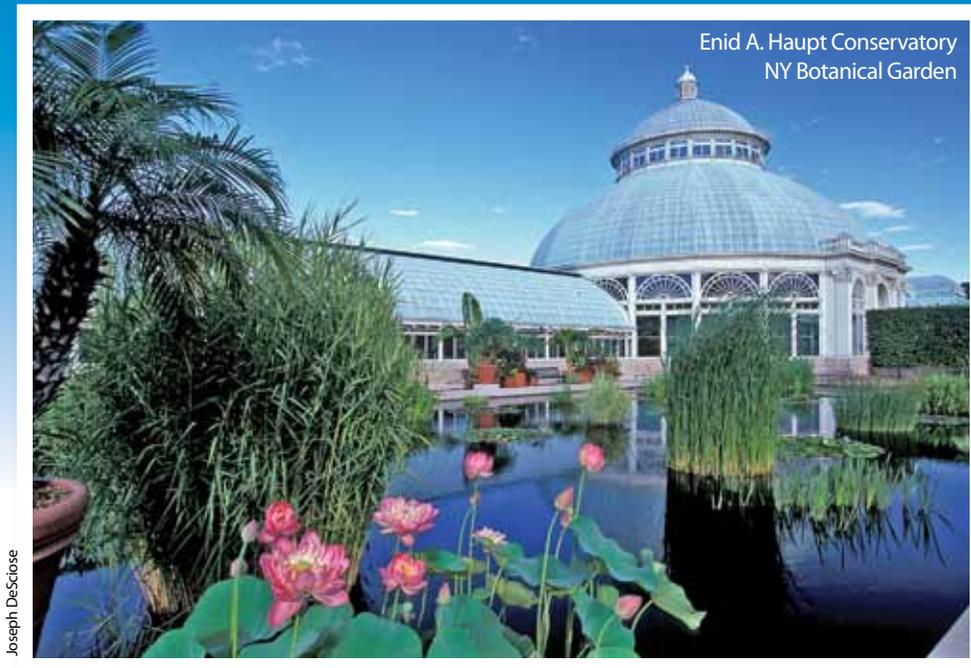


Azaleas in bloom at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden





Joseph DeSciote

Oases in the City: New York's Botanical Gardens

By Ellen Bidell

Ever heard the analogy that the city can be a jungle? Well, plan a visit to one of New York City's botanical gardens and you'll be transported into the jungles of the Amazon or Southeast Asia. From there you can stroll through the cherry tree blossoms of Japan or the deserts of the American Southwest. Two of the city's biggest gardens boast extensive collections, landscaped to bring the sights and scents of far-away locations to the hustle and bustle of the concrete jungle.

The New York Botanical Garden

Located in the Bronx, the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) occupies 250 acres of dramatic rock outcrops, rolling hills, waterfalls and ponds. More than one million plants in 50 themed gardens delight the more than 750,000 people that visit the garden each year.

The NYBG was established in 1891 as part of an effort to create a cosmopolitan world capital in New York City. The design of the garden was inspired by Columbia University botanist Nathaniel Lord Britton and his wife Elizabeth Gertrude Knight Britton. It is located on property owned by the City of New York and funded in part by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

The centerpiece of the garden is the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, a Victorian-style glasshouse that was declared a New York City landmark in 1975. There are eleven interconnected galleries within the conservatory, each representing a different habitat. The Palms of the World houses one of the world's largest collections of palms (more than 50 species). Two tropical rainforests (lowland and upland) include some of the rarest plants on earth, as well as 8,000 orchids.

The Azalea Garden opened in spring 2011 and holds one of the largest and most important collections of azaleas in the world. Located in the heart of the botanical garden, visitors can meander along woodland paths through the collection of almost 3,000

Nancy Bryan Luce Herb Garden

azaleas and rhododendrons which are in full bloom by Mother’s Day.

