

A Self Guided Tour of the South Bay Botanic Garden

February 2013 version

Take this guided tour of the South Bay Botanic Garden.

Note: You will need a one-day parking pass to park outside of the garden.

As you enter the South Bay Botanic Garden, pass under the entrance arbor, turn left on the gravel road and look for the greenhouse on your left. Slide open the large door and walk into the:

Tropical House - Constructed in 2008, this greenhouse used to display tropical plants on tables. It now showcases over 50 different tropical plants growing along a waterfall, stream, and a disappearing pond. Overhead misting nozzles help to provide water and humidity to the plants. To see the waterfall in action, simply look for the timer switch located near the door and turn it on. A plant guide is also available in the mailbox located near the timer switch.

After leaving the Tropical House, proceed left up the road. Take a quick look on your left at the:

Vegetable Garden - This area shows how the use of raised beds can make vegetable gardening fun and easy. Each bed is filled with garden soil that has been amended frequently with manure, compost, and used potting soil. This is far superior to gardening in the native hard clay soil we have at the South Bay Botanic Garden. The garden is planted by the students in the basic introductory horticulture class entitled "Plant and Horticultural Science". Located just behind the garden is a small hydroponic house that provides an alternative to the growing of vegetables outdoors.

While leaving the Vegetable Garden, you might notice on the green potting shed a sample of:

Vertical Gardening - Vertical gardening is becoming more and more popular, especially in urban settings that have little available land. Vegetables or ornamental plants can be grown in the small cells that make up the hanging planter. Also, these vertical planters can provide shade to sun-facing walls and reduce heat buildup, thereby reducing utility bills.

After passing the small green potting shed, a small path shoots off the gravel road to the left and enters the:

Compost Demonstration Area - this area is designed to showcase different composting methods and devices. These devices are perfect for home composting of garden refuse, kitchen wastes, and other appropriate compostable materials. Benches are installed to allow for outdoor composting workshops.

Return back to the road and follow the gravel road as it bends to the right. At this point is planted the South Bay Botanic Garden's

Cacti and Succulent Collection - Over 100 different cacti and succulents are planted here. Pick up a guide in the mailbox and use the numbered tags to help you identify your favorites. Cacti and succulents can be very addicting. Once you take a look at the vast variety of foliage shapes, textures, and colors, you might find yourself "hooked". And, every once and while, these plants can surprise you with some fantastic blooms. What better way to rid yourself of water-thirsty plants and provide your landscape with easy-to-care-for specimens!

After you get past the 100th numbered succulent, turn left under the arbor and just a few feet past this entrance you will see a garden path that takes you to the right and into the

California Native Garden - Just renovated in December 2010, this garden groups California Native Plants by the regions and the micro-climates in which they grow. Visit this garden regularly to get a glimpse of just how attractive natives can be depending on the season in which they are observed. Add to that their lower water needs, and you can see why there is a big move to replace imported plants with our own California beauties.

After meandering around the California Native Garden, find the path that takes you across the flagstone walk and enter the small gate into

Monocot Meadow – Finished in 2012, this garden showcases the vast variety of plants in the monocot (grass) family. Ornamental grasses in this garden can make excellent ground covers, accent plants, and lawn replacements.

Exit Monocot Meadow at the opposite end of where you entered (by the flagstone drinking fountain and turn right at the concrete sidewalk. You may want to pause here and observe the unusual...

Bunya-Bunya Tree - Grab a drink of water at the nearby fountain and admire this unusual tree that comes from Queensland, Australia. With sharp-pointed leaf tips and more serious "spines" along the trunk, you definitely won't want to get too close to this tree. Add to it the large cones that come crashing down (which can weigh 10 pounds or more!), and you best put on a hard-hat! This stately tree (*Araucaria bidwillii*) is best reserved for larger lots, open areas, and arboretums!

After admiring this tree, head just a few feet up the sidewalk and take a look at the beginning of the South Bay Botanic Garden collection of

Rare and Exotic Fruiting Plants - Our ever-growing collection of rare, unusual, and exotic fruit trees is perfect for the various micro-climates you find in and around San Diego County. Sure, some of these plants need protection from frost but most homeowners can find perfect niche-climates around their home where they can grow most of the plants seen in our collection. We are very thankful to the San Diego Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Society for donating, pruning, and naming many of the species in our collection. The collection also showcases the different ways in which trees can be pruned to facilitate large fruits and to fit into tight garden areas.

