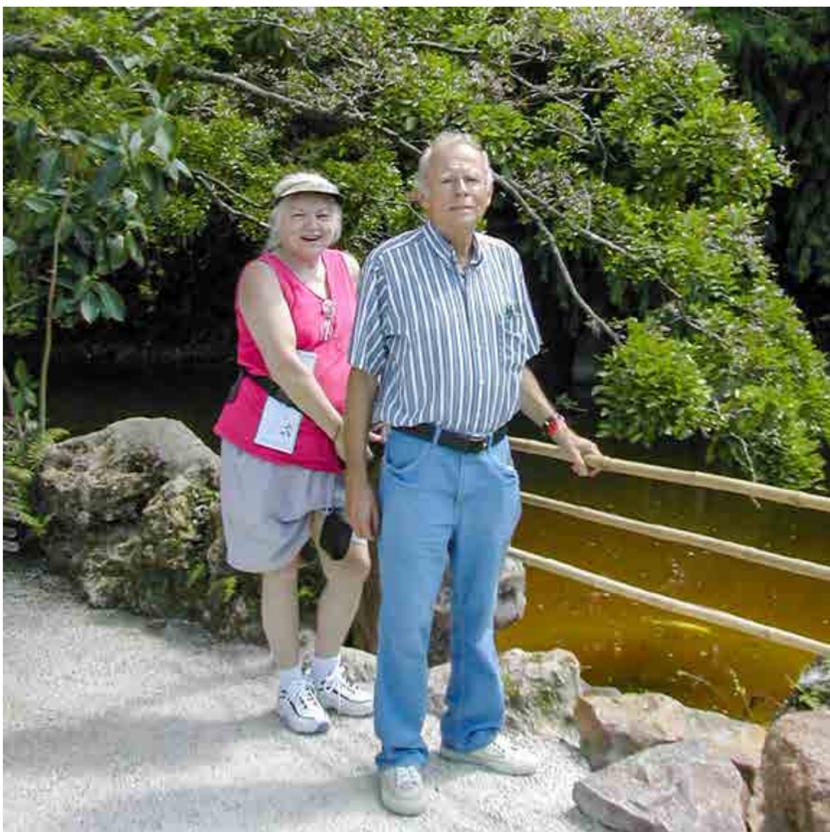


One of my earliest visits to Rainbow Springs

We moved to Florida when I was a teenager. Soon Ravine Gardens became an annual pilgrimage. Once it was preserved as a state park, Rainbow Springs became our hangout.

While still a high school student, my very first opinion letter to a newspaper was to encourage the state to save Rainbow Springs from development. More than a decade later, my brother and his wife were married there in the gardens.

Thanks to these early travels, I've had a lifelong love affair with public gardens. While I've never been able to replicate their beauty at home, I've looked for them wherever I travel.



Morikami Gardens, Delray Beach 2004



Sunken Gardens, St. Petersburg 2006

After living in Pennsylvania for over a decade, I moved to Florida in 1999 to be with my parents after my sister Susan lost her fight with cancer. She was an amazing artist. Her botanical illustrations are now a focal point in our living room.

As a travel writer and outdoor writer, I continued to visit Florida gardens regularly for the next decade while writing a series of hiking guides and the *Explorer's Guide* travel guide series covering Florida.

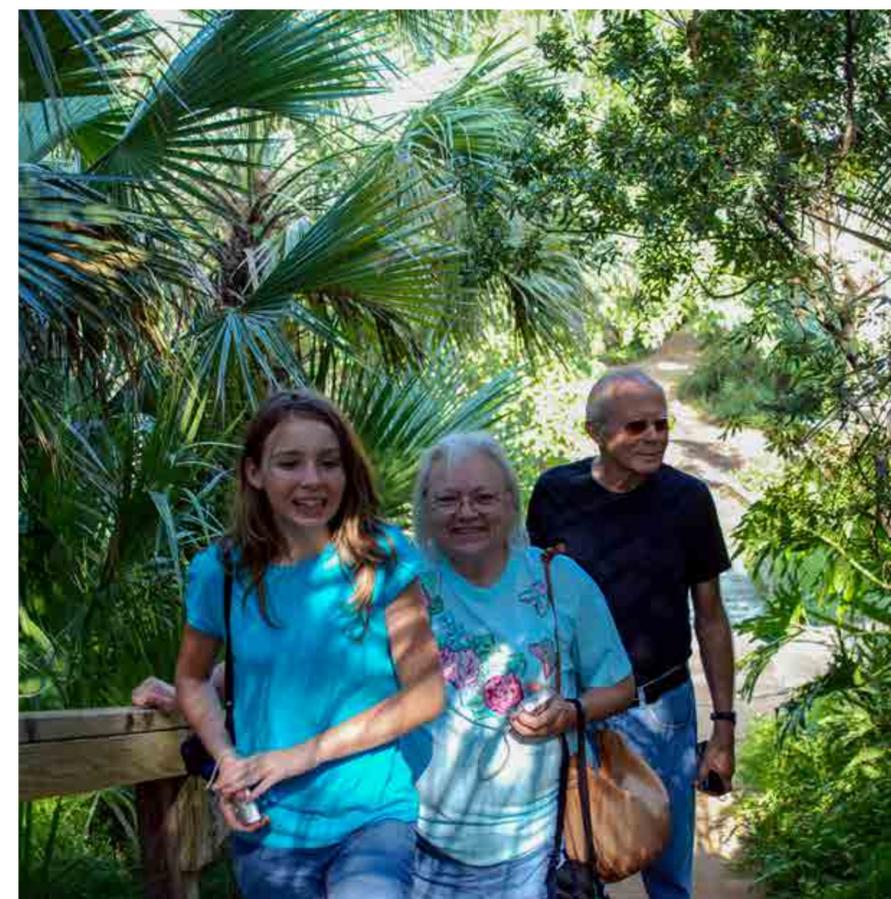
Out of that research came a book called *Exploring Florida's Botanical Wonders* and, a few years later, an app called *Florida's Gardens*, which vanished off the market when the publisher folded.

Whenever I could, I would include my parents in my research trips around Florida when I knew I would be visiting gardens. They were passholders at Silver Springs and visited Rainbow Springs regularly, and continued to make trips to gardens in Florida on their own.

In 2009, Dad decided he wanted to visit some of his cousins. His worsening eyesight wouldn't allow him to drive. I offered to take Mom and Dad on a road trip to Georgia and Tennessee.



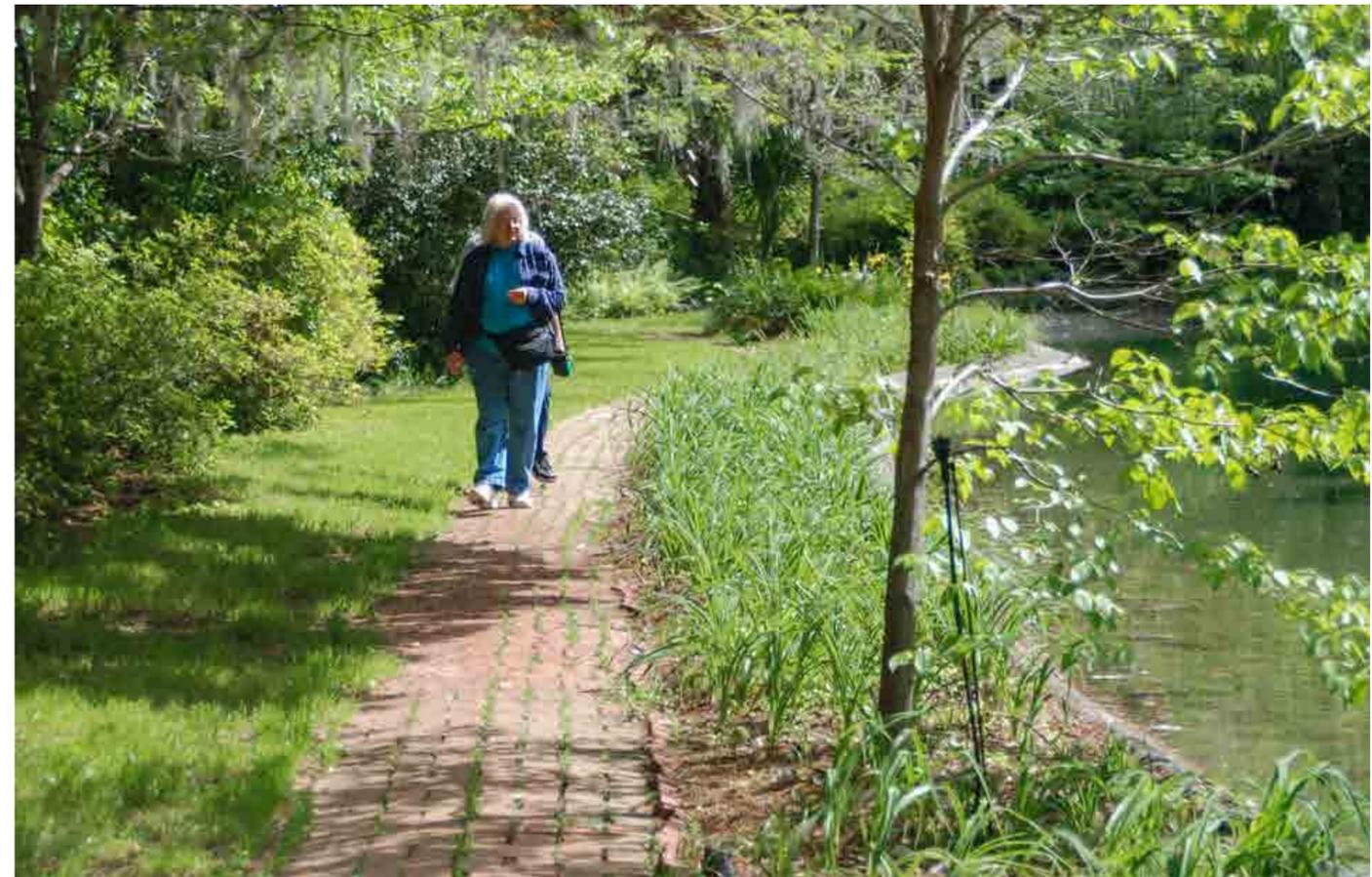
McKee Botanical Gardens, Vero Beach 2007



Ormond Memorial Gardens, Ormond Beach 2008



*Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain GA 2009*



*MacLay Gardens, Tallahassee FL 2009*

On the way up, we visited Callaway Gardens. On our return trip, I introduced them to Maclay Gardens in Tallahassee.

I decided to give them the gift of gardens for Christmas. I made plans for a week-long road trip to South Florida between Christmas and New Years Day to take them back to places we'd visited in the 1960s around Fort Myers, Naples, and Miami.

I'd arranged for a tour of Historic Spanish Point in Sarasota, where there were gardens they'd never seen before. But as we walked the gardens, something wasn't quite right with Dad.

That night, I called 911 to our hotel room twice. Since Dad refused medical assistance both times despite his worsening condition, I took them home the next morning and we went to his doctor. Dad died a few days later, on New Years Day.



*Our last time together in a garden, December 2009*



*Mom at Magnolia Gardens, 2010*

It was nine months shy of their 50th anniversary, so I worried about Mom. There was a lot to deal with, so I stuck close.

As her March birthday approached, I had an idea. I'd won a pair of tickets and lodging at a B&B for the Charleston Wine & Food Festival, and decided it would be best to take Mom along.



*The cottage at Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, March 2010*

I reached out to Tom Johnson, the director of Magnolia Plantation & Gardens. I'd met him the year before during a travel writing conference in Charleston. He extended an invite for a stay.

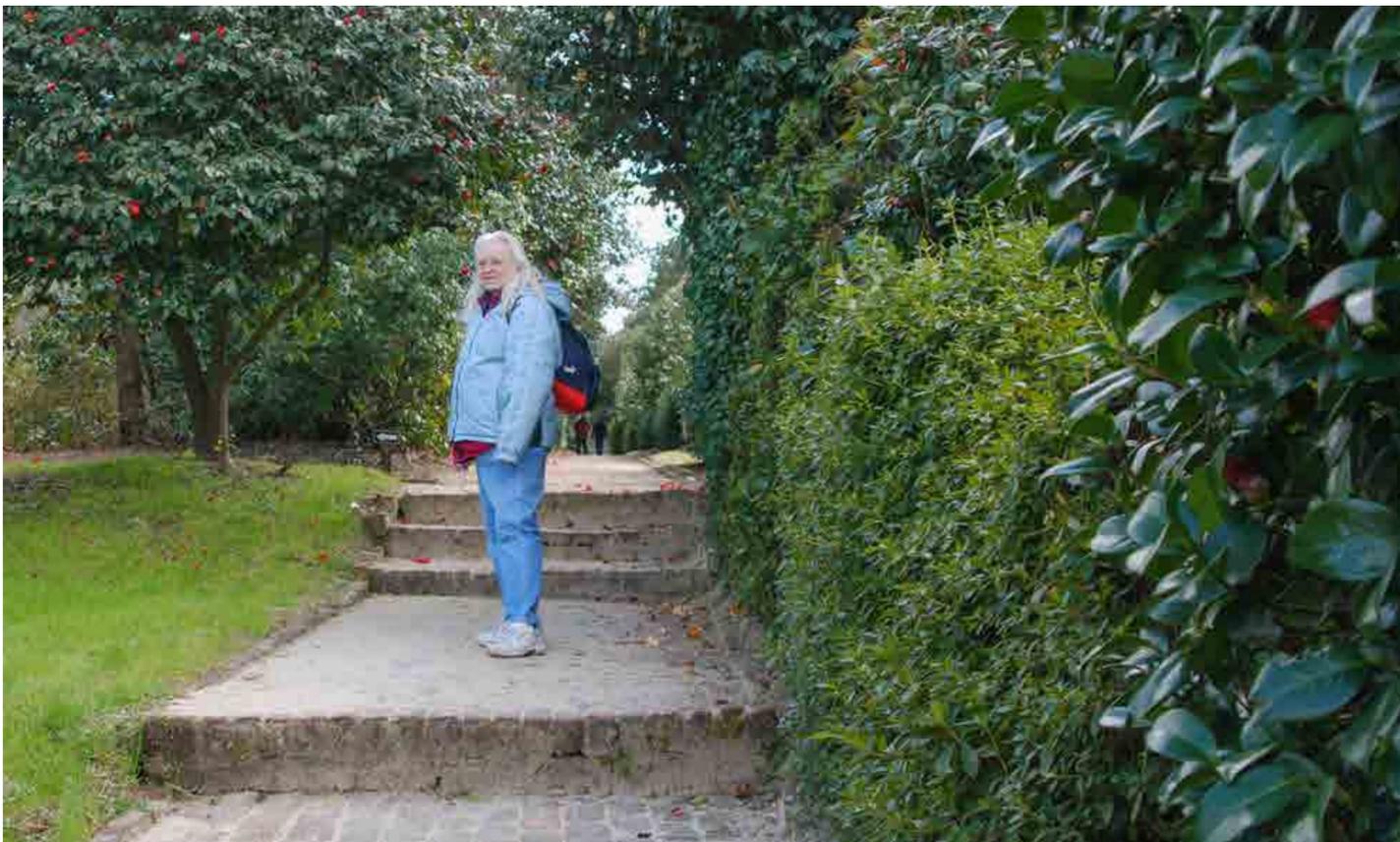
After the festival ended, Mom and I stayed on the garden grounds as their guests. Walking in the beauty of Magnolia Gardens brought back Mom's smile. It had always been one of her favorite places, and this was her first time back since the late 1970s. Being able to walk out the door and into the gardens each day rejuvenated us both.

It also started a year of gardens for us. Whenever I could work it in, I'd take Mom on my research trips. During a business trip to Tallahassee, we both visited Goodwood for the first time and learned of its intriguing ties to early American botanists.

For Mother's Day, I took her and my brother's oldest child, Amber, on a road trip to South Florida. I introduced them both to Big Cypress National Preserve with a stay surrounded by orchids at Clyde and Niki Butcher's Swamp Cottage. Later that month, we spent a week in Jupiter while my brother took his family on vacation there.