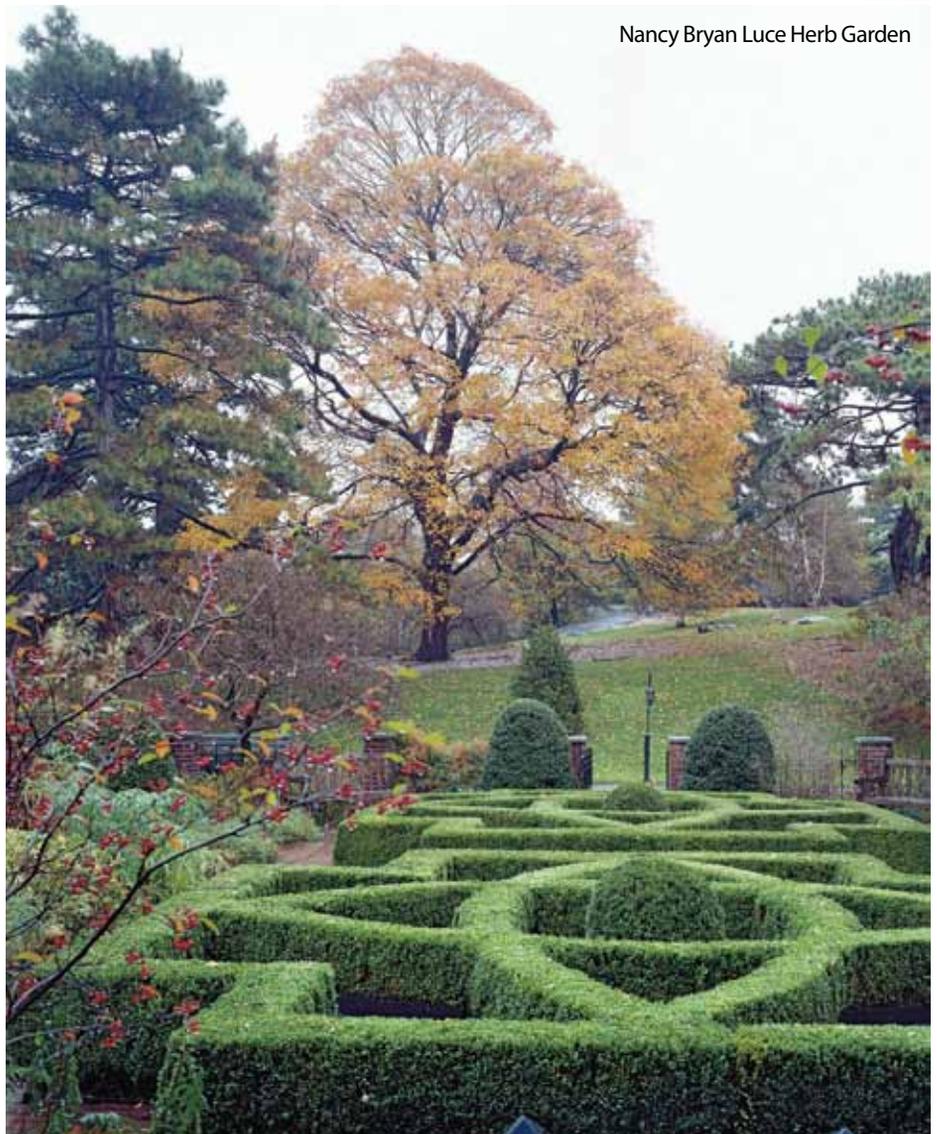
The alpine-inspired landscape of the Rock Garden takes you into a natural setting that seems far from the skyscrapers of the city. A waterfall, a 150-year-old black oak, natural rock outcrops and shade gardens provide the backdrop for the two-and-a-half acre oasis.

Botanical gardens aren’t just about showy blooms and intricately designed landscapes. Research, preservation and education play integral roles in the operations. The NYBG is one of the four largest research herbariums in the world. Its collection of preserved plant specimens aids with the study, conservation and sustainable management of the earth’s diverse plant life.

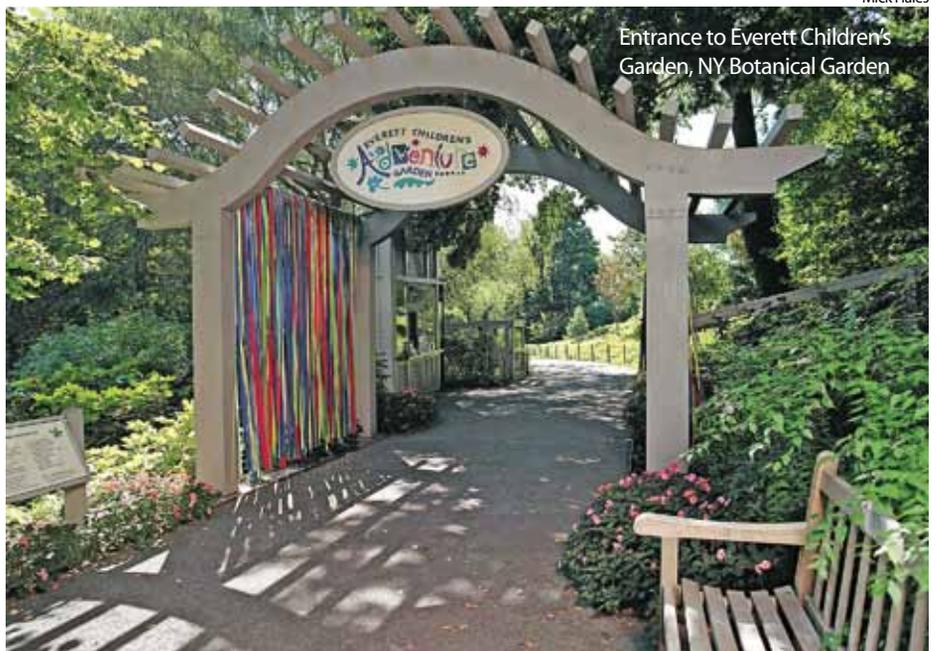
Garden scientists are involved in field research programs all over the world, including North America, the Caribbean, Brazil, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The NYBG scientists conduct cutting-edge research in habitat destruction, sustainable forestry, natural resource management, plant molecular biology and the complex relationship between plants and people.

