

IDEA GUIDE



LEXINGTON CONVENTION
AND VISITORS BUREAU

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GROWING ATTRACTIONS

*Gorgeous Gardens Await in
Lexington and the Bluegrass*

Early Kentucky settlers thought the entire Bluegrass region was a garden spot. “We felt ourselves as passengers through a wilderness just arrived at the fields of Elysium, or at a garden where there was no forbidden fruit,” gushed Daniel Boone’s companion Felix Walker, in the late 1700s.

As cabins began to dot the wilderness, so did gardens. Writings from the early 1800s described Kentucky cabins adorned with climbing roses. By the 1830s, a visitor noted that the elegant mansions of the Bluegrass were “surrounded by gardens and pleasure grounds, adorned with trees and shrubs, tastefully disposed.”

The gardening traditions in Lexington and the surrounding area continue to delight visitors today. Garden enthusiasts can enjoy spots ranging from formal gardens to sweeping expanses of wildflowers.

IN LEXINGTON

Formal Traditions

At **Ashland, The Henry Clay Estate**, beautiful iron gates lead into a traditional English parterre garden. The six parterres, or sections, feature a wide variety of trees, shrubs, perennials, herbs, roses and annuals. Benches and chairs provide

delightful spots in which to rest and admire, paint, or read the free garden brochure available from the estate visitor center.

Formal gardens have been a part of the estate since the days of Clay himself. The famous 19th-century statesman collected landscaping ideas while on trips of state to England and France. The current half-acre garden, designed to reflect the style of a formal garden of Clay’s era, was begun in 1950 and is maintained by the Garden Club of Lexington. The

Ashland Garden is open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; admission is free. (There’s a charge to tour the house.) 120 Sycamore Road. (859) 266-8581.

Bluegrass Note: The fertile soil of the Bluegrass has been legendary since the earliest settlers arrived. “Plant a nail at night and it’ll come up a spike by morning,” boasted a Kentuckian to a visitor in the early 1800s.

Memorial —and Memorable

The **Lexington Cemetery** is the final resting place of famous Lexingtonians, but many visitors come to see its living attractions— the trees, shrubs, plants and flower beds that have gained it a national reputation as one of America’s most beautiful cemeteries and arboretums. The cemetery includes more than 200 species of trees, from flowering dogwoods and magnolias to an historic American linden that was growing when the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787. Lovely flower gardens and three lakes add to the park-like setting.

The summer begonias and some of the other plants are grown in the cemetery's own greenhouse. Pick up a free self-guided tree tour in the office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Saturdays. There is also a children's walking tour. The cemetery gates are locked at 5 p.m. 833 West Main Street. (859) 255-5522.

A State-ly Park

A 2 mile horticultural "Walk Across Kentucky" is just one of the attractions under development at **The Arboretum** on the University of Kentucky campus.

In 1995, more than 1,000 trees and shrubs gathered from Kentucky's five geophysical regions were planted. The arboretum also includes herb, rose, water and butterfly gardens, and an All-American Trials vegetable garden. Numerous special events are held throughout the year, including a plant exchange in May and October, Halloween activities, Arbor Day in April and, in summers, performances by the Kentucky Classical Theatre Conservatory.

The arboretum is open daily, dawn to dusk. It is located at 500 Alumni Drive between Nicholasville and Tates Creek roads. Admission is free. (859) 257-6955.

City Farm

In the shade of Lexington skyscrapers is nestled a 1790s historic property now home to the **Flag Fork Herb Farm**. After ten years in the wholesale herb business, Mike and Carrie Creech decided to market their line of Kentucky Gourmet Foods, along with the herbs to make them, from their own brick cottage in the Bluegrass. Their quaint shop is brimming with perennial and old-fashioned flowers, dried arrangements, garden accessories, and candles. Closed Sunday and Monday. The Garden Cafe, featuring lunchtime homemade meals Wednesdays through Saturdays, overlooks the bird

Bluegrass Note: The formal garden at the Lexington Cemetery was inspired by the famed Butchart Gardens in Victoria, British Columbia.