*Finding her way at Magnolia's garden maze*



Middleton Place, 2010

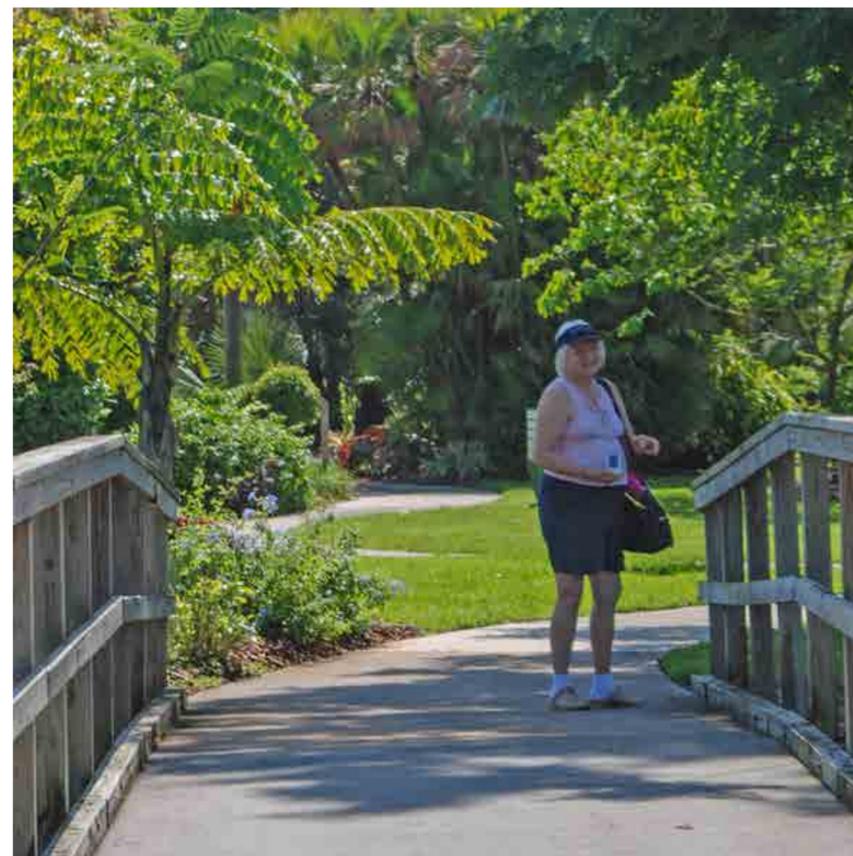
Mom and I visited the gardens of Palm Beach and West Palm Beach while the rest of the family enjoyed the beach.

Having that book on the market about gardens in Florida, I started thinking about expanding my writing to gardens outside of Florida. I suggested to Mom that we take a trip chasing the 2011 azalea season across the gardens of the South. Of course, she was thrilled. She immediately went to work researching potential destinations.

And so our big mother and daughter trip fell into place. We were invited to Wilmington to be there for the 64th annual North Carolina Azalea Festival. Out of the hundreds of gardens Mom documented throughout the South, we picked those we could fit into a circular route, following the best azalea blooms north into North Carolina.



Bethesda-By-The-Sea, 2010



Mounts Botanical Garden, 2010

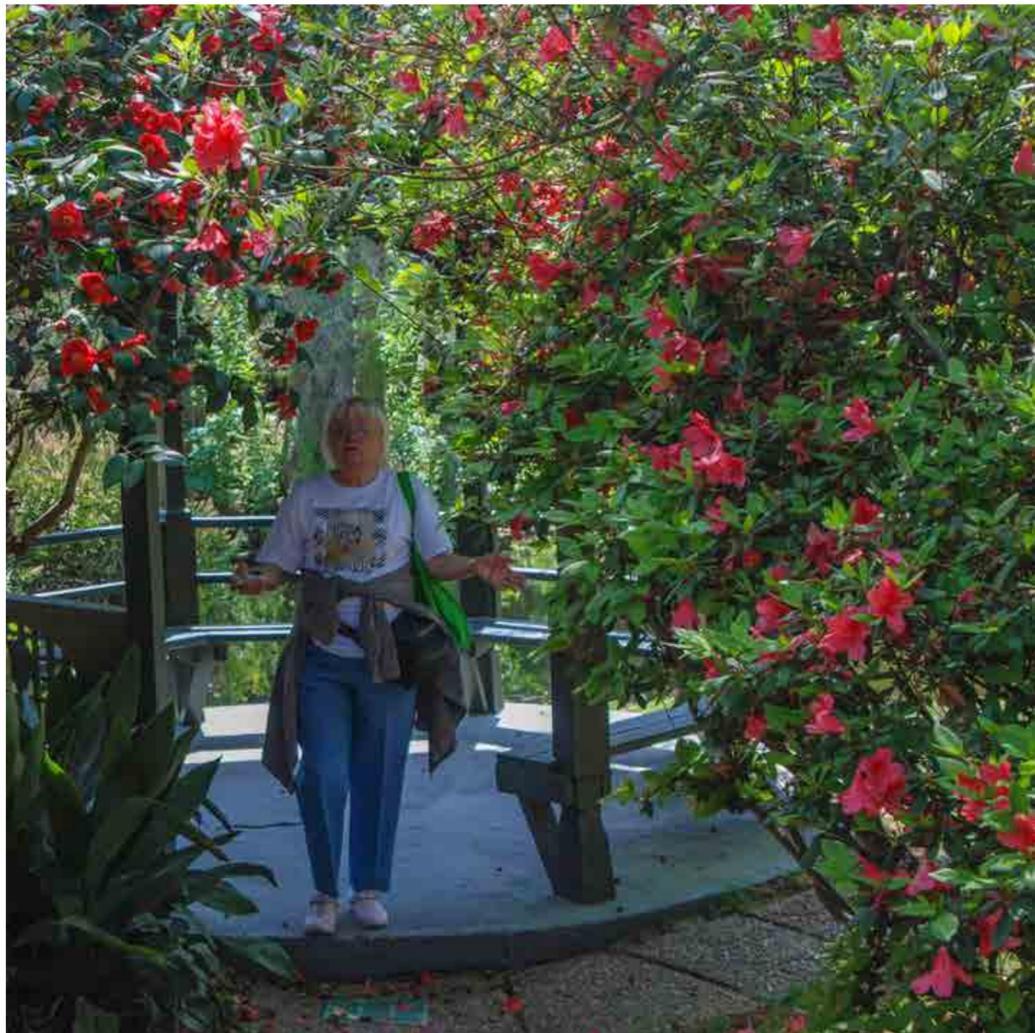


Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, 2010

And we did. In a month's time, Mom and I visited 33 public gardens, parks with gardens, and three state parks of botanical interest, plus a parade of private homes open to the public during the North Carolina Azalea Festival.

Already juggling several projects, I added another: a new blog called Gracious Gardens of the South. It was my plan to write up each garden as we visited it. I thought I'd then write a book or produce an app about our garden visits.

To make ends meet, I had a consulting job, which I had to clock into while we traveled. I quickly found that between visiting gardens, squeezing in some work, and driving between destinations, blogging wasn't going to happen. Social media was in its infancy, with no way to post photos through your phone.



*Bellingrath Gardens, Mobile AL 2011*

After our journey, I wrote up a handful of the gardens and put them on the blog. Eventually I took it offline and moved the stories elsewhere. Life took a different turn after that trip. My consulting job had an end date looming. I needed to be somewhere I could find more work. I moved away, and a few months later, met John.

Before the azaleas could bloom again, Mom was diagnosed with cancer. After her initial surgery, John and I tried to include her in our visits to gardens. She only took us up on it twice.

The first time was after she was in remission. We went to the EPCOT Flower and Garden Show. Since Walt Disney World was her favorite place to be, we picked her up and brought her along for a two night stay on the grounds.

John and I were invited speakers to talk about wildflower walks in Florida. Mom spent that morning rambling through EPCOT on her own.



*2011 North Carolina Azalea Festival*

The next day she and I spent together. I made a frivolous purchase, very out of character, but one I treasure to this day for the memory.

I call it the “Moms’ Purse.” Mom was with me when I chose it at a botanical artist’s booth at EPCOT, and it was paid for with a Christmas gift of cash from John’s mom.

Within a year, the cancer returned. We made a day trip together to Kanapaha Gardens, our last. Afterwards, I again pulled out my notes and thought about writing the book, but I feared there wasn’t enough time to get it done. So I created a photo book of our Gracious Gardens journey and gave it to her for Christmas.

A few months later, during the peak of azalea season, she was admitted to hospice. As serendipity would have it, her bed was beneath an illuminated ceiling panel of a garden with azaleas in bloom. She died on my birthday.

The trips we took formed strong memories. I will always link gardens to my parents, and I think of Mom whenever I see azaleas blooming. I created this book to inspire others to share natural beauty with their families, and a website in order to share even more gardens and to help you find your way to them.

This is where it all began: the Gracious Gardens of the South. Enjoy this photographic journey through 36 of the destinations that Mom and I visited and bonded over two years during peak azalea season in the Southeast.



*We and the “Moms’ Purse” at Planting Fields Arboretum, Oyster Bay NY 2018*



*Azaleas blooming at Rainbow Springs, FL*

# Our Timetable

## Azalea Season, 2010

### FLORIDA

Feb 20 Goodwood Museum & Gardens, Tallahassee

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Mar 3 Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston

Mar 4 Middleton Place, Charleston

Mar 5 Boone Hall Plantation, Mount Pleasant

Mar 8 Charleston Tea Plantation, Johns Island

## Azalea Season, 2011

### FLORIDA

Mar 22 Dorothy B. Owen Park, Tallahassee

Mar 23 Alfred B. MacLay Gardens, Tallahassee

### ALABAMA

Mar 24 Dothan Area Botanical Gardens, Dothan

Mar 27 Bellingrath Gardens, Mobile

Mar 27 Mobile Botanical Gardens, Mobile

Mar 28 Aldridge Botanical Gardens, Hoover

Mar 29 Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham

Mar 29 Arlington House and Gardens, Birmingham

Mar 30 Huntsville Botanical Gardens, Huntsville

### GEORGIA

Apr 1 Oak Hill, Rome

Apr 3 Barnsley Gardens, Adairsville

Apr 3 Hamilton Gardens, Hiawassee

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Apr 4 South Carolina Botanical Garden, Clemson

Apr 4 Hatcher Garden, Spartansburg

Apr 4 Glencairn Garden, Rock Hill

Apr 5 Kalmia Gardens, Hartsville

### NORTH CAROLINA

Apr 6 Burgwin-Wright House Gardens, Wilmington

Apr 6 Poplar Grove Plantation, Wilmington

Apr 7 Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington NC

Apr 7 Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, Wilmington

Apr 8 North Carolina Azalea Festival, Wilmington

Apr 8 Greenfield Lake Park, Wilmington

Apr 8 Hugh MacRae Park, Wilmington

Apr 8 New Hanover County Arboretum, Wilmington

Apr 9 Airlie Gardens, Wilmington

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Apr 10 Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet

Apr 11 Cypress Gardens, Monck's Corner

Apr 11 Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston

Apr 12 Charles Towne Landing, Charleston

### GEORGIA

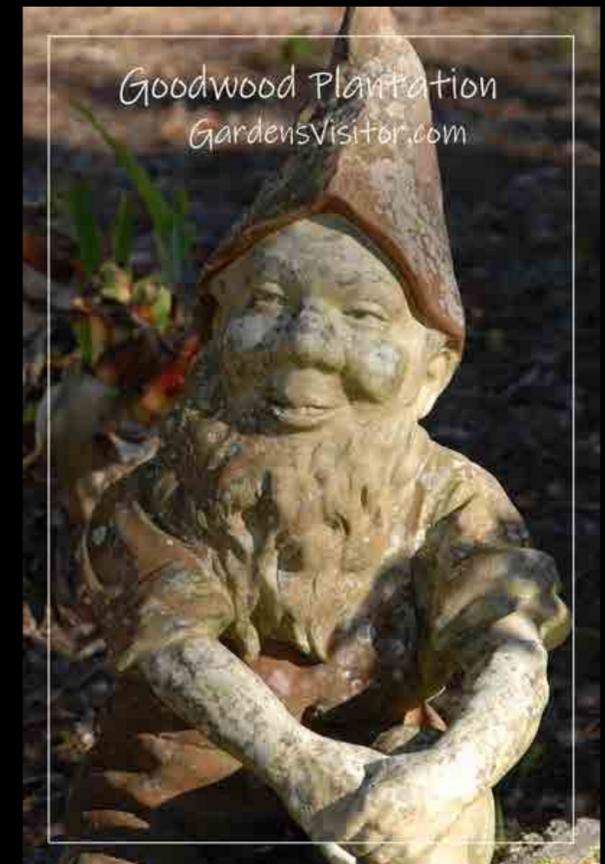
Apr 12 Savannah Botanical Gardens, Savannah

Apr 13 Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens, Savannah

# Goodwood Museum & Gardens



Established in 1830 on one of Tallahassee's highest hills by noted botanist Hardy Bryan Croom, Goodwood has one of the oldest designed gardens in Florida, with an heirloom daffodil bed.





Goodwood Museum & Gardens, Tallahassee FL

# Magnolia Plantation & Gardens



Magnolia Plantation & Gardens  
GardensVisitor.com

At America's oldest public garden, opened in 1870, the romantic gardens of Magnolia Plantation flow through natural woodlands and swamps along the Ashley River, with a strong emphasis on azaleas and camellias.

Magnolia is recognized as the site where azaleas were first introduced into America. We arrived too early for those blooms in 2010, but enjoyed the camellias and the fruit trees blossoming.





Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston SC

# Middleton Place

Laid out under a formal landscape architecture plan, the gardens of Middleton Place are the oldest of their style in America, started in 1741 by Henry Middleton. Mirroring European gardens, they follow precise geometric angles and curves around focal points such as statuary and vistas. Middleton Place is where camellias were first introduced to America.

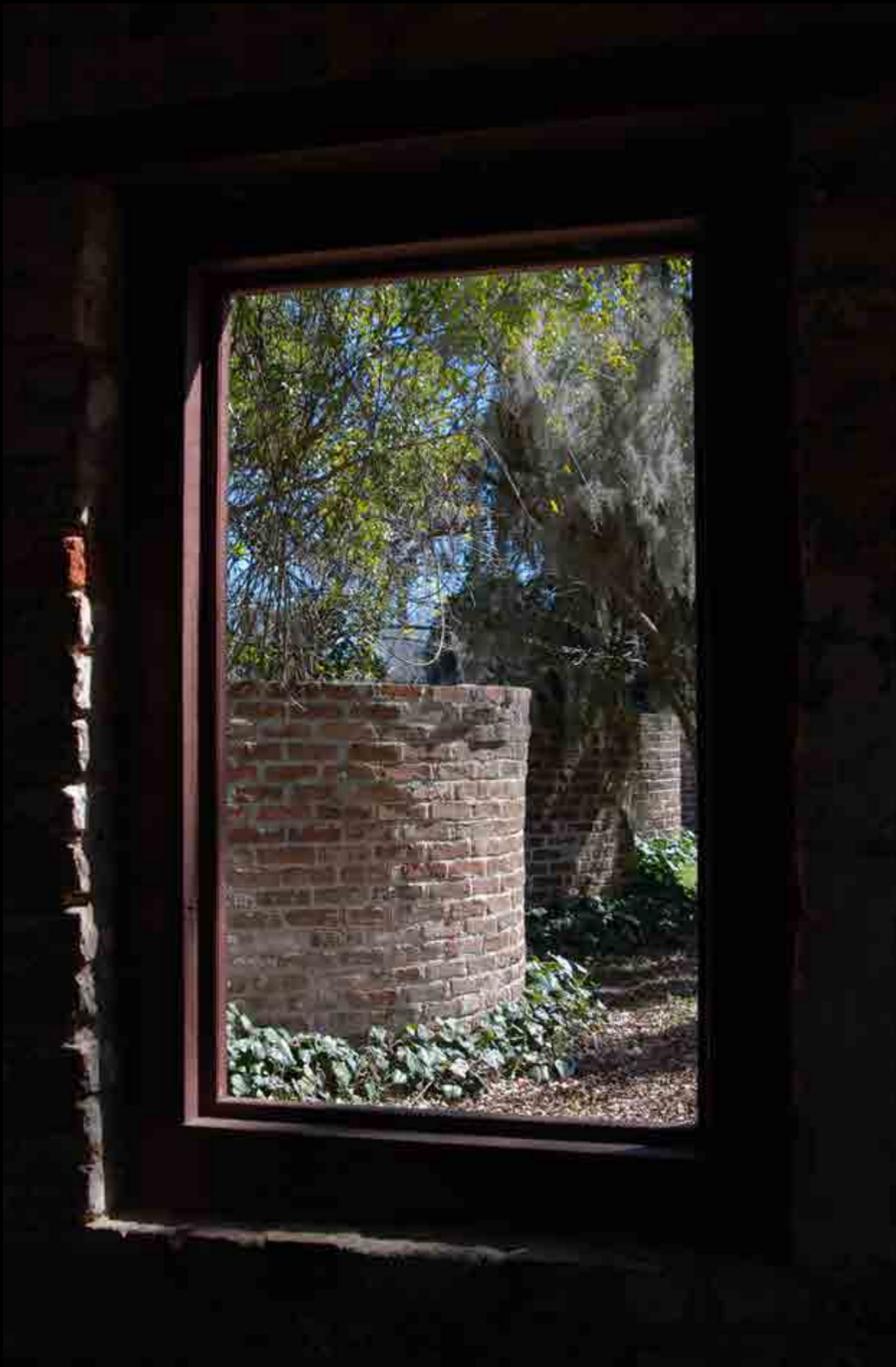
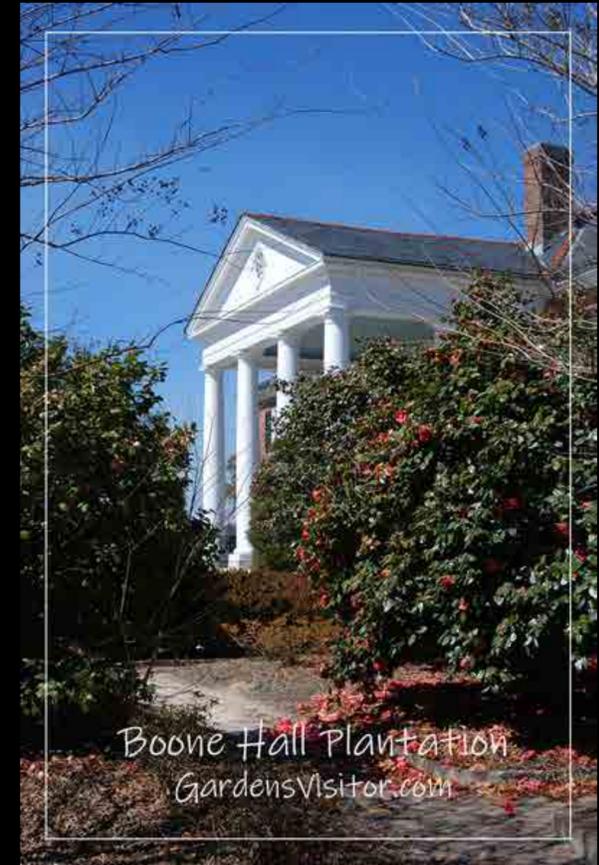




Middleton Place, Charleston SC

# Boone Hall Plantation

Graced by live oaks planted in 1743, the renowned Avenue of Oaks creates a grand entrance into this historic site, one of America's oldest working plantations. Antique roses date back more than a century on the grounds, which include nine original slave cabins and extensive wetlands.