Once you have past the banana collection, continue along the sidewalk until it begins to make a sharp right turn. On your right is a new garden collection featuring:

Dry Feet Garden or Plants that need Excellent Drainage - Just behind the deck is a sloping garden filled with fast-draining decomposed granite soil. Many of our local plants will only do well with rapid drainage and no water "standing" around their roots. This area will showcase these plants that you often find in our higher elevations around San Diego County. This area is irrigated by a drip system and you can see the typical components of a drip system located just to the right of this garden.

Continue along the concrete sidewalk until it forks. Take the right fork. On your left are a variety of different or "not so common" trees and shrubs you might consider for your garden. Once the concrete sidewalk returns to the gravel road, turn left. After a few paces, you will come upon the

Formal and Rose Garden - This garden reflects a more organized, stately appearance. With clipped boxwood hedges, small topiary India hawthorne trees and formal paths, it is a great example of gardens often found in Europe. Our rose collection is growing inside these border hedges, featuring 16 different rose varieties.

After observing this garden, head towards the rear of the Formal and Rose Garden and find the concrete sidewalk and turn right. As you continue along this sidewalk, look for more plants of the Rare and Exotic Fruiting type. These are located along the sidewalk and around and behind the Gazebo. As the walk passes by the Gazebo, step about 10 paces away so you can observe the gazebo and see the

Green Roof Garden: this gazebo's roof is planted with succulents and illustrates a method to transform barren hot roofs into a more sustainable entity by cooling the rooftops and providing plants which create oxygen and trap dust and other pollutants. Green roofs in heavily populated urban environments can drastically reduce the heat and pollution caused by bare roof tops.

Continue on the sidewalk and walk to the right of the gazebo and you should hear the sound of water. You are now at our

Pond and Stream - Water features add beauty, soft and pleasing sounds, and wildlife to your garden. They can be a bold statement or a more subtle focal point. The proper mixture of fish and water plants can make for a somewhat self-maintaining pond that brings in birds, dragonflies, and other wildlife that is often pushed out of urban environments. Relax on the deck and enjoy the garden surroundings!

Continue along the concrete sidewalk and take some time to see some different trees planted on your right. These include Atlas Cedars (*Cedrus atlantica*), a Mulberry tree (*Morus alba*), a Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), a Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*), a Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), and - right where the sidewalk begins to turn right - a Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*). As you make the right turn of the sidewalk, take a look at the:

Putting Green - This green is used for the purpose of training our students majoring in the Golf and Sports Turf Management field. The grass is a new trial for the San Diego area, using a turf called Sea Spray Paspalum. This grass is more salt-tolerant and more drought tolerant than traditional bent grass and annual bluegrass putting greens now being used in San Diego. If it succeeds in being used on golf courses, then less water will be needed and it will even tolerate reclaimed water from treatment plants.

Once past the putting green, turn right on the gravel road. On your right coming up are the:

Ground Cover Demonstration Plots - Check out this area to find ground covers suitable to your landscape. You can choose a ground cover to fill in a large slope, to provide colorful flowers and foliage, or to grow between stepping stones. Pick up a guide in the mailbox to get more information about each one

After you have observed the Ground Cover Plots, continue up the gravel road until you reach a small brick planter on your left. Inside that planter is a very impressive:

Floss Silk Tree - Another fantastic tree of the many growing in the South Bay Botanic Garden. This tree (*Chorisia speciosa*) comes from Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. The tree has many great features: spiny trunks and branches, loads of pink "hibiscus-like" blooms in September, and unusual 'avocado-shaped' fruits in winter that split open and provide white, silky fibers used to stuff pillows in its native regions.

Continue on the sidewalk located next to the brick planter and pass the wood deck on your right. Turn left where the deck ends and head towards the central patio area. On your left is the

Undersea Succulent Garden: planted in December of 2012, this garden transformed a water-wasting fountain feature into a replica of plants and coral found in an undersea environment. A fun and whimsical garden just about anyone could create.

Continue down the sidewalk to the main central patio and observe a Ginkgo Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) in the square brick planter, and the huge over-story tree called a Southern Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*). Pass under this oak back to the gravel road and turn left down the road. After passing by the large storage building on your right, look for an entrance to a lawn that passes under a vine-covered arbor. Head into the

Gathering Spot - Dedicated to Dr. Bill Nelson (formally of Pacific Tree Farms) for his donation of many trees to this garden and many other San Diego landscapes, this area is used to hold both campus and South Bay Botanic Garden events. You might also notice a traditional orchard which grows stone fruits, apples, pears, and figs. This area is also used to train students in the proper techniques in fruit tree pruning.

Congratulations, you have finished the loop of the South Bay Botanic Garden. Head up the gravel path to return to the entrance arbor or (if the double-chain link gates are open) you can turn right and exit through them.

Thanks for visiting the **South Bay Botanic Garden @ Southwestern College**.