The Garden runs the largest educational program of any botanical garden in the world, educating more than 275,000 people each year, including children, teachers and families. There were 800 public programs in 2010, including daily tours, cooking demonstrations and weekly home gardening demonstrations, attended by more than 35,000 visitors.

Children are encouraged to touch the plants and displays of the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, which features a 12-acre indoor and outdoor garden. There are a variety of hands-on activities, including building bird nests big enough for a child, and netting insects in the wetland areas.



Entrance to Everett Children’s Garden, NY Botanical Garden



Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Although smaller in size than the NYBG, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG) has nearly as many visitors each year. Founded in 1910, the BBG encompasses 52 acres with 12,000 different types of plants. Like the NYBG, it is located on property owned by the City of New York and funded in part by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, as well as the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The BBG is dedicated to education, research and a display of horticulture.

The Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden was the first Japanese garden created in a public American garden and remains one of the oldest and most visited Japanese-inspired gardens outside Japan. The garden features a blend of old and new styles: an ancient hill-and-pond style and the more recent stroll-garden style. Visitors are treated to wooden bridges, stone lanterns, a torii (Japanese gateway), and a Shinto shrine along the meandering paths. The Japanese Garden and Cherry Esplanade come alive with the Hanami celebration during the month of April. The event celebrates the Japanese cultural tradition of enjoying each moment of the cherry blossom season. At the end of Hanami, the two-day Sakura Matsuri (cherry blossom festival) includes Taiko drumming, martial arts, Bonsai demonstrations and Minbu folk dancing in a celebration of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture.

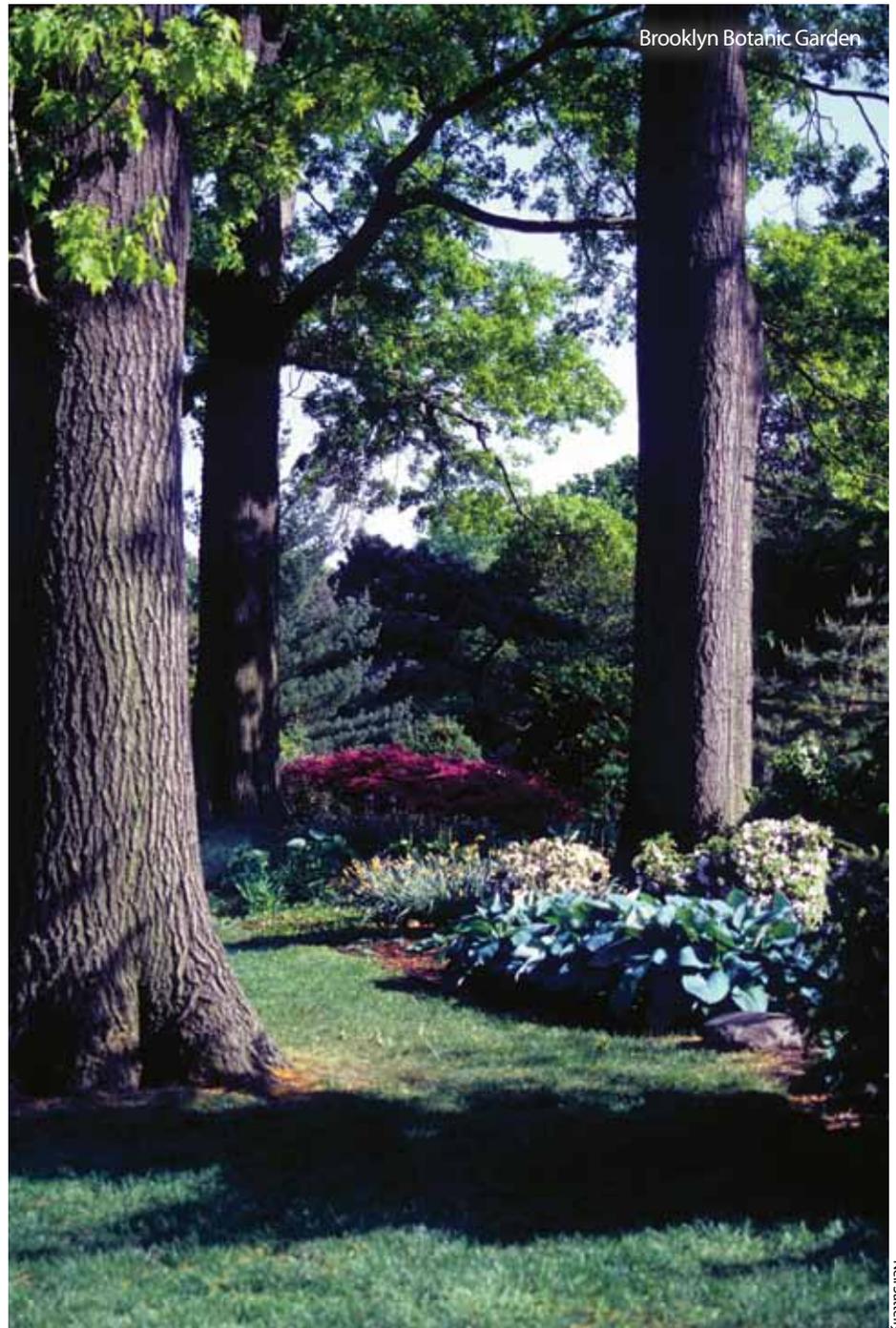
One of the most popular attractions at BBG is the Cranford Rose Garden. During the month of June, tens of thousands of roses in a variety of colors decorate the arches, lattices and formal beds of the garden. The Cranford Rose Garden is one of the largest collections in the United States, with more than 5,000 rose bushes of 1,400 varieties.

