

BOTANICAL BEAUTIES

Get nourished by nature at these Southwest gardens

By Robin Roenker

IT'S EASY TO GET LOST IN THE BEAUTY OF NATURE. A single, breathtakingly colorful cacti blossom. A meandering, tree-lined path. A bed bursting with fall chrysanthemums. All have the power to leave you feeling renewed. Wondering where to find such a natural refresh? The Southwest is home to many of the country's finest botanical gardens, where experts curate beds and create displays so beguiling, you may never want to leave. Here are some of the best:



Tulip at ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden



Bromeliad at ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden



Chain cholla at Desert Botanical Garden



BELLAGIO CONSERVATORY & BOTANICAL GARDEN

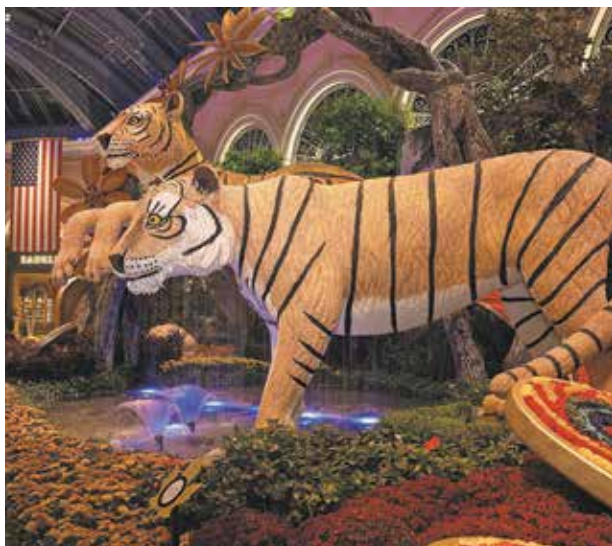
Las Vegas

Located near the hotel lobby, Bellagio's indoor conservatory and botanical garden features 14,000 square feet of eye-catching floral fantasy. New displays are rotated in each season in addition to a special annual installation to celebrate Chinese New Year.

This fall's themed show, *Into the Woods*, includes a treehouse, waterfalls, whimsical foxes made from natural materials and stunning displays of "fall Aspen trees that will bring a lot of yellow and orange throughout," says Jerry Bowlen, the Bellagio's executive director of horticulture. The current show also includes a new guest experience where parties of up to four can dine among the conservatory's meticulously curated beds. Contact the hotel concierge for details.

Open 24/7. Admission is free.

📍 bellagio.mgmresorts.com



DALLAS ARBORETUM AND BOTANICAL GARDEN

Dallas

Enjoy 66 acres bursting with seasonal color, dotted by 21 distinct gardens — including The Eugenia Leftwich Palmer Fern Dell and the Martha Brooks Camellia Garden — with no shortage of benches, so you can linger to soak in the beauty. "We probably plant more flowering plants than any other botanic garden in the United States, so there are always a lot of beautiful things in bloom, even in fall and winter," says Dave Forehand, vice president of gardens.

The annual Autumn at the Arboretum (Sept. 19 to Nov. 1) features 150,000 fall flowers and a Pumpkin Village, a series of houses and creative displays fashioned from more than 90,000 pumpkins, gourds and squash.

Open daily. Due to COVID-19, visitors must prepurchase timed admission tickets online.

📍 dallasarboretum.org



RED HILLS DESERT GARDEN

St. George, Utah

Stroll through a nearly 5-acre interactive desert garden showcasing more than 5,000 water-efficient plants — and walk in the footsteps of dinosaurs. Fossil tracks made by prehistoric animals are on view throughout the garden.

Enjoy the 1,150-foot undulating stream stocked with some of the rarest fish species on Earth, take in panoramic views of the nearby red rock formations or visit the adjacent Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, a 62,000-acre conservation area — home to the protected Mojave Desert Tortoise — with miles of trails for hiking and biking.

There is even a replica slot canyon in Utah's first desert conservation garden.

Open daily. Admission is free.

📍 redhillsdesertgarden.com





ABQ BIOPARK BOTANIC GARDEN

Albuquerque, N.M.

There's something for everyone at the ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden, home to native desert plants, a Mediterranean conservatory, a BUGarium, a Children's Fantasy Garden and a functioning re-creation of a 1930s-era Rio Grande homestead.

Watch for native wildlife in the garden, as well: Bobcats, porcupines and an array of migratory birds are known to visit from the nearby Rio Grande Bosque, the city's riverside cottonwood forest.

The BioPark also includes a zoo and aquarium.

"From the BioPark's Tingley Beach, you can walk right out to the Rio Grande," says Maria Thomas, curator of plants. "That connectivity to nature is what makes the park as a whole such a special place."

Open daily. Some indoor exhibits may be closed due to COVID-19.

[abqbiopark.com](https://www.abqbiopark.com)



MYRIAD BOTANICAL GARDENS

Oklahoma City

A 15-acre natural oasis in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City, this gem has been "a source of serenity" for visitors — offering a safe space to enjoy the outdoors while socially distancing, says director of marketing and public relations Leslie Spears.

Admission to the outdoor grounds, including a prairie garden, dog park, children's garden and interactive splash park, is free. The fee (free up to \$8, depending on age) to enter the indoor Crystal Bridge Conservatory is worth it for the stunning architecture alone. Inside the 13,000-square-foot acrylic tube, enjoy displays of 750 varieties of plants ranging from dry zone succulents to rainforest orchids. But visit before December, when the conservatory will close for a two-year interior remodel.

"When it reopens, it will be glorious," Spears says.

Open daily. Hours vary.

[myriadgardens.org](https://www.myriadgardens.org)



DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN

Phoenix

Roam the garden's five themed trails to discover the rugged, resourceful beauty of hearty desert cacti and wildflowers — plants that thrive in some of the harshest climates in the world.

Watch for special pop-up events with socially distanced themes on Friday nights in the garden.

"We are being very careful with our COVID-19 safety precautions. We want to give people a place to come and enjoy being outside," says marketing communications manager Clare Hahne. A beloved Phoenix holiday tradition, Las Noches de Las Luminarias — when the garden is lit by 8,000 luminarias — is set for Nov. 27-28 and Dec. 4-6, 11-13, 17-23 and 26-31.

Open daily. Due to COVID-19, visitors must prepurchase tickets online.

[dbg.org](https://www.dbg.org)