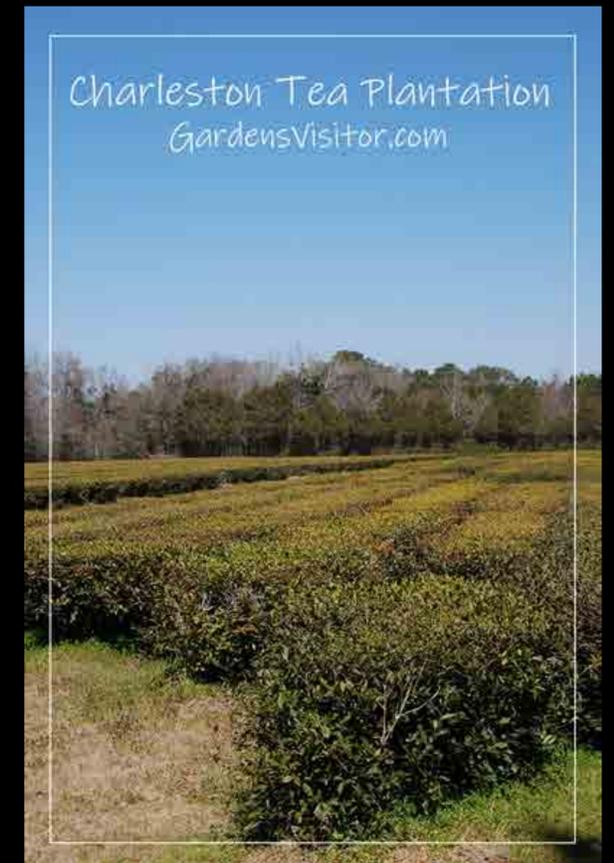


Boone Hall Plantation, Mount Pleasant SC

# Charleston Tea Plantation



While not so much a garden as a farm, this collection of *camellia sinensis* is the only commercial tea plantation in the United States. Tours travel the grounds in a trolley bus and end up at a factory walk-through to learn how these camellia leaves become tea.





Charleston Tea Plantation, Johns Island SC

# Dorothy B. Oven Park



A seven acre city park, Dorothy B. Oven Park recalls the history of one of Florida's earliest camellia growers, Breckenridge Gamble, on the former grounds of his Camellia Nursery of Tallahassee. Gamble's great-grandfather brought the first camellia to Florida in 1829.

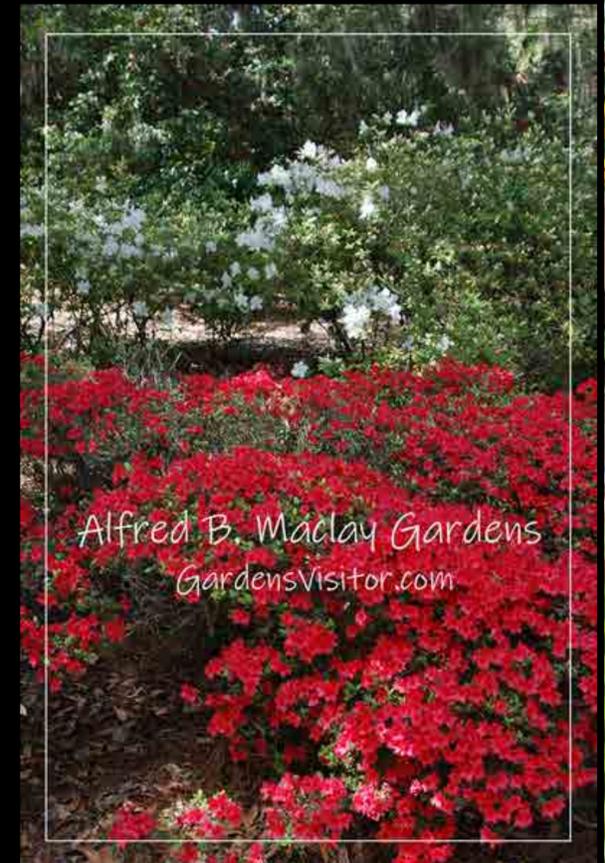




Dorothy B. Owen Park, Tallahassee FL

# Alfred B. MacLay Gardens

One of Florida's finest formal gardens, Alfred B. MacLay Gardens contains one of the most impressive and historic camellia collections in the South, started in 1923 as a private garden on a former quail hunting plantation.





Alfred B. MacLay Gardens, Tallahassee FL

# Dothan Area Botanical Gardens



Established in 1997, the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens provide an excellent schooling in native plants and trees of Alabama across a hilly woodland landscape bounded by a stream. More than sixteen topical gardens are set within over fifty acres of forest and field.





Dothan Area Botanical Gardens, Dothan AL

# Bellingrath Gardens

From its roots as a fishing camp getaway for Coca-Cola bottler Walter Bellingrath and his wife Bessie, Bellingrath Gardens opened its doors in 1932 to the delight of Mobile residents who came to see the spring flowers. It remains a “fitting and permanent memorial” to Bessie, astounding visitors with its complex tapestry of colors and textures.





Bellingrath Gardens, Mobile AL

# Mobile Botanical Gardens



Covering more than 100 acres, the Mobile Botanical Gardens include a natural longleaf pine forest with woodland gardens and hiking trails along with horticulturally important gardens devoted to the historic hybridization of azaleas and camellias for American gardens.



Mobile Botanical Gardens  
GardensVisitor.com



Mobile Botanical Gardens, Mobile AL

# Aldridge Botanical Gardens

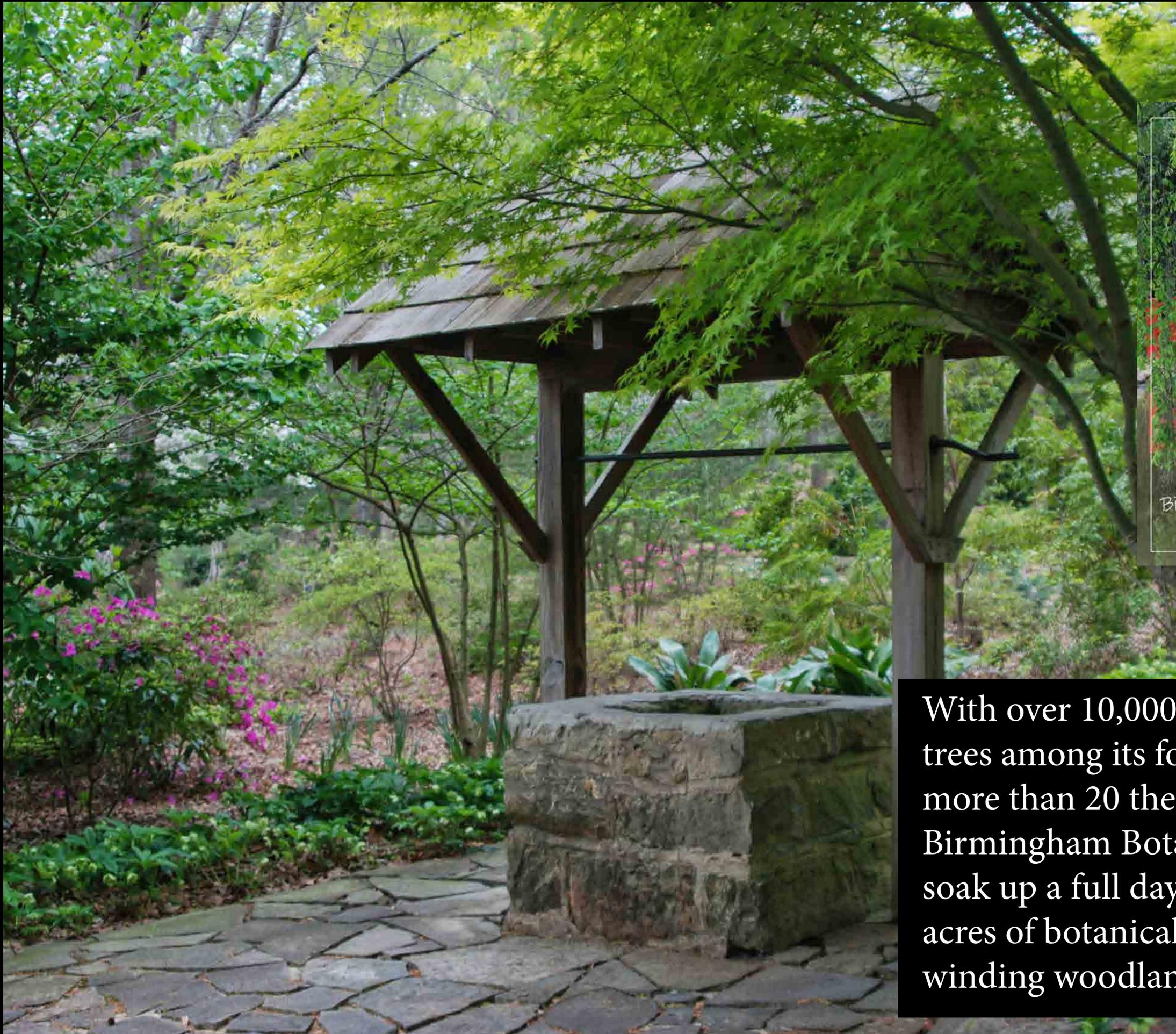
With a parade of blooms for every season, the 30-acre Aldridge Botanical Gardens south of Birmingham features one of the top collections of hydrangeas in the Southeast, a legacy to the family that propogated and patented the Snowflake hydrangea.





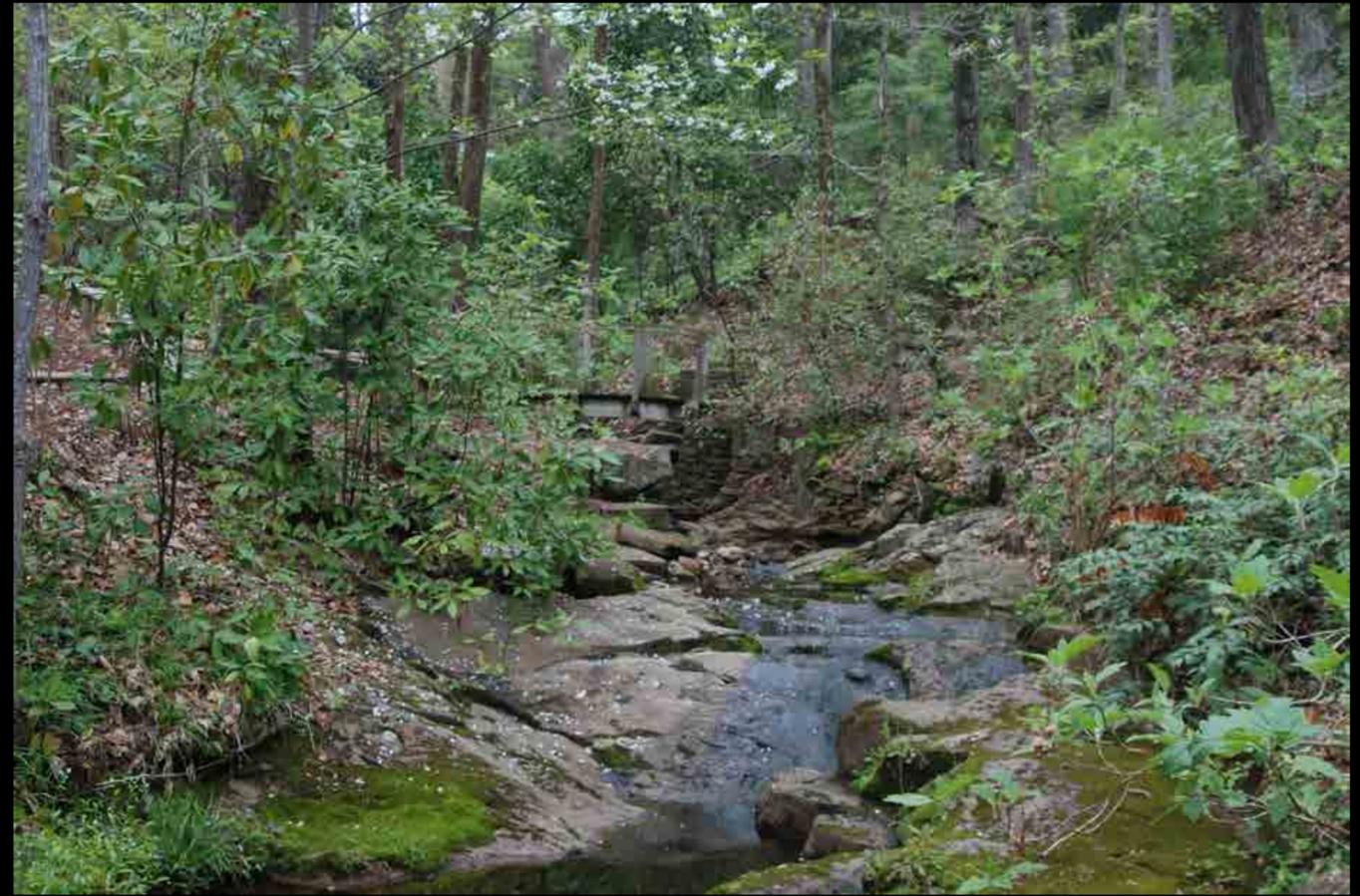
Aldridge Botanical Gardens, Hoover AL

# Birmingham Botanical Gardens



Birmingham Botanical Gardens  
GardensVisitor.com

With over 10,000 identified plants and trees among its forested slopes and more than 20 themed gardens, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens will soak up a full day to explore its 67 acres of botanical wonders along its winding woodland paths.



Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham AL

# Arlington Home and Gardens



On six acres surrounding an 1840s Greek Revival Mansion, the gardens of Arlington House feature plantings appropriate to this National Register house. A restored garden room provides a place to relax and a venue for special events.





Arlington Home and Gardens, Birmingham AL

# Huntsville Botanical Garden

Opened in 1988, the expansive Huntsville Botanical Garden provides a striking contrast to the adjoining U.S. Space & Rocket Center. Flowing through more than 100 acres of woodlands, they include the National Trillium Collection among more than a dozen themed spaces ideal for family exploration.