A truly unique garden, the Alice Recknagel Ireys Fragrance Garden was

built in 1955 as the first of its kind in the United States. The garden is designed for visitors who are visually impaired. People are encouraged to touch and smell the plants, which are identified by Braille labels. The gardens grow in raised beds, which are just the right height for wheelchair access. Like all collections in the BBG, the garden beds are arranged by theme: plants with scented leaves, plants to touch, fragrant flowers and kitchen herbs.

The Children's Garden is the oldest of its kind in continuous operation, and more than 800 neighborhood children now garden there each year. They learn about nutrition and sustainable gardening. Other education programs reach 150,000 children on an annual basis, and adults can learn about planting, flower arranging and composting.

Like NYBG, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden also supports and conducts





cutting-edge research. One such study is the New York Metropolitan Flora project, a multi-year effort to document the flora in all counties within a 50-mile radius of New York City. The goal of the project is to preserve rare plants, assist in the planning of parks and greenways, repair degraded habitats and design home gardens with native plants.

While research plays a vital role in the mission of any classic botanical garden, the visitors come for the flowers and trees. No matter the time of year,

there is always something to see and do at the botanical gardens of New York City. The landscapes change with the seasons, making each visit a little different from the last. Whether you want to walk through the rainforest or meander through a rose garden, sit quietly beside a waterfall or dance at a Japanese festival, the botanical gardens of New York City will give you a glimpse into the habitats of the world, near and far.

Ellen Bidell is a citizen participation specialist in DEC's Albany Office.



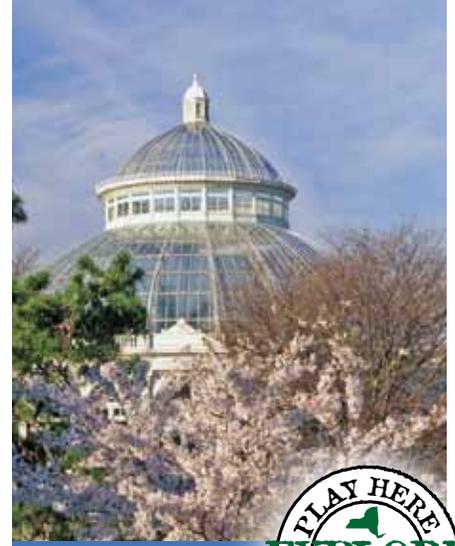
Neil Satterly

Rock Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden



Neil Satterly

Visitors come from miles around to enjoy the stunning flowers at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.



NY Botanical Garden



The New York Botanical Garden

The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Blvd. in the Bronx, close to Botanical Garden Station off the Metro-North Harlem local line. (It's just 20 minutes from Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan.)

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed most Mondays and Christmas Day.

For directions and current admission fees, visit the Garden's website at www.nybg.org/visit/directions.php.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is located at 900 Washington Avenue in Brooklyn.

Hours: Tuesday–Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday—Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Mondays.

For directions and current admission fees, visit the Garden's website at www.bbg.org/visit/directions.

Note: New York City is home to several botanical gardens. In addition to the two profiled here, visitors to the city may also enjoy seeing the Queens Botanical Garden, and the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden.