

Enjoy Spring - Virtually Visit Gardens



It's now May and we continue to be at home doing our part to keep ourselves and others safe from the ongoing, serious threats from COVID-19. The world is warming up outside. The spring flowers are blooming. The trees are budding. The birds are singing to welcome the season and, with less traffic, we can all easily hear them this year.

The seasonal flowers and trees have all started to bloom.



Even though you have grown accustomed to your armchair, there are virtual ways to enjoy this spring season. There are wonderful gardens - both nearby and around the world to enjoy.

Right here in NEW YORK

Our area is fortunate to have spectacular gardens that you can visit virtually.



You can visit the **New York Botanical Garden**. Their website has several virtual walks through different parts of the garden that change as plantings come into bloom. In June be sure to check and visit the rose garden: <https://www.nybg.org/read-watch/>

You may have missed the spectacular cherry blossom walkways at the **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** but you can see them on their website and there is more to see as the season progresses. Take a look at: <https://www.bbg.org/>

And don't forget **Central Park**. This link literally takes you on a walk through the highlights of the park. It was filmed in summer but is still fun and summer will be here very soon: <https://www.youvisit.com/tour/centralpark>

You can also broaden your horizons and go further by traveling virtually to see gardens around the world. Europeans love gardens and each country has their own unique style. Here are just a few interesting ones, but there are even more if you search further.

GREAT BRITAIN

Our friends across the pond in Great Britain have always had green thumbs and they have spectacular public gardens. Here are just two:

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in Richmond outside of London: The garden was formally started in 1759 by the parents of George III around Kew Palace, a royal summer residence. The garden's famous Victorian glass houses were built in the early 19th century. Its 300+ acres are continually evolving and changing.



There's easy access to Kew Gardens from central London by rail to the Kew Bridge Rail Station then a 10-minute walk to Elizabeth Gate. There are also several bus routes or you can travel by Tube to Victoria Gate. When I visited, I took a boat up the Thames to the garden – a lovely ride with views of the city along the way. And then I enjoyed a picnic lunch in the gardens.

- Visit their web site for a virtual visit of the garden's highlights:
<https://www.kew.org/about-us/virtual-kew-wakehurst>
- A quick view of gardens can be found on this site:
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1084/video/>

Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley in Surrey, England is another garden noted for its beds of seasonal flowers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2WealAPZHU>

You can go further on your garden tour - other parts of Europe also have beautiful, unique gardens:

FRANCE

- **Giverny:** Visit the gardens at Giverny where Claude Monet lived and painted. We all know his series of water lilies. Here was his inspiration:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE_2KXdMcac

I visited the gardens in June, when the flower beds were overflowing with Iris, daisies, and the roses were blooming. The arbors around the house were dripping with wisteria. Across the road the ponds were filled with blooming lilies. How did Monet ever find the time to paint when surrounded by all of this!

- **Versailles:** Don't forget the formal French gardens at Versailles. These gardens are the complete opposite of the rambling, overflowing seasonal flowerbeds at Giverny. These formal French gardens were begun in 1661 when Louis XIV hired Andre Le Notre to design his gardens. The initial project took over 40 years and has been ongoing ever since. Today the gardens at Versailles are a UNESCO World Heritage site where you can enjoy the Grand Canal, the parterres with sculptures and fountains located throughout the garden and forest areas. <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/cwWhTPHE38uq4g>



This is just one of many fountains looking toward the Grand Canal. Not a bad view from the back porch!

I've visited Versailles in the spring, in the summer when it's overflowing with day visitors and tourists, and in winter when you have it mostly to yourself. It's beautiful and grand in any season. In the warm weather, generally April – November, be sure to check the schedule for the times when the fountains “perform” their musical fountain shows. There are also evening “performances.”

And finally, how could we leave this one out? Do you know where it is?



THE NETHERLANDS

This is just one spectacular look at Keukenhof Gardens outside of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. This garden was established in 1949 by a consortium of bulb growers and flower exporters to showcase their products and support the export industry. The gardens opened to the public in 1950. Keukenhof opens each spring for 8 weeks from mid-March to mid-May.

The colors and flowerbed arrangements are amazing and there are 79 acres to enjoy filled with walks and with cafes along the way. The last time I was at Keukenhof it was April and there was a hale storm that swept through the gardens with heavy wind and rain. The stones were the size of quarters and bounced off the sidewalks and buildings. However, the acres of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths didn't seem to mind at all and bounced right back up for me to enjoy them. And there was hot Dutch chocolate to enjoy at the cafes. The area around Keukenhof is one of the areas where the bulbs are grown. If

you wander the side roads, you are driving through fields of tulips all in colorful rows. Hopefully you'll get there before the flower heads are cut off so the bulbs can be harvested.

Enjoy your visits. Hope you get some ideas for your own gardens and let's all hope that we can visit in person in the seasons ahead.

Books to Help Plan Your Own Garden

Look for these titles and others with the call number 636 for more titles on planning and maintaining flower and vegetable gardens.