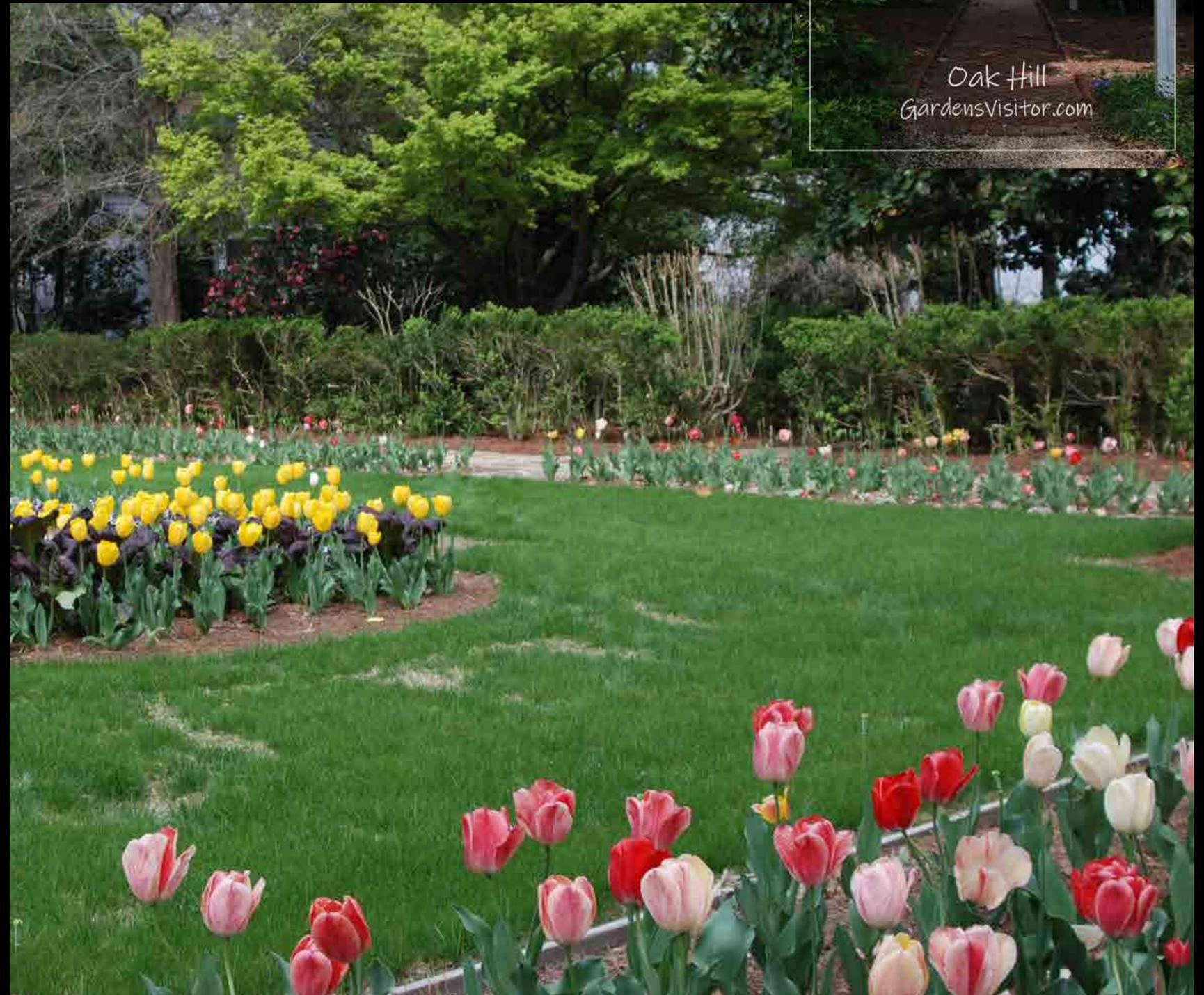
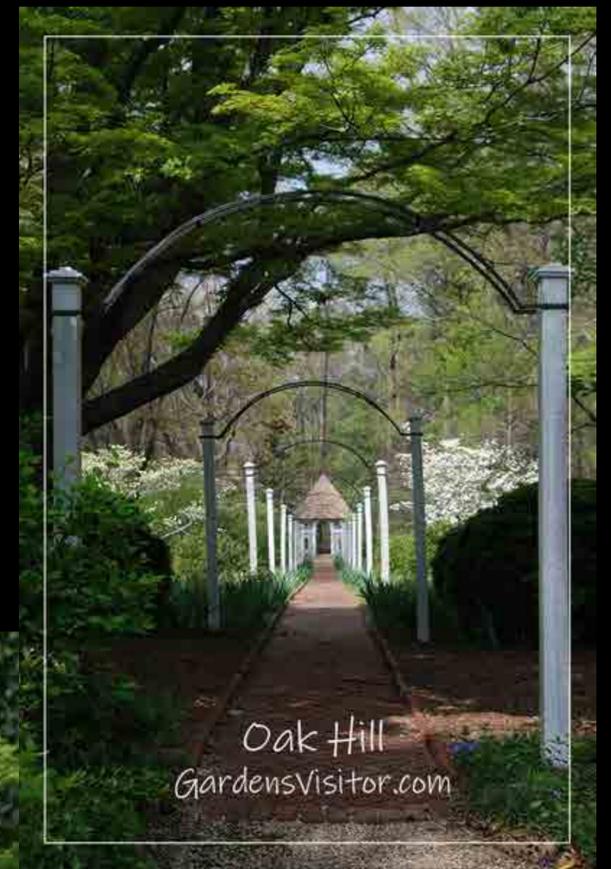
Huntsville Botanical Gardens  
GardensVisitor.com



Huntsville Botanical Gardens, Huntsville AL

# Oak Hill

The home of Berry College founder Martha Berry, Oak Hill is a Greek Revival mansion built in the 1880s atop its namesake hill. Landscape architect Robert Cridland designed three formal Colonial Revival style gardens at Martha's request, including one that cascades down the steep side of the hill.



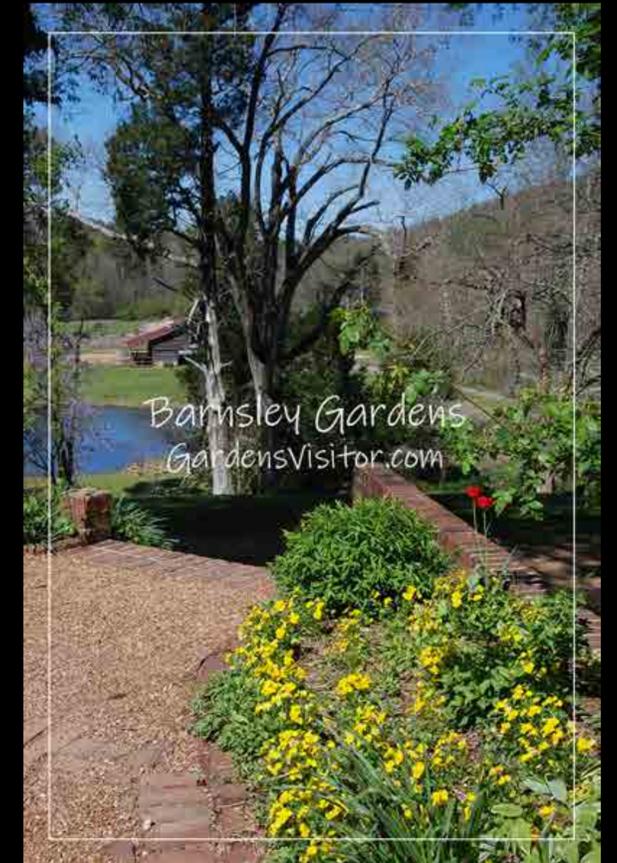


Oak Hill, Rome, GA

# Barnsley Gardens



Surrounding the ruins of Woodlands, an Italianate manor built in the late 1840s, the gardens radiate from a formal boxwood parterre and fountain in front of the house to informal woodland gardens on the expansive property, now part of an elegant resort.





Barnsley Gardens, Adairsville, GA

# Hamilton Gardens

In 1981, more than a thousand rhododendrons and native azaleas were planted on this hillside in Hiawassee as part of a county park, brought here from the personal collection of Hazel and Fred Hamilton. This 33 acre garden slopes down to Lake Chatuge and is at its finest in April and May.





Hamilton Gardens, Hiawassee GA

# South Carolina Botanical Garden

Growing from a camellia garden and arboretum established on the campus of Clemson University in the late 1950s, the South Carolina Botanical Garden encompasses 295 acres. Two museums plus a network of nature trails connecting more than 20 themed gardens, including a natural heritage garden featuring all of the state's native habitats, make this a place you can spend all day.

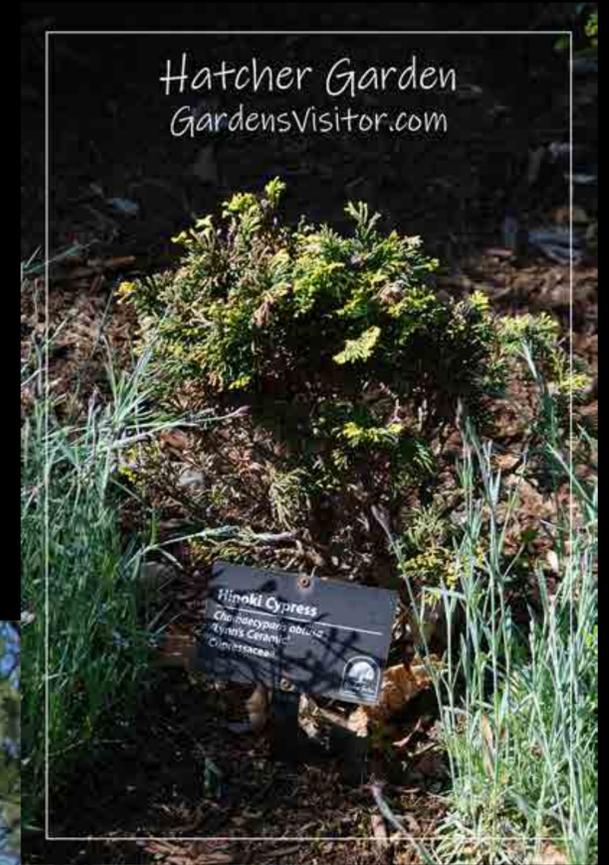




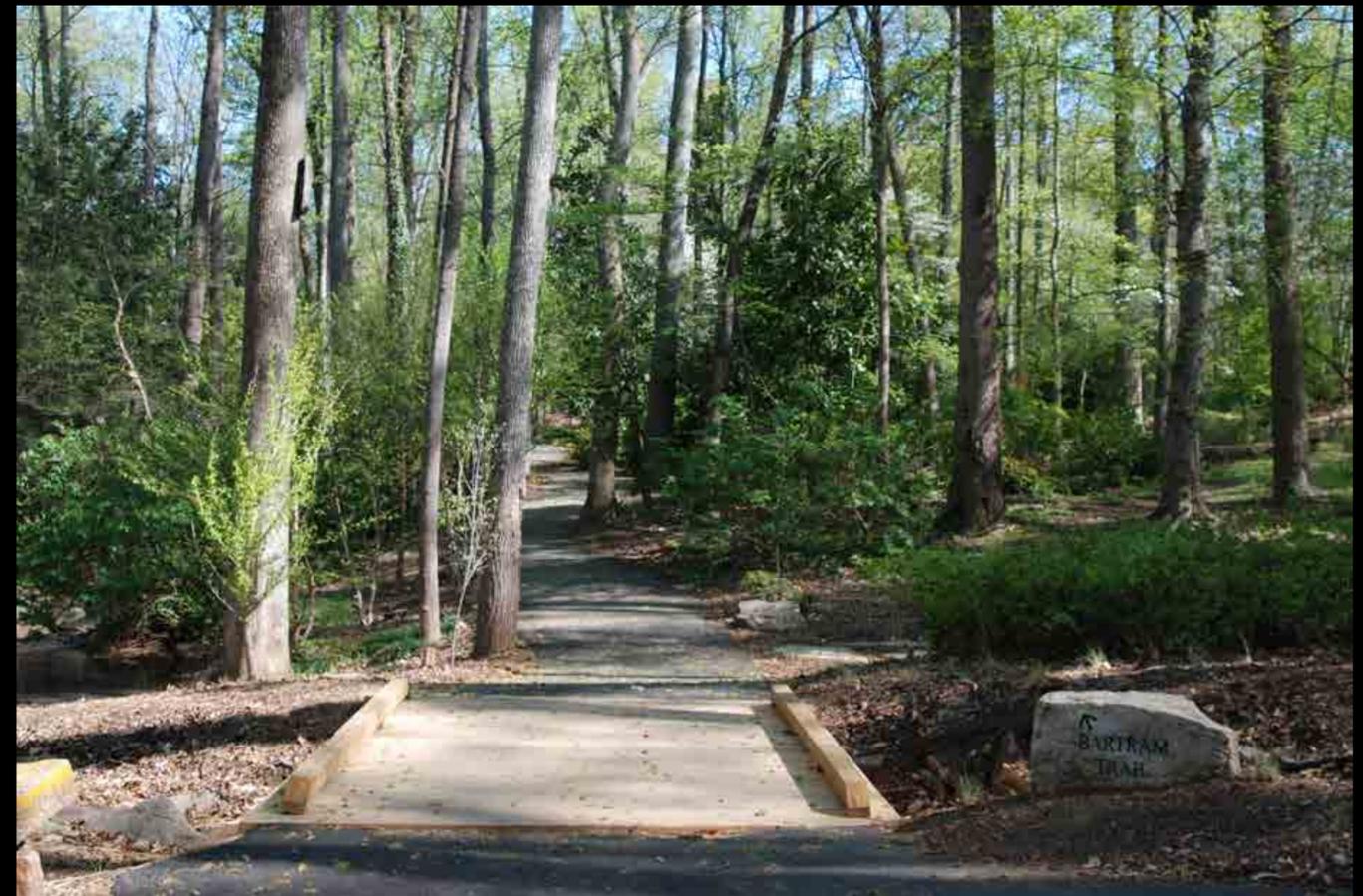
South Carolina Botanical Garden, Clemson, SC

# Hatcher Garden

Developed over thirty years by two retirees with a passion for botanical beauty, Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve is a testament to restoration of natural habitats. It occupies a 10-acre gully once planted in cotton, where trails wind beneath a dense forest canopy over identified plantings, including azaleas, camellias, hostas, hydrangea, rhododendron, and more.



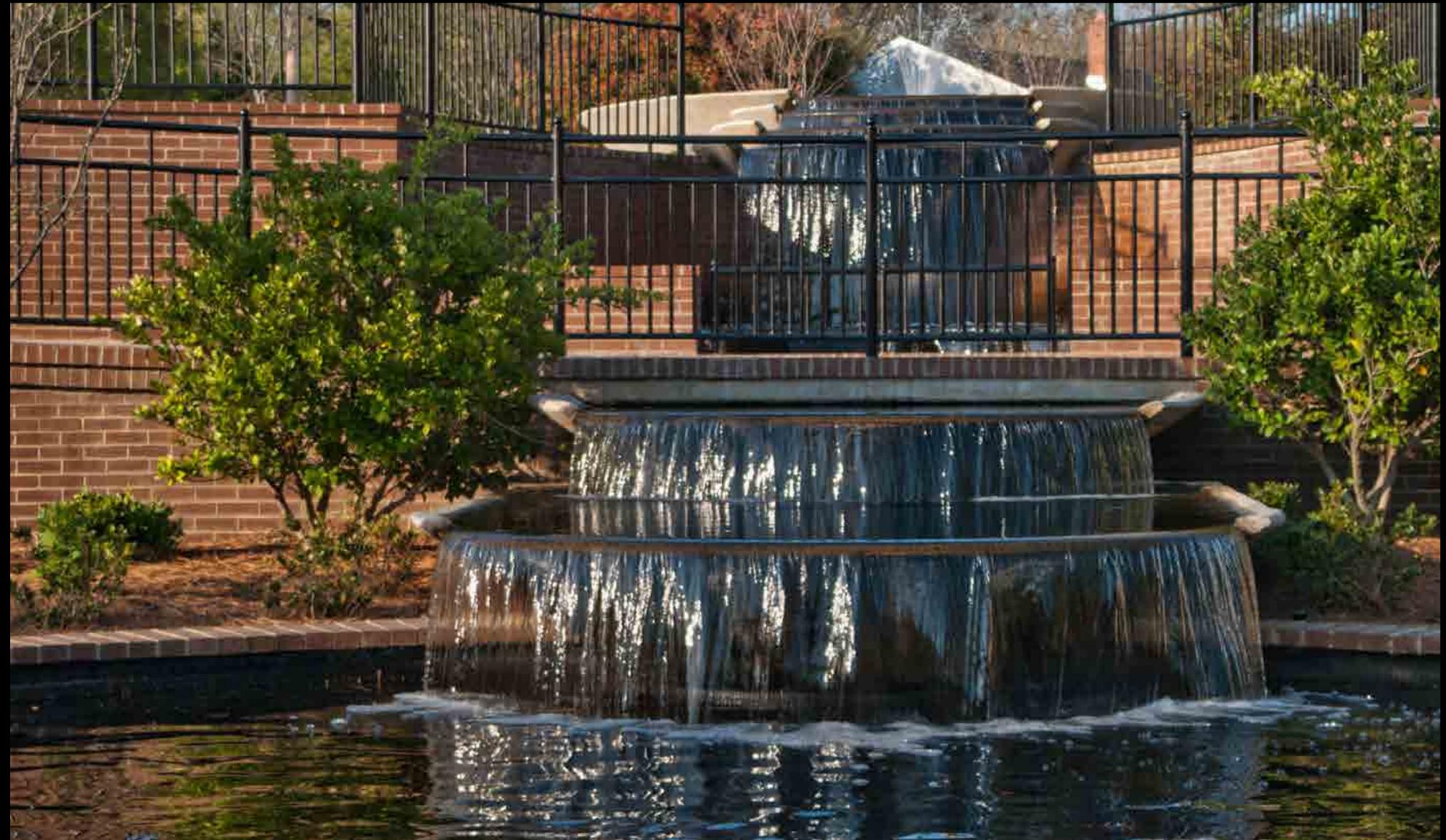
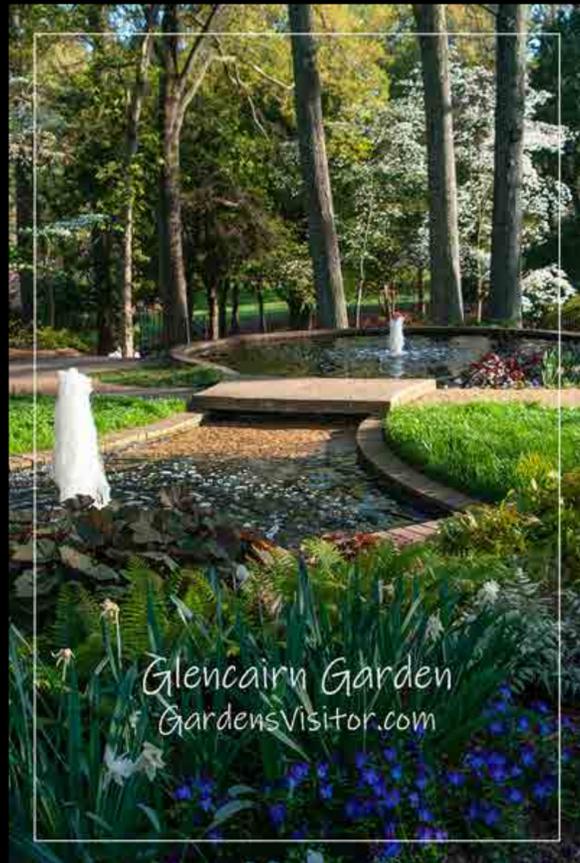
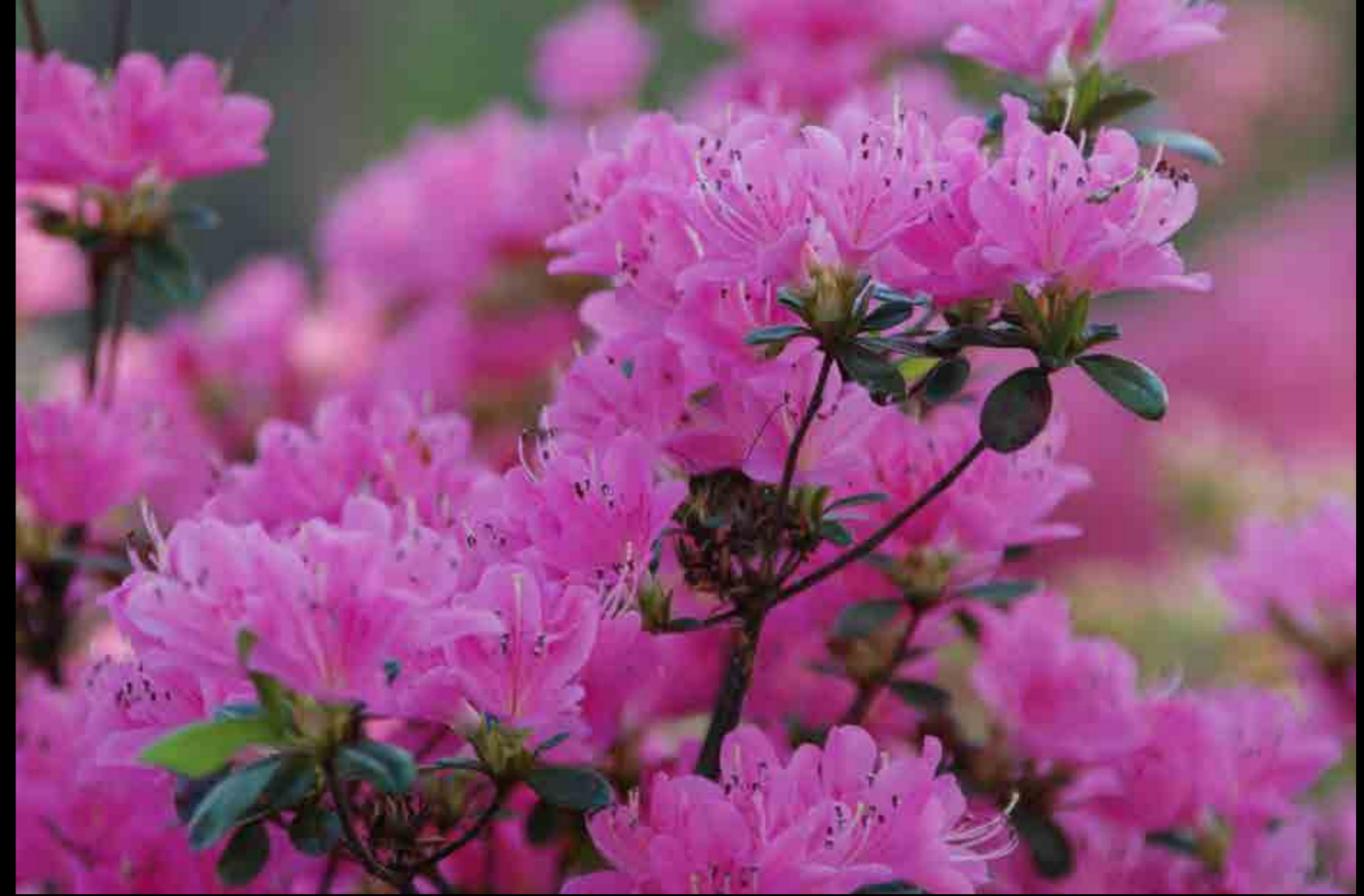
Hatcher Garden  
GardensVisitor.com



Hatcher Garden, Spartansburg SC

# Glencairn Garden

Glencairn Garden took shape in 1928 as a resident's backyard garden, and is now a city park. Spanning 11 acres, it features extensive azalea and camellia plantings on the slopes leading down to a series of pools and fountains, including the Tiered Fountain waterfall.

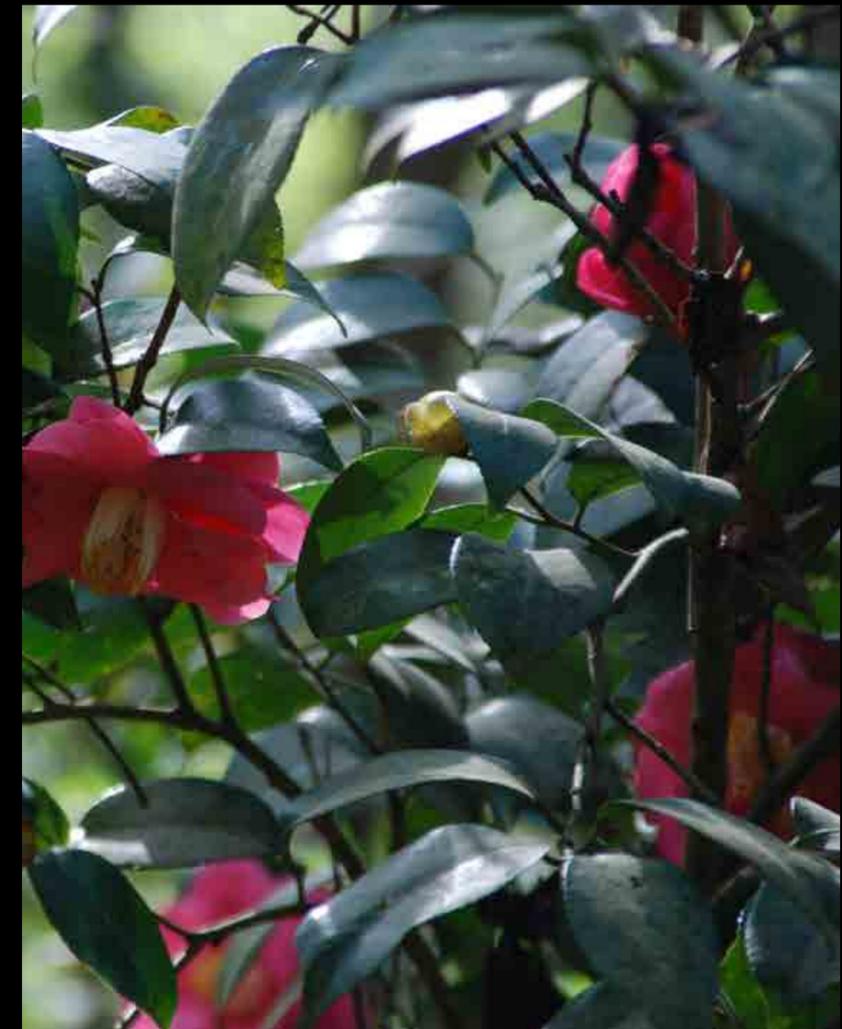
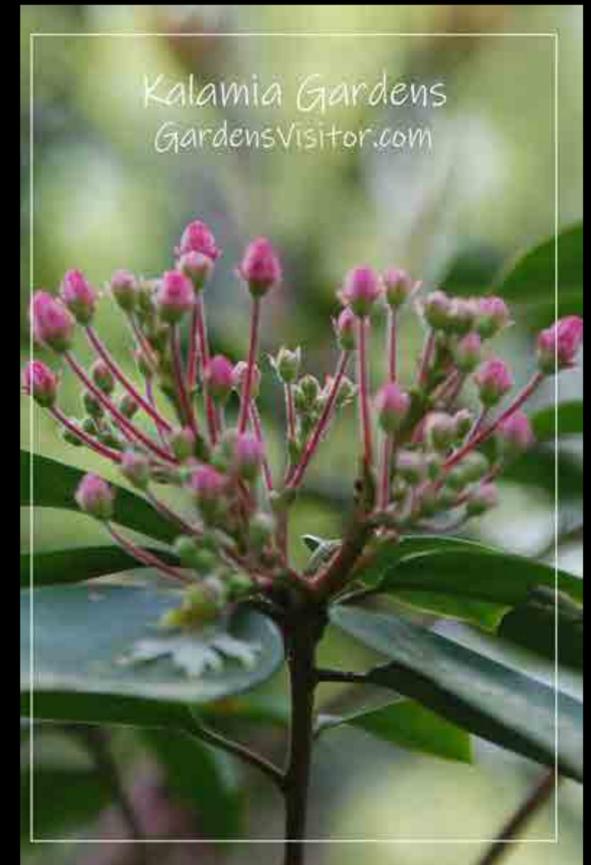


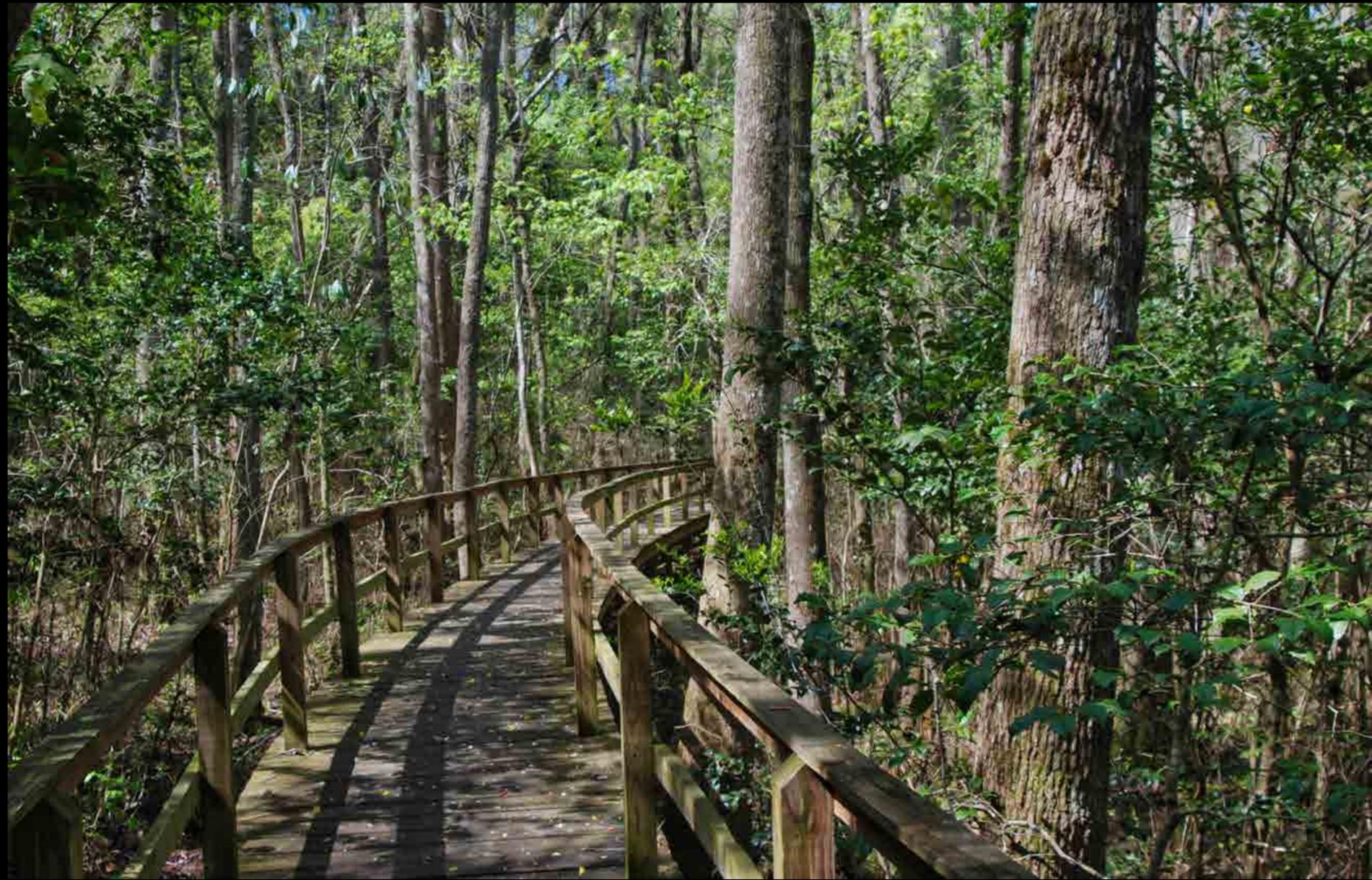
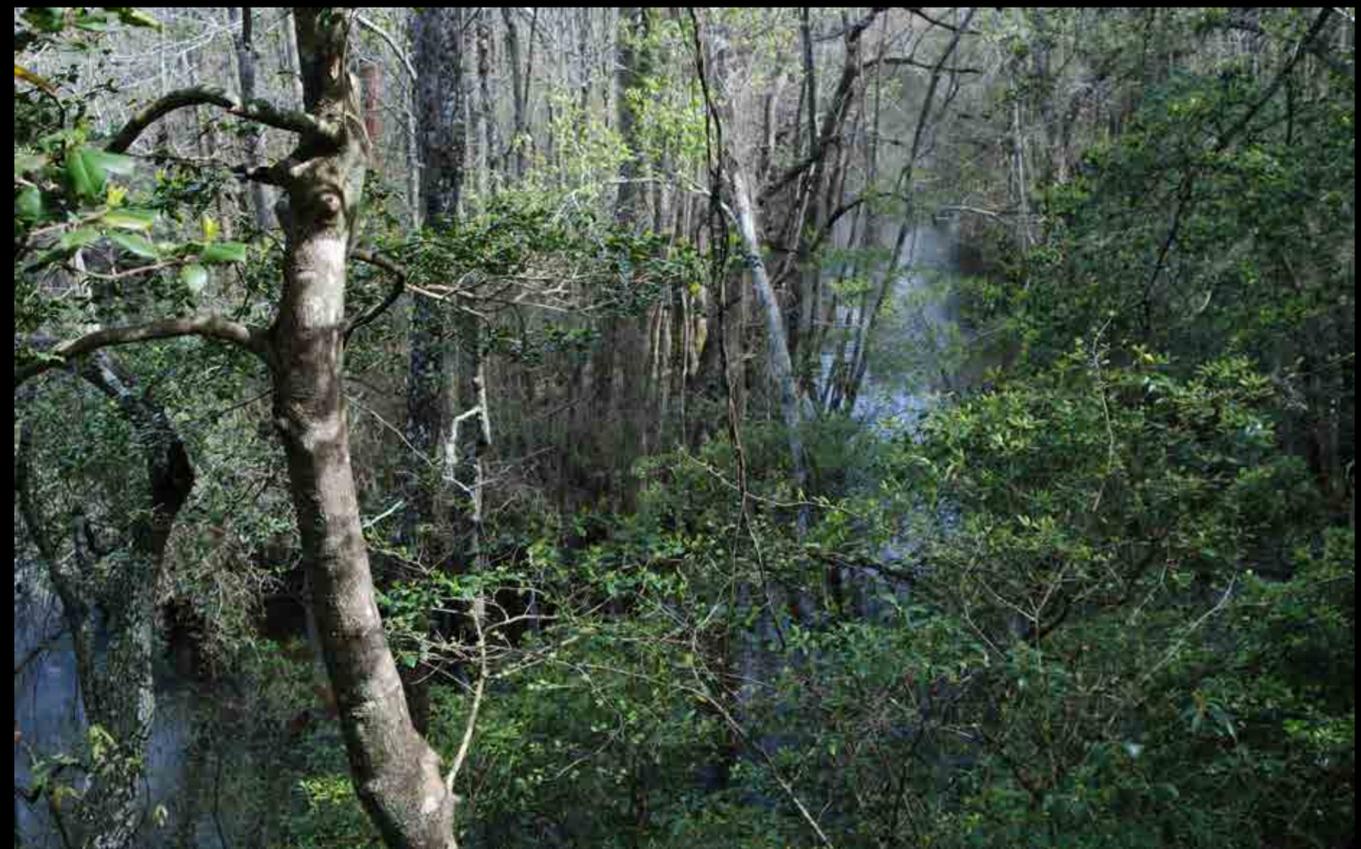


Glencairn Garden, Rock Hill SC

# Kalmia Gardens

Kalmia Gardens is named for *Kalmia latifolia*, the mountain laurel that thrives here thanks to the steep bluff dropping to the Black Creek floodplain. May Coker, wife of Coker College founder David Coker, planted ornamentals and blazed trails around the 1820s plantation home “Laurel Land” which her family moved into in Hartsville. They opened the gardens publicly in 1935.





Kalmia Gardens, Hartsville SC

# Burgwin-Wright House Gardens



Accenting a fine manor home built in 1770 by the Treasurer of the South Carolina colony, these formal gardens were installed as part of restoration of the property in the 1960s. Designed by landscape architects who worked on Colonial Williamsburg, the gardens reflect the styles used in Europe contemporary to the Burgwin-Wright House.





Burgwin-Wright House Gardens, Wilmington NC

# Poplar Grove Plantation



Hosting an annual Herb & Garden Fair and a seasonal weekly Farmer's Market, Poplar Grove began as a sweet potato and peanut plantation established in 1795. It was one of the primary producers of peanuts in the nation thanks to the knowledge and expertise of the enslaved Gullah Geechee workers, who knew them as a main crop for West African diets. Adjoining Poplar Grove and once part of the plantation fields, the 67-acre Abbey Nature Preserve showcases natural habitats, including forests and bottomlands with colorful wildflowers in spring.





Poplar Grove Plantation, Wilmington NC

# Bellamy Mansion

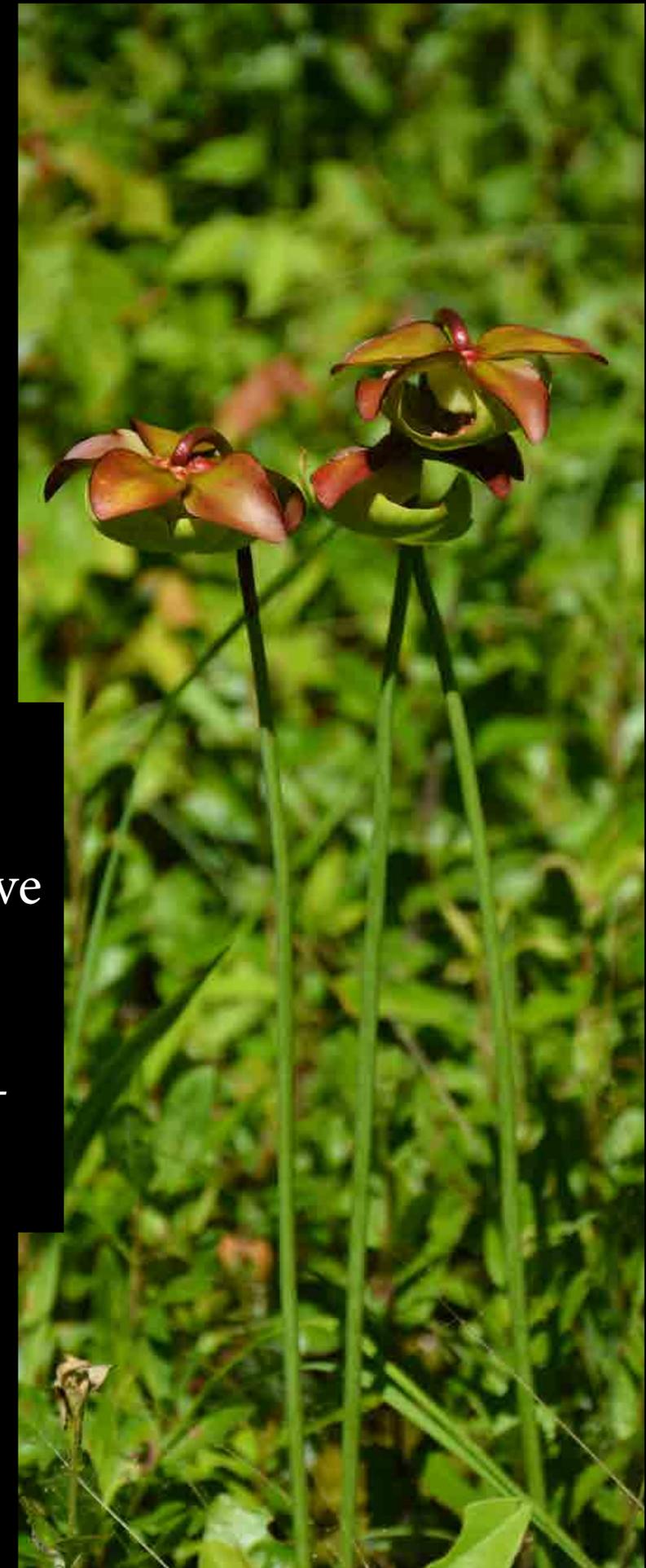
One of North Carolina's finest examples of an antebellum home, the Bellamy Mansion has a long and storied history dating back to 1859. Contemporary with the home's restoration, its surrounding Victorian-style landscaped gardens have been re-created with plantings based on archaeological finds, photographs, and journals written by family members.



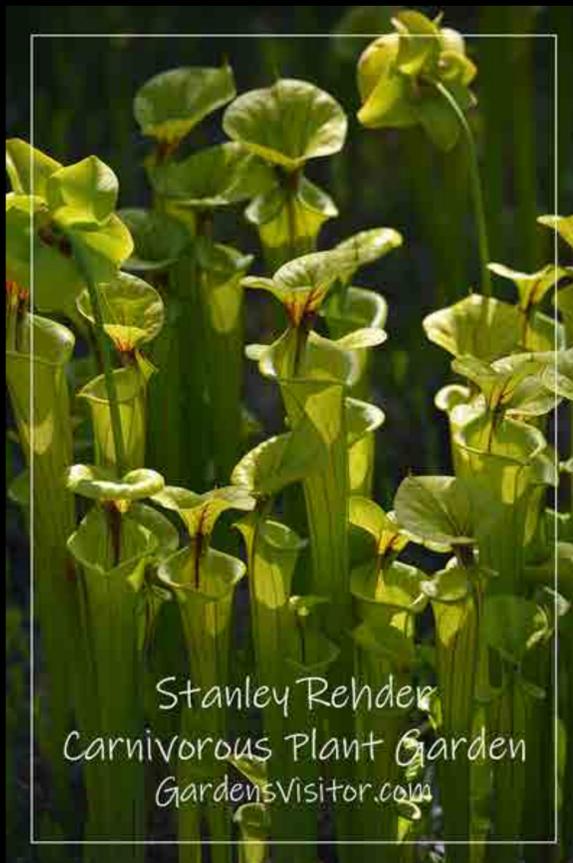


Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington NC

# Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden



Although less than an acre in size, the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden shouldn't be missed. An accessible boardwalk and interpretive signage explains the most fascinating bog garden we've ever encountered, densely packed with pitcher plants, sundews, and the Venus fly-trap, which is native to the Wilmington area.



Stanley Rehder  
Carnivorous Plant Garden  
[GardensVisitor.com](http://GardensVisitor.com)





Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, Wilmington NC

# North Carolina Azalea Festival



Founded in 1948, the North Carolina Azalea Festival celebrates the peak of azalea season in this region with a series of events and garden tours spanning a week in early April. The Cape Fear Garden Club arranges self-guided Azalea Garden Tours where visitors are welcome to tour a series of private gardens as well as attend events at public gardens.

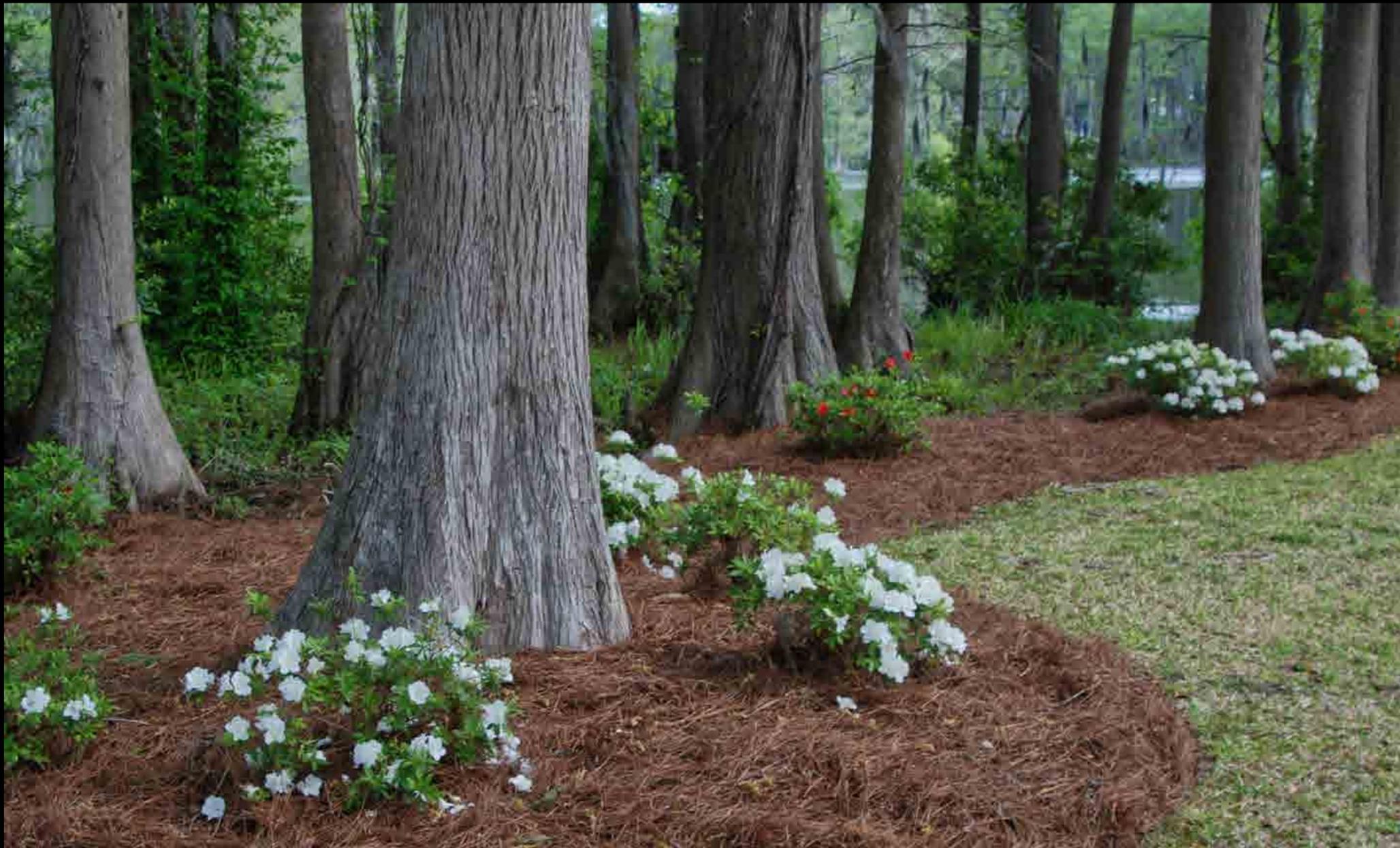




North Carolina Azalea Festival, Wilmington NC

# Greenfield Lake Park

Home to the world's largest floral Rotary Wheel, a Fragrance Garden, and a Sunken Garden, Greenfield Lake Park is a delight when its thousands of azaleas are in bloom. We attended the kickoff of the 64th annual North Carolina Azalea Festival at the park amphitheater. Miles of paved and unpaved trails circle the cypress-lined lake, which is home to the northernmost alligators we've encountered in the wild.





Greenfield Lake Park, Wilmington NC

# Hugh MacRae Park

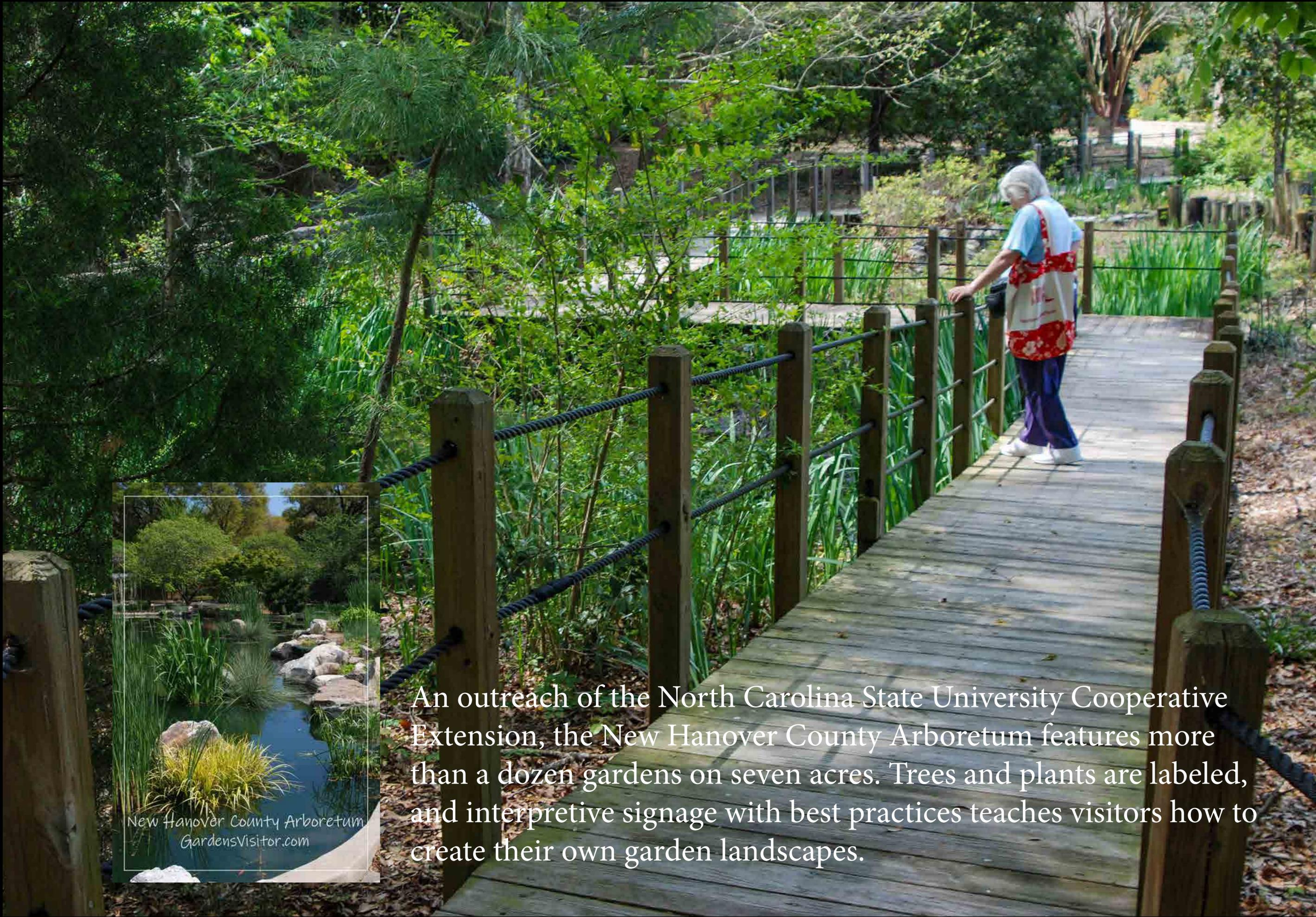


An often-overlooked beauty spot for visitors to Wilmington, the gardens at the core of Hugh MacRae Park surround a pond with a perpetually splashing fountain. Clumps of azaleas blaze brightly under the tall pines in March and April. Along the walkways, interpretive signs alert to some of the more interesting ornamentals planted here.