Bluegrass Note: More than 300 different varieties of wildflowers, including blue-eyed Mary and other rare varieties, can be found at Lexington's Raven Run Nature Sanctuary.

and butterfly display garden. Reservations are recommended for lunch at the Cafe. 900 North Broadway. (859) 252-6837.

Other Growing Attractions

Several of the historic homes open for tour in Lexington include small period gardens. There's no admission charge just to visit the gardens.

Herb and flower gardens at **Waveland State Historic Site**, 225 Waveland Museum Rd., include plants appropriate to the antebellum era. (859) 272-3611.

Behind the wrought iron fence at the **Hunt-Morgan House**, 201 North Mill Street, you'll find a small "city garden" with a gazebo. (859) 253-0362.

A formal 19th-century herb and perennial garden graces the backyard of the **Mary Todd Lincoln House**, 578 West Main St. (859) 233-9999.

While not a "garden" in the traditional sense, **Raven Run Nature Sanctuary**, is a great place to view Kentucky wildflowers spring through fall. Trails open daily, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Guided nature walks are given monthly. 5888 Jacks Creek Pike. (859) 272-6105.

Garden enthusiasts might also like to take a driving tour through some scenic Lexington neighborhoods. The **Chevy Chase/Ashland Park** neighborhoods (streets around and

east of Ashland, The Henry Clay Estate); and the **Kenwick** neighborhood (Mentelle Park, Victory and other streets off Richmond Road east of downtown), are beautifully in bloom, spring through fall.

NEARBY & NOTEWORTHY

Frankfort Florals

When Margaretta Mason Brown came as a bride to Frankfort, Kentucky, in 1801, from New York, she brought rose cuttings with her. The descendants of

some of her roses bloomed until the 1960's in the three-acre garden at **Liberty Hall**, 218 Wilkinson Street.

With its boxwood hedges, exotic ginkgo trees and exuberant flower beds, the garden is maintained in the Colonial Revival-style in which Margaretta's granddaughter kept it in the early 1900s. The garden is included in the book "Grandmother's Garden: The Old-Fashioned American Garden 1865-1915," by May Brawley Hill.

There's no charge to tour the gardens of Liberty Hall or the adjacent Orlando Brown House. The houses are closed Sundays and Mondays. (502) 227-2560.

Kentucky's most unusual garden is found on the grounds of the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort. The **Floral Clock** is made up of more than 10,000 plants. The face of the clock is 34 feet across, and a special mechanism enables the quarter-ton hands to move. The whole blooming thing sits in a 100-ton planter above a reflecting pool. Open daily dawn to dusk. Free admission. (502) 564-3449.

Frankfort is 27 miles west of Lexington via I-64 or US 60.

Parisian Plot

About 100 varieties of trees - including many varieties of flowering dogwoods -- numerous flowering plants, a rose garden and a fish pool are found in the five-acre **Nannine Clay Wallis Arboretum**, 616 Pleasant Street in Paris. The arboretum is the "back yard" of the headquarters of the Garden Club of Kentucky. View the gardens daily, sunrise to sunset, unless a special event is tak-

Bluegrass Note: Kentuckians have also made their mark in vegetable gardening. Bibb lettuce, also known as limestone lettuce, was developed by amateur horticulturist John B. Bibb in his backyard garden in Frankfort, Kentucky, sometime around 1865. You can walk by the Bibb-Burnley House on Wapping Street in Frankfort.

ing place. Admission is free. (859) 987-6158.

Paris is 18 miles north of Lexington via US 27/68.

Seeds of Shaker Life

Although the main attractions at **Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill** are the beautifully restored buildings, garden enthusiasts will also enjoy the outdoor views at America's largest restored Shaker community. There are herb and vegetable gardens at the village, planted and tended as they might have been when this was a thriving 19th-century Shaker community. Shaker Village is about 25 miles southwest of Lexington via US 68. It's open daily; admission charged. Call (859) 734-5411 or toll-free, (800) 734-5611.

Country Retreat

On the way to Shaker Village, avid gardeners will want to stop at **Springhouse Gardens**, just south of Lexington on US 68 across from Golf Club of the Bluegrass.

