

BACK TO THE GARDEN

By Julie Catalano
Photography courtesy of
San Antonio Botanical Garden



a private gathering complete with wine pairing and a local chef can be arranged. “We will have various levels of price points for people interested in culinary activities,” says Brackman.



*In our modern mode of being perpetually plugged in
and charged up, spending some time communing
with nature sounds bloomin’ glorious.*

With its October 21-22, 2017 expansion grand opening that includes the addition of 8.5 acres, exciting new centers and a brand new entrance, the San Antonio Botanical Garden continues its mission of inspiring humans to experience the outdoors, specifically to walk and wander among the thousands of plants that grace its 38 acres.

A longtime beloved landmark, the newly-expanded Garden, says executive director Bob Brackman, “will tell our story in a much more prominent way, with features and amenities which I think all generations appreciate and enjoy.” Above all, he adds, “it will be a family destination, a place of beauty and aesthetics, and an example of conservation and stewardship.”

And a whole lot of fun. One of the most on-trend and surefire hits is the new 34-bed Culinary Garden with an outdoor CHEF Teaching Kitchen and Goldsburry Foundation Pavilion, offering chef-run interactive education programs in planting, harvesting, kitchen fundamentals and meal preparation for a true garden-to-table experience using on-site produce. “You’ll actually be able to pull it out of the ground, wash it off, and learn how to use it right there,” says Brackman. Or for the ultimate dinner party,

The new Hallmark Family Adventure Garden, including the Greehey Family Foundation “No Name Creek,” is 2.5 acres of nature play for all ages, featuring 15 themed galleries, water features and other interactive elements such as education stations and the Prickly Pear Pavilion outdoor classroom. “We have an eight-week course in arboriculture for arborists,” says Brackman, “or for newcomers who just moved here and might not know what to grow.” The Garden is open year-round, 9:00am-5:00pm (except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day) and guided group tours are available for an extra fee and require advance scheduling.

No features, gardens or structures were lost in the expansion, assures Brackman, but some were relocated. The Carriage House Bistro restaurant now takes up the entire first floor of what was the old entrance, and will resume service after the fall expansion opening. The gift shop was enlarged by half and moved to the dramatic new entrance — a live oak-lined avenue leading to the Welcome & Discovery Complex that encompasses new courtyards, the Halsell Welcome Building and the H-E-B Discovery Center. Beyond lies the Mays Family Display Garden bursting with year-round color.

The Garden is a haven for history lovers, too, with authentic examples of diverse Texas architecture for anyone who wants a peek into the past: Daniel J. Sullivan Carriage House (Richardsonian Romanesque style, San Antonio, 1896); Auld House (piñon pine log cabin, Real County, 1880s); Schumacher House (early German settlers, limestone and fachwerk, Fredericksburg, 1849); East Texas Log Cabin (hand-hewn post oak log cabin, Fayette County, 1850s); and South Texas Adobe (adobe palisado with split shake roof, South Texas Plains, 1880s).

Also unchanged is the nearly 30-year-old Lucille Halsell Conservatory, a visitor favorite with its futuristic towering glass structures designed by Emilio Ambasz, with Fern Room and Palm House. Fun fact: Only the iconic glass roofs protrude above ground; all offices and maintenance areas are underground. ♦

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