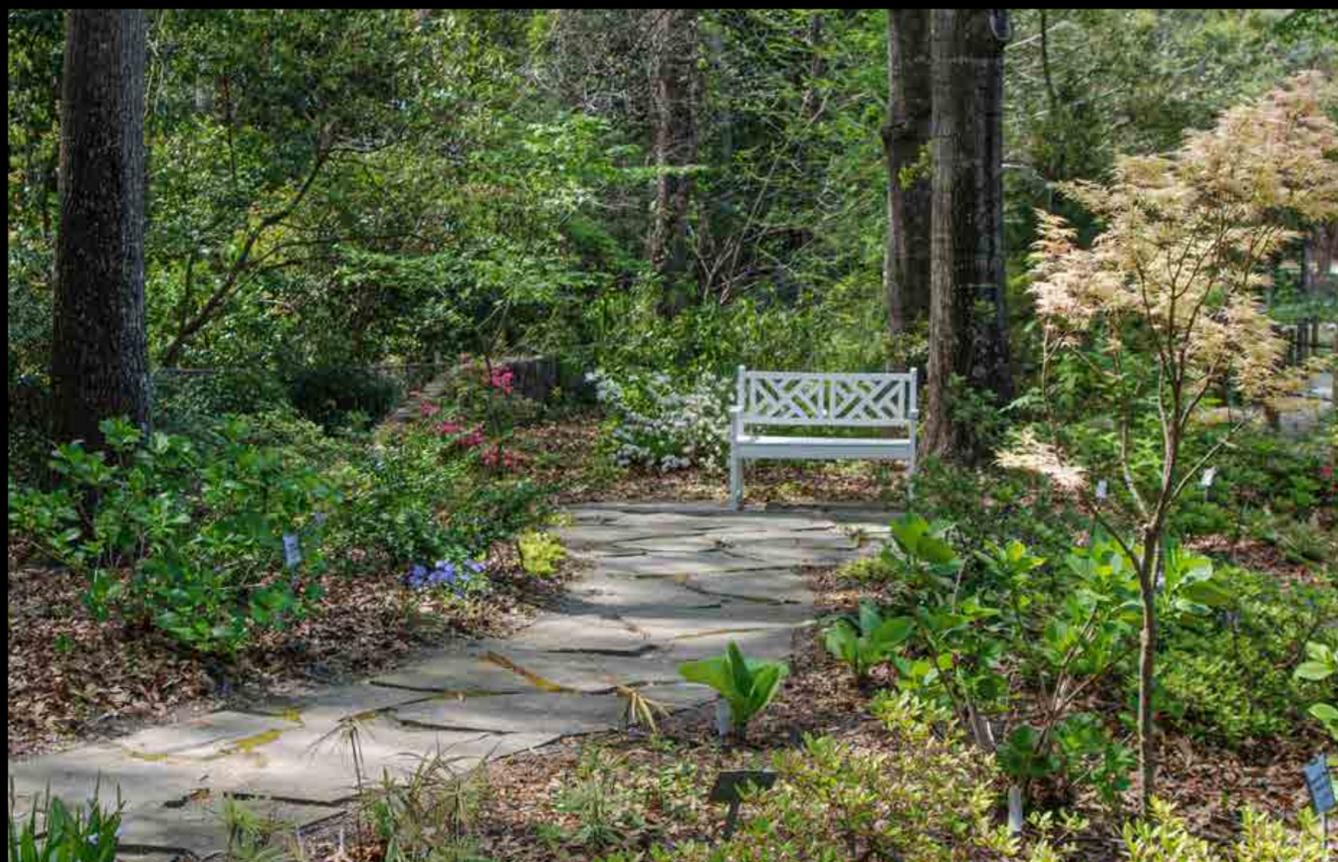
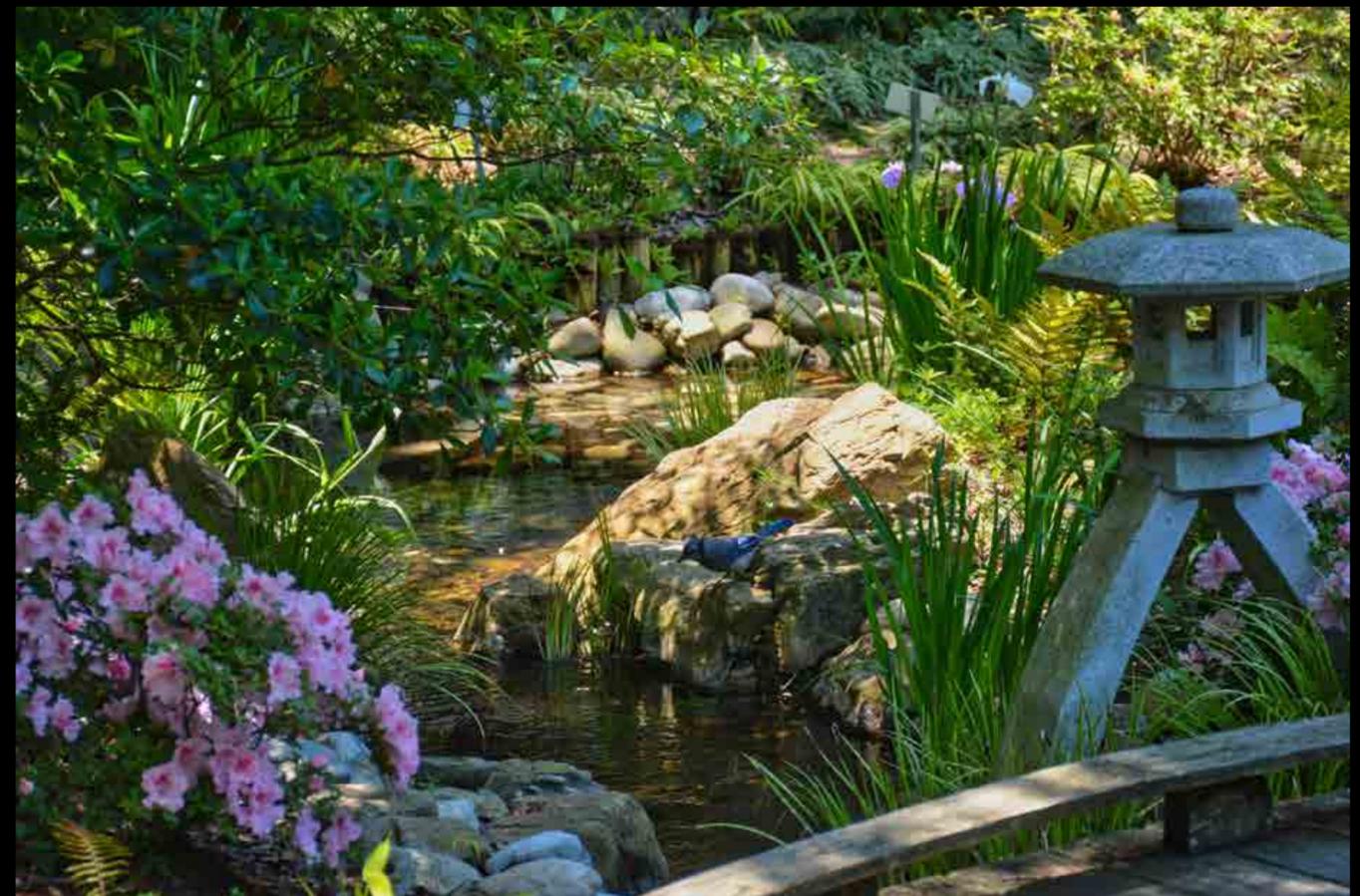


Hugh MacRae Park, Wilmington NC

# New Hanover County Arboretum



An outreach of the North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension, the New Hanover County Arboretum features more than a dozen gardens on seven acres. Trees and plants are labeled, and interpretive signage with best practices teaches visitors how to create their own garden landscapes.

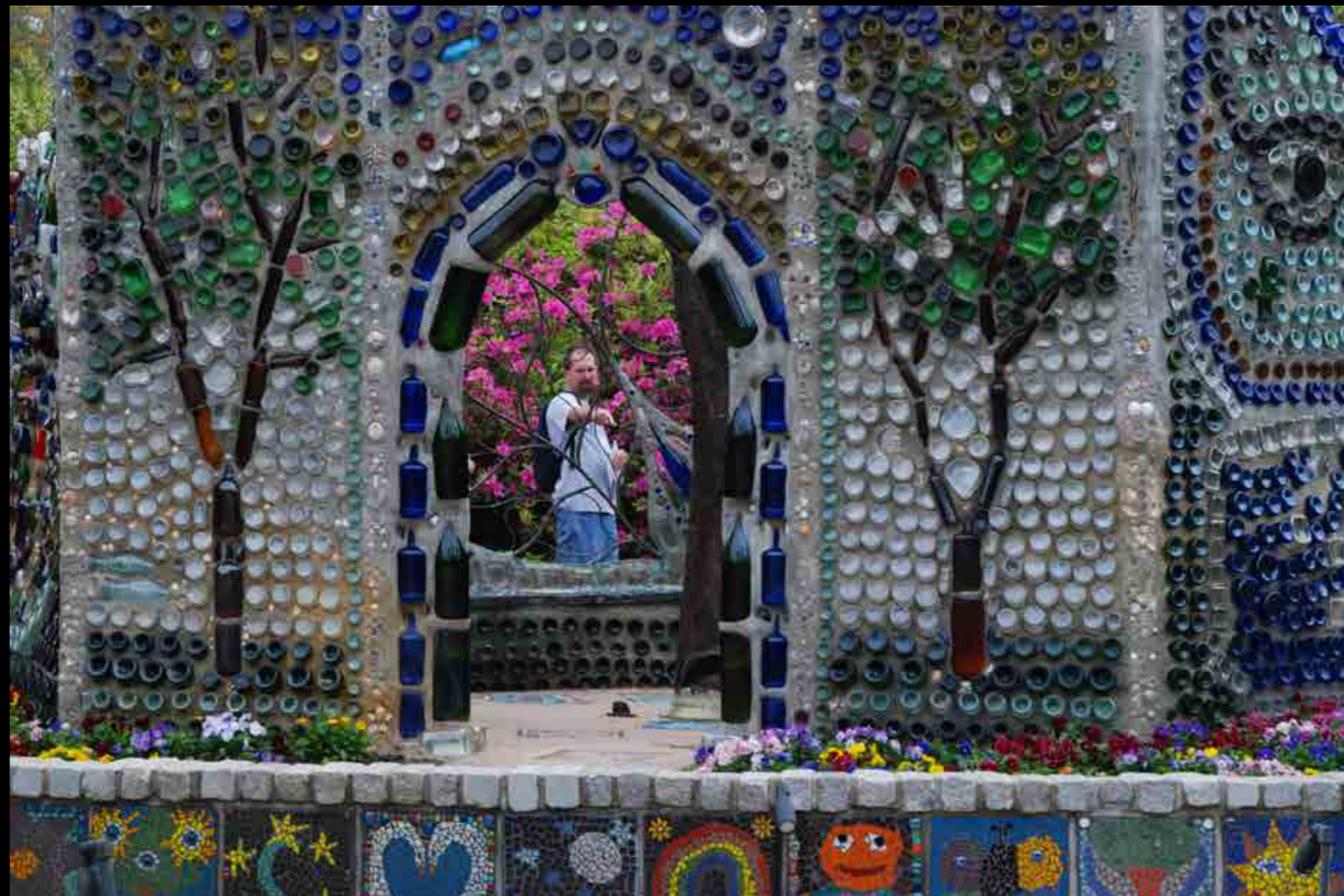
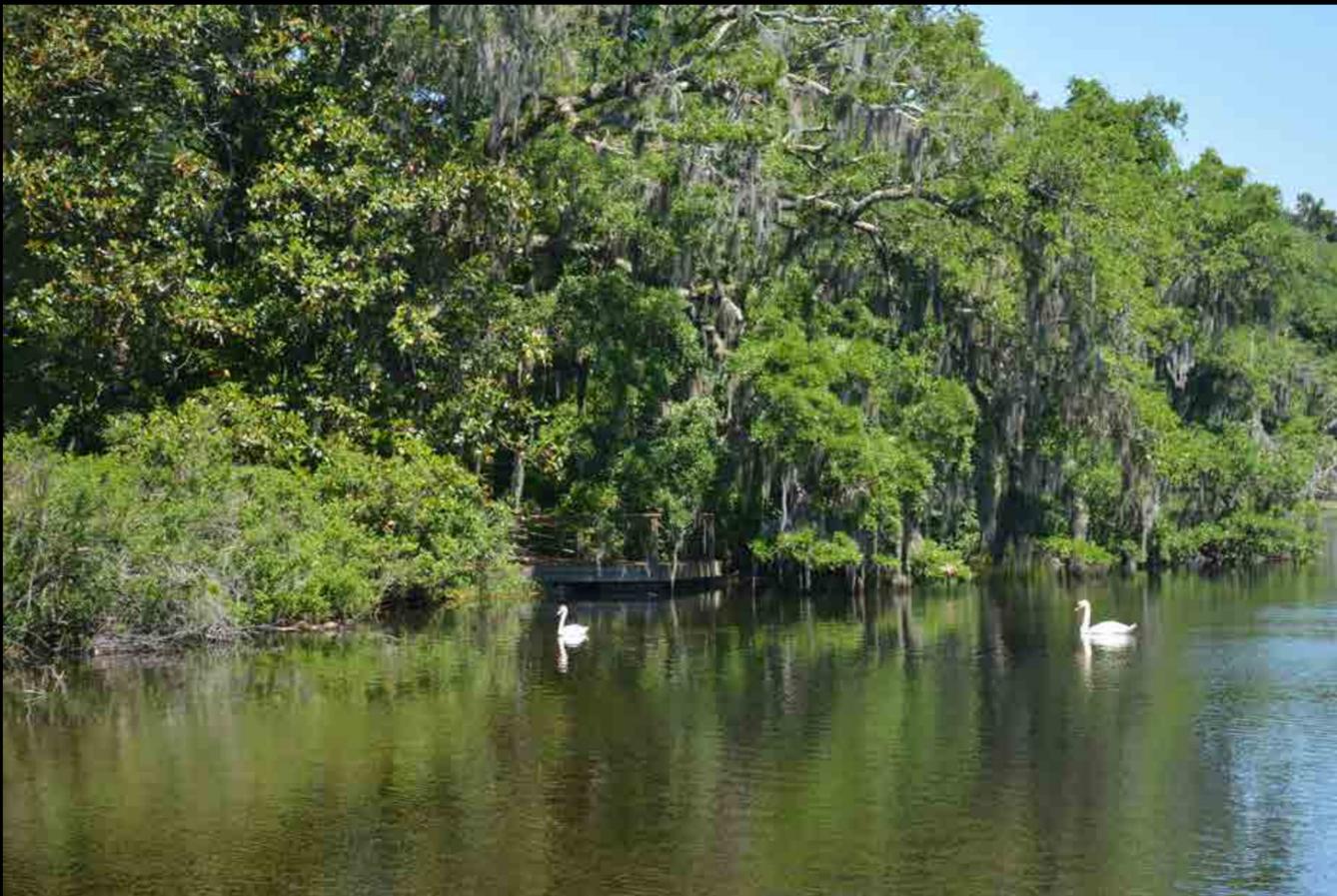


New Hanover County Arboretum, Wilmington NC

# Airlie Gardens

Developed more than a century ago as a woodland garden of camellias and azaleas under a canopy of grand live oaks - including the Airlie Oak, the state champion - Airlie Gardens feels like an immense park with intimate themed gardens sprinkled through the forests. Public garden tours began in 1931.





Airlie Gardens, Wilmington NC

# Brookgreen Gardens

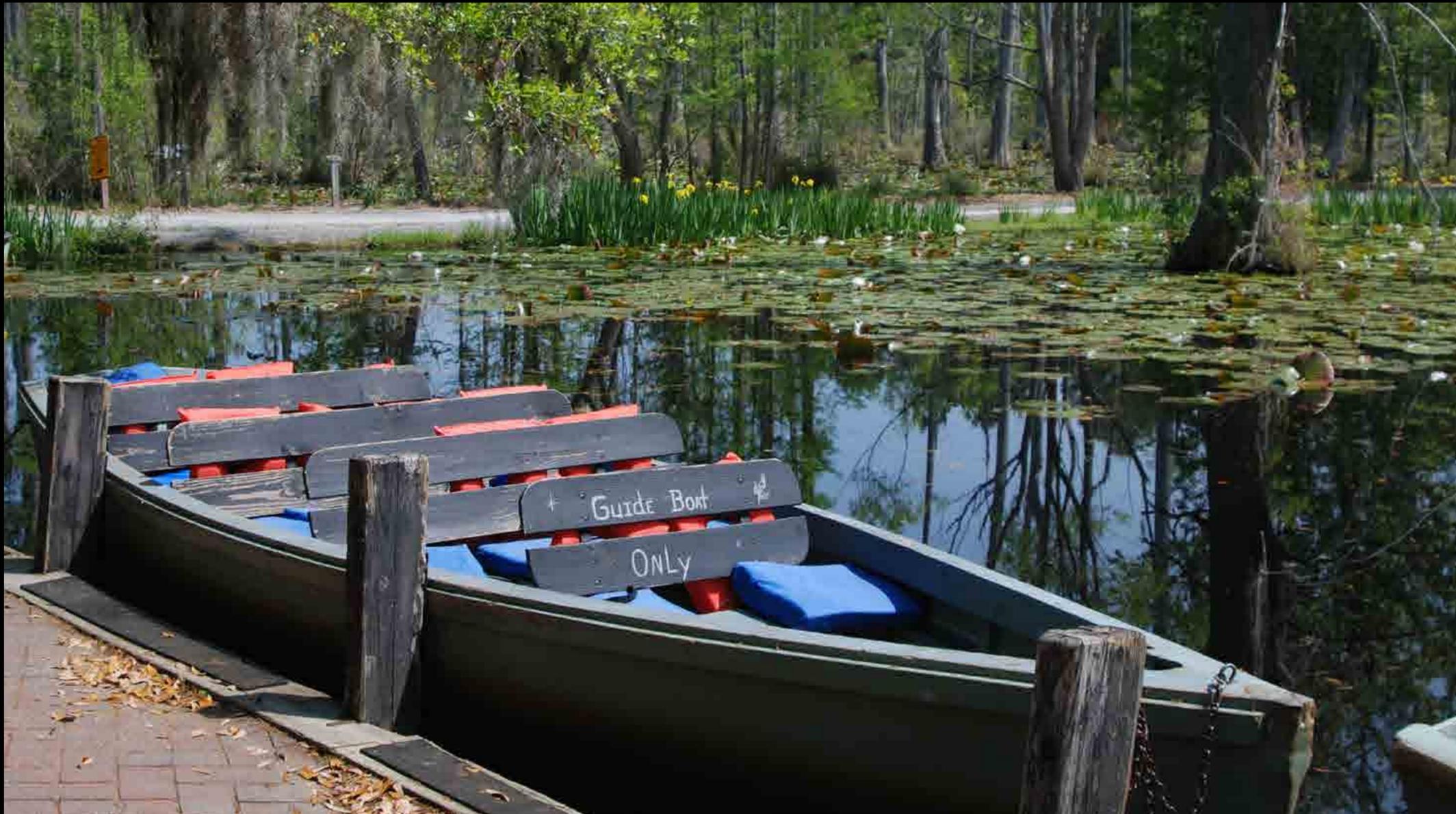
Established by Archer and Anna Hyatt Huntington in the 1930s, Brookgreen Gardens stands as a testament to their philanthropy and creativity. Comprised of four former rice plantations south of Murrells Inlet, the gardens form a backdrop to Anna's renowned sculptures and an extensive collection of sculpture by fellow artists.