A natural spring, dry-laid limestone fences and towering sycamores lend a rustic feel to this Central Kentucky garden center. Owner Richard Weber has incorporated many artifacts found on the property, formerly part of a tobacco farm, into its design. Even a child's old red wagon discovered in the barn found new life hauling plants. Now a signature of the business, customers can use little red wagons for shopping carts.

More than just a nursery, a variety of permanent display gardens including water gardens and beautifully constructed shade pavilions make Springhouse a year round destination. You are welcome to wander the 6 and 1/2 acres. Hours vary from season to season. Call (859) 224-1417.

Hands Across the Ocean

A joint project between Georgetown's sister city, Tahara, Japan, and local garden enthusiasts, **Yuko-En on the Elkhorn** flourishes on the banks of Elkhorn Creek. It is the Official Kentucky-Japan Friendship Garden and one of the largest Japanese

gardens in America. Complete with waterfalls, arched bridges and a Zen rock garden, you can let your mind escape to another place. Take the short drive to Georgetown and see native Japanese maples, irises and other flora. Open daily from dawn until dusk. 700 Cincinnati Pike, Georgetown. (502)316-4554).

Living History

Floracliff, a 278-acre nature preserve in southern Fayette County, has an astounding number of ancient trees. One tree, known affectionately as “The One,” is a Chinkapin oak dating to 1611. Twelve other trees pre-date Daniel Boone and James Harrod. Floracliff's uplands and gorges are one of the best places to view wildflowers in the Bluegrass Region. The sanctuary is open by appointment only, but offers a variety of walks, events, and hands-on workshops to interested individuals and groups. (859) 351-7770.

Native Kentuckians

The small, but—pardon the expression—growing **Scott County Native Plants Arboretum** in Georgetown offers a miniature tour of Kentucky plant life.

On about a half acre on the Georgetown College campus there are trees and shrubs, as well as herbaceous and flowering plants native to Kentucky, and in particular the Bluegrass region. Several habitat plantings focus on indigenous plants: There is a display of species typical to the Kentucky River Palisades and the former Bluegrass savanna. Small formal perennial gardens along Georgetown's Main Street use native herbaceous plants to create a butterfly and hummingbird garden, a prairie and savanna garden, a prairie medicinals garden and a woodland medicinals garden. The arboretum is located at Main Street and Memorial Drive

Bluegrass Note: They are poisonous when raw, but early settlers roasted the seeds of the Kentucky Coffeetree to make a coffee substitute. Black, leathery pods filled with bean-like seeds hang from branches which are bare most of the year. The Coffeetree was the official Kentucky State Tree until 1994, when the Legislature bumped it for the more “popular” Tulip Poplar, a member of the magnolia family.

in Georgetown. Admission is free. Georgetown is about 13 miles north of Lexington. (502) 863-2547.

Farther Afield

A bit farther from Lexington but still within easy driving distance are several other fascinating gardens:

The 2,000 public acres at **Bernheim Forest** include a 250-acre landscape arboretum with more than 1,800 labeled varieties of plants, a visitor center, cafe and three lakes.

The arboretum includes the largest collection of American hollies in North America as well as herb gardens, a butterfly garden, water gardens and other perennial and annual plantings. Bernheim is open year-round, daily except Christmas Day and New Year's Day, from 7:00 a.m. until sunset. It's located on Ky. 245 off I-65 near Clermont, Kentucky, about 58 miles from Lexington. Admission free during the week; there's a \$5 per-vehicle charge on weekends and holidays. (502)955-8512.

Gardener-to-gardener inspiration and idea-sharing were what Mary Ellen Pesek and her husband Mark Lawhorn had in mind when they decided to open their six acres of gardens to the public. The couple's **Big Bone Gardens**, across from Big Bone Lick State Park, includes seven water gardens, herb gardens, a Gnome garden and other theme gardens, with an emphasis on naturalistic landscaping and organic care. It's open to the public Saturdays and Sundays from mid-April through mid-July. Hours are 12 p.m.- 5 p.m.; other times by appointment. Big Bone Lick is about 72 miles from Lexington off I-75. Free. (859) 384-1949. 

**For more information
contact the Lexington Convention
and Visitors Bureau at 800-845-3959.**

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