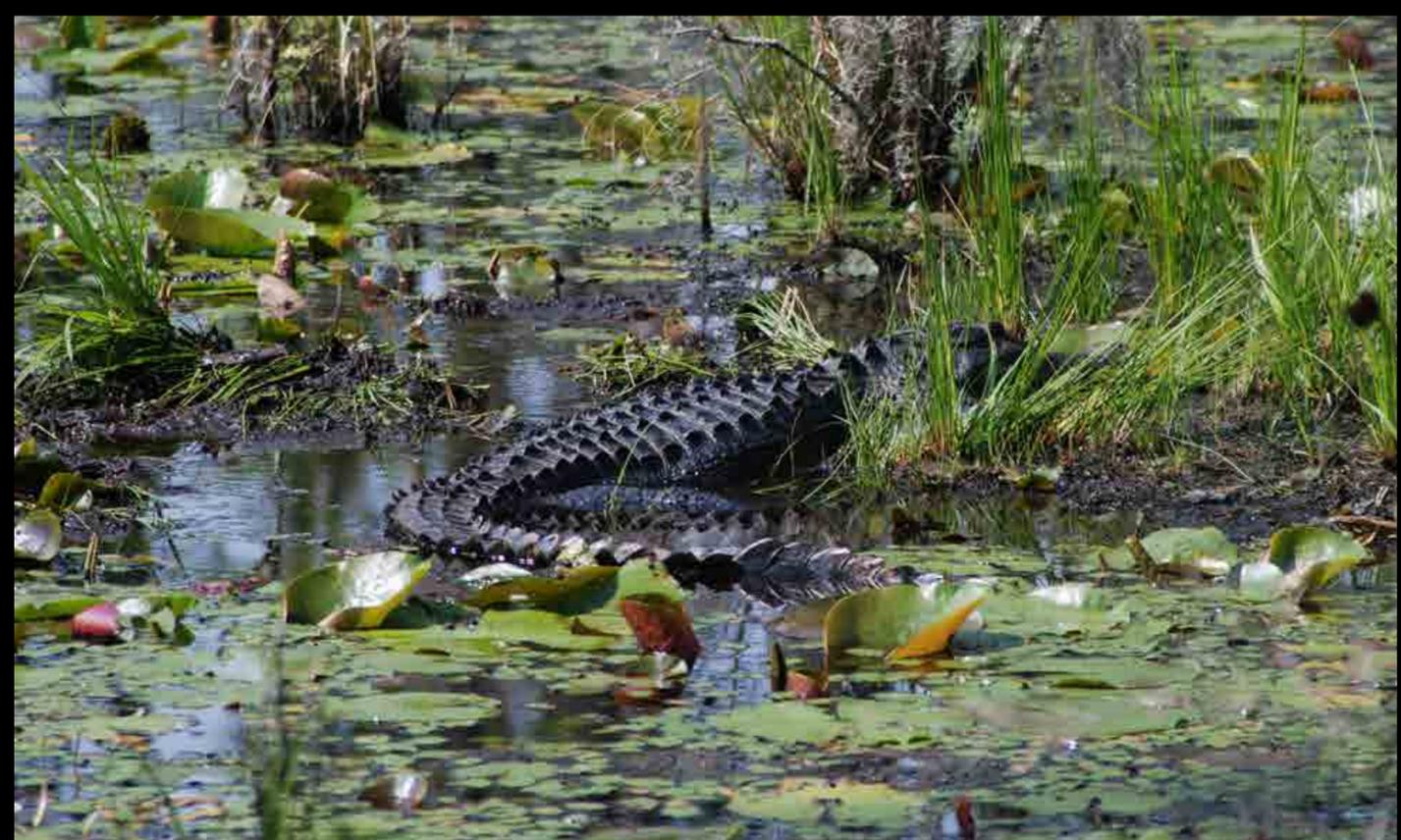
Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet SC

# Cypress Gardens



A truly unique setting for a garden, Cypress Gardens is laid out around and in an 80-acre cypress swamp, with visitors able to paddle boats through it or go with a guide. Gentle trails loop around the lily-dotted waters to showcase niche gardens on the former Dean Hall plantation.





Cypress Gardens, Monck's Corner SC

# Magnolia Plantation & Gardens



Flowerdale is the heart of Magnolia Gardens. Established in 1685, this formal English garden within a garden is the oldest garden in America.

Returning to Magnolia Plantation & Gardens in mid-April was quite the contrast to our early March visit the year before. While the camellias were faded, the azaleas were in their glory. With leaves on the trees in fresh spring green, the gardens felt renewed. On this visit, we took the boat ride on the Ashley River and the tram ride around the plantation to see the nooks and corners and wild edges we missed the first time.





Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston SC

# Charles Towne Landing

Along the Ashley River, Fernandina Legare Waring planted hundreds of azaleas and camellias to accent the beauty of the live oak forest surrounding her family's plantation. Her gardens span 80 acres of this important historic site that interprets the first European settlement in South Carolina, now a state park.

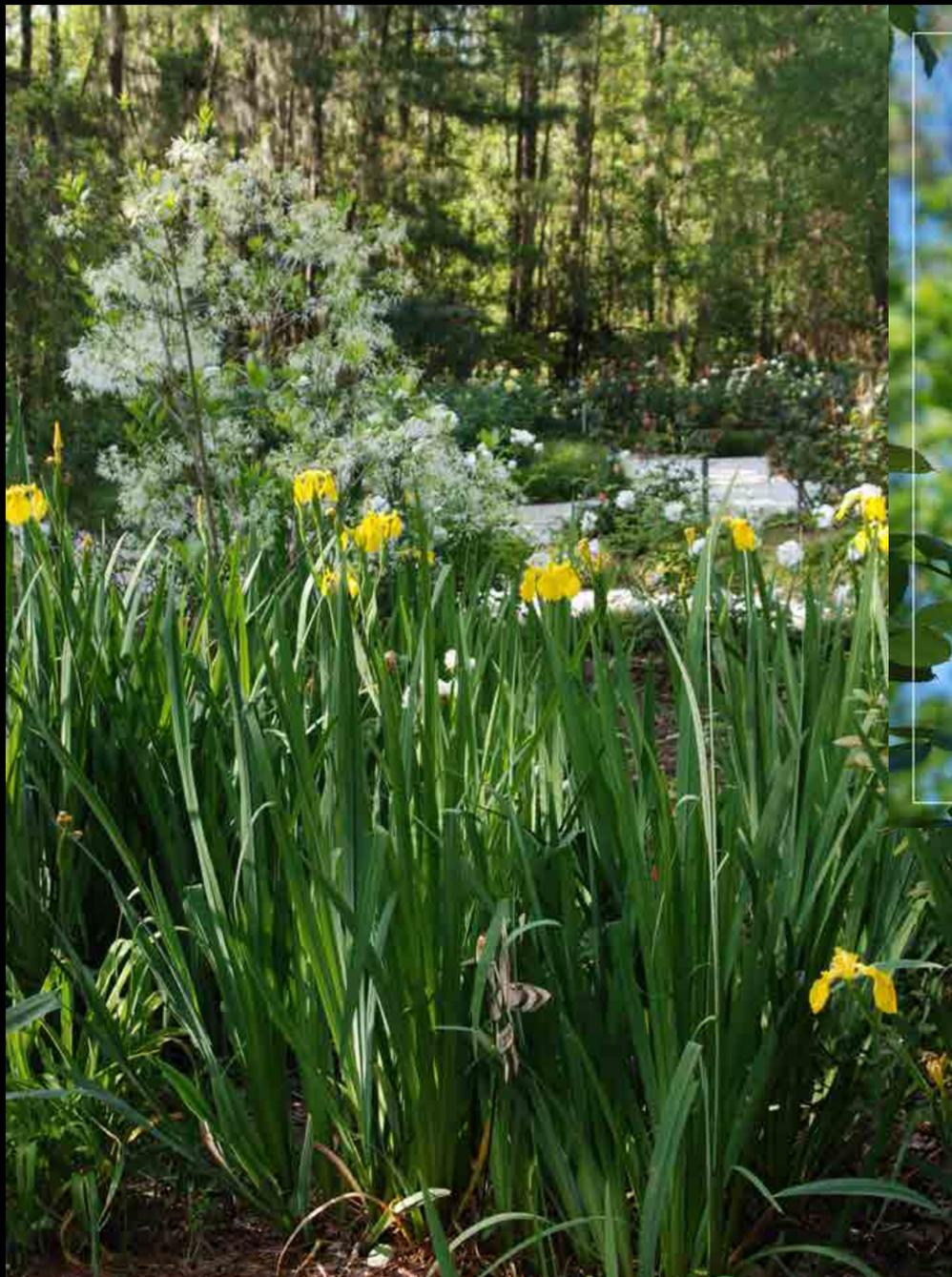




Charles Towne Landing, Charleston SC

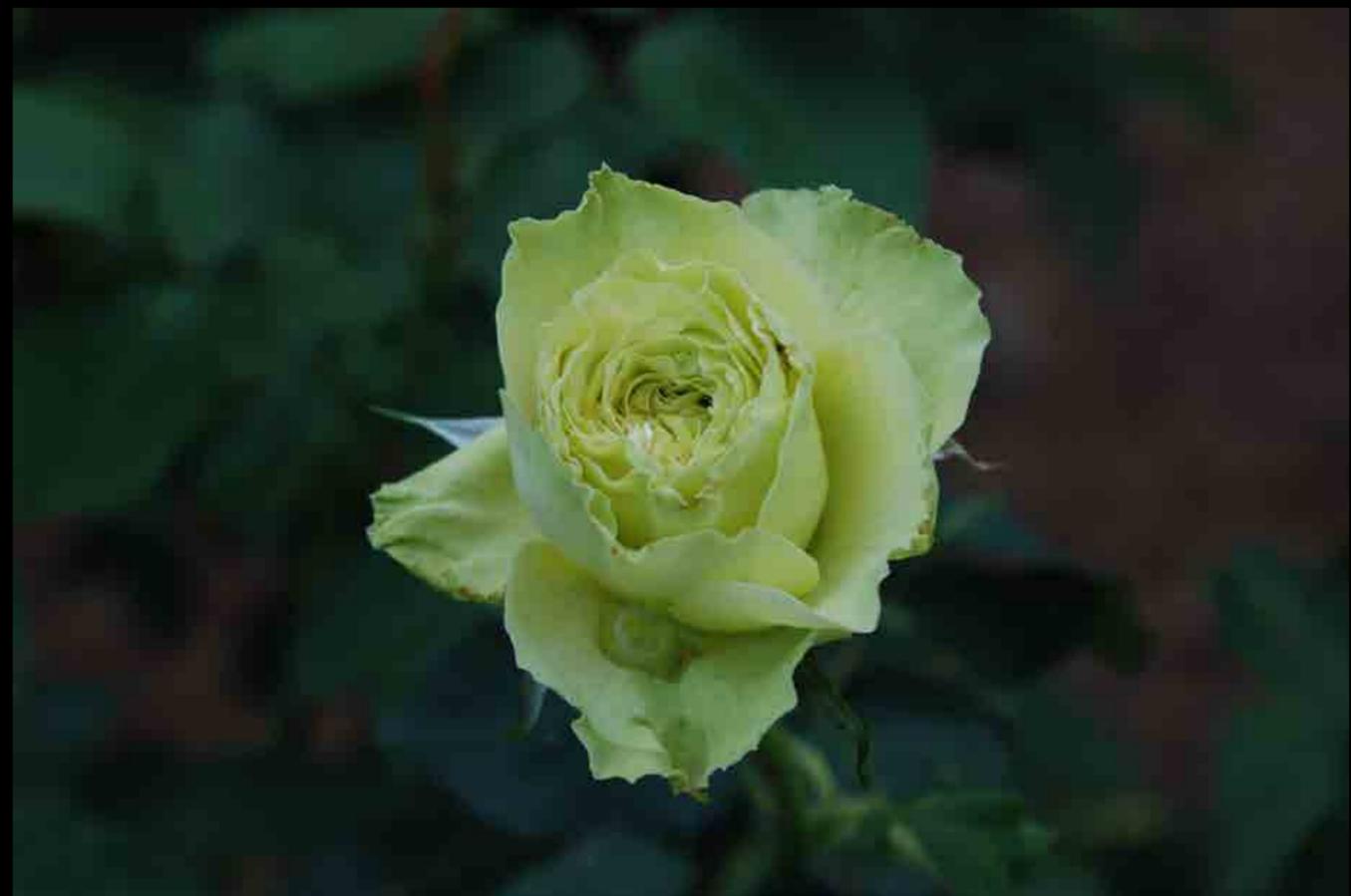
# Savannah Botanical Gardens

Developed and cared for by the Savannah Area Council of Garden Clubs, the Savannah Botanical Garden occupies 10 acres behind the Reinhard Farmhouse, built in the 1840s and moved here in 1992. Fifteen garden clubs maintain nearly 20 themed gardens, including three rose gardens.



Savannah Botanical Garden  
GardensVisitor.com

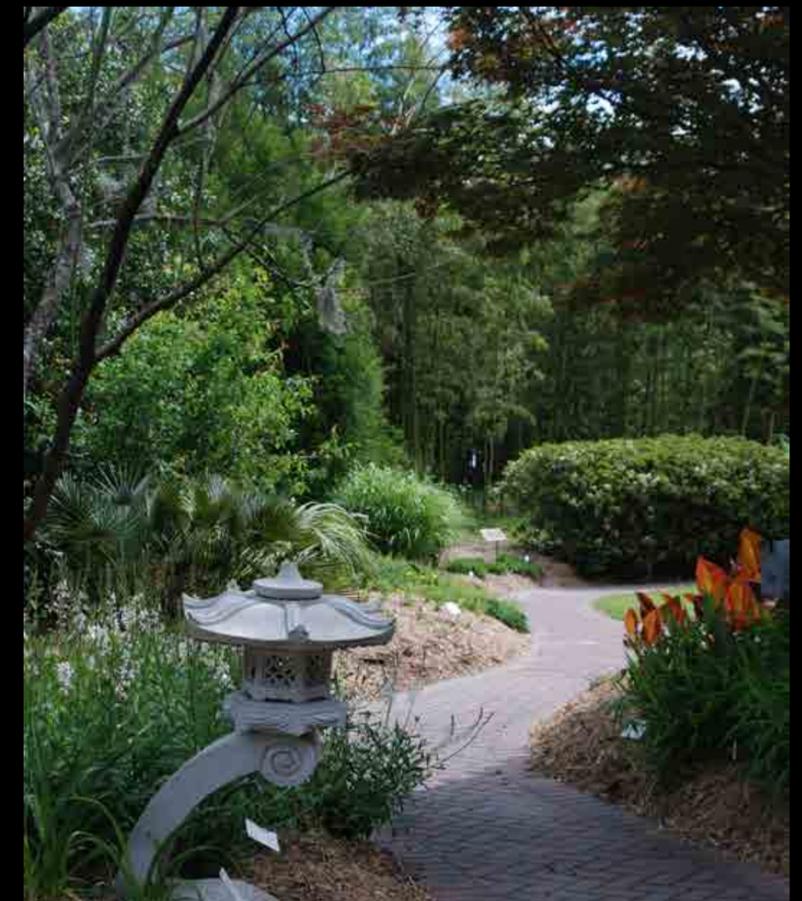




Savannah Botanical Gardens, Savannah GA

# Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens

In 1919, renowned horticultural explorer David Fairchild asked his patron Thomas Barbour Lathrop to purchase a Georgia farm where Japanese timber bamboo was thriving. Leased to the USDA, it became a test farm for introducing Asian plants into America. Now part of the University of Georgia, the gardens include a rich variety of collections, including camellia, crape myrtles, dwarf palmetto, roses, and tall bearded iris.





Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens, Savannah GA

Gardens photography by Sandra Friend, Linda Friend, and John Keatley.  
Sandra and John revisited many of the gardens in Wilmington, NC in 2015.

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Introduction and links updated January 2026



To learn more about these gardens and many others in the United  
States, visit our website [TrailsandTravel.com](https://TrailsandTravel.com)