



Sensory Tip Sheet: Visiting the U.S. Botanic Garden



Welcome to the U.S. Botanic Garden!

We look forward to your visit. The U.S. Botanic Garden is a living plant museum. We invite you to return again and again to watch the Garden grow and change through the seasons and explore our ever-changing exhibits.

Best Times to Visit

If you are looking for a quieter time to visit, the months of January to early March and mid-July to early September tend to be the least crowded. Early and late afternoon times also tend to be less busy. Please exercise caution when visiting during the summer months due to extreme heat. There are several air-conditioned spaces within the indoor Conservatory.

Accessible pathways

During higher visitation days (especially weekends), congestion of pathways and exhibit spaces is a frequent occurrence.

- Elevator: There is an elevator on the east side of the Tropics house providing access to the canopy walk.

Sensory Bags

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and/or sensory processing disorders (SPD) experience difficulty with everyday sensory stimulation; this can be related to noise, touch, taste textures or a variety of sensitivities.

Sensory bags are available to borrow from the visitor information desk with a valid driver's license or government-issued picture identification card. Items include noise-reducing headphones, weighted lap blankets, and a selection of fidgets to help ease sensory stimulation. These resources are also available for all public programs. The ID will be returned upon return of the sensory bag.

Rest Areas

- There are benches located throughout the indoor Conservatory to take a break from your visit.
- Seasonal tables, chairs and benches are located outdoors on the Garden terraces and in the Gated Outdoor Gardens and Bartholdi Fountain and Gardens.

Restrooms & Changing Tables

Accessible restrooms and infant-size changing tables are located in the south lobby, adjacent to the World Deserts and Medicinal Plant houses. It can take a few additional minutes, especially on high visitation days, to travel to the restrooms from any location within the Conservatory. Please allow ample time for navigation to the south lobby.

- There are **automatic** flushing toilets, sinks, soap dispensers and hand dryers.



Sensory Tip Sheet: Garden Environment Overview



Conservatory Entrance:

- The main entrance to the indoor Conservatory is located under the American flag.
- There is a very large ceiling fan that facilitates the movement of air.
- Visitors *are not* subjected to a physical security screening.

Living Plant Collection:

- You might find on occasion plants that have slightly extended into the visitor pathway. Especially on crowded days, you may experience the sensation of a plant brushing up against an arm or leg.
- We encourage visitors to “look with their eyes” as these plants comprise our documented museum collection. However, please communicate with a staff member if you feel that tactile exploration would enrich the experience and if possible, we will work to accommodate these requests.

Allergens & Scent

Depending on what might be in bloom, or recent gardening activities, visitors will encounter many scents during their visit to our living plant museum. During the holiday display, the structural frame for the East Gallery Railway is constructed from reclaimed cedar planks and retains a distinct odor throughout the holiday show.

Ambient noise

Throughout the Garden, both indoors and out, various ambient noise exists due to automated nature sounds, high-velocity ceiling fans, plant misters, waterfalls, fountains, sliding doors, visitor conversation, etc..

Animals

- Small rodents (e.g., mice) and some larger insects (e.g., roaches) occasionally take up residence in the Garden and venture out into public areas. They do not pose any harm.
- Canine patrols: United States Capitol Police conduct routine canine patrols of the Conservatory.

Automatic sliding doors

In order to control for plant temperature requirements and allow for ease of movement for visitors throughout the Conservatory, there are automatic sliding doors between plant houses. These doors have built-in motion detectors which will respond to movement within close proximity of the sensor.



Sensory Tip Sheet: Garden Environment Overview (continued)



Indoor Temperature

As you move through the Conservatory, noticeable temperature shifts occur due to the environmental needs of the plant collection.

Light

Visitors may experience fluctuations in natural light levels throughout the Conservatory due to outdoor weather conditions, Conservatory shades, or, plant growth overhead.

Misters

Water misters can be found throughout the Conservatory and intermittently turn on and spray water into the atmosphere, providing an important resource for the plants. Visitors may experience feeling moist when exploring a plant house when the misters are turned on.

Terrain

As you explore the outdoor gardens, you will experience changes in the terrain depending on where you choose to explore - flagstone paths, loose gravel, grass.

Water

Use caution when crossing wet pathways and bridges. Please refrain from entering areas of water.

- Garden Court: Active fountains along both east and west sides of the space.
- Tropics: Tiered waterfall
- Mediterranean: Small sculptural fountain and surrounding pool
- Orchids: Small waterfall feature
- Hawaii: Large natural waterfall feature
- Garden Primeval: Small waterfall and standing pool featuring aquatic plants
- Gated outdoor gardens - First Ladies Water Garden



Sensory Tip Sheet: Additional Visitor Services and Onsite Resources



Assisted Listening Devices

Assisted Listening Devices (headsets and receivers) are available upon request from a member of the visitor service team for all guided tours and public programs. The headsets are compatible with hearing aids.

Audio Tour

The Garden's audio tour is accessible on mobile phone.

Color Blind Glasses

Color blind glasses are available to borrow from the visitor information desk with a valid driver's license or government-issued picture identification card. These glasses are engineered to give those with color blindness the ability to see more of the broad spectrum of bright color. Outdoor and indoor lenses are available to optimize your experience. Youth sizes are also available. The ID will be returned upon return of the glasses.

Drinking Fountains and Bottle Refill

Drinking fountains and a water bottle refill station are located in the south of the indoor Conservatory near the restrooms.

Sign Language Interpretation

In cooperation with the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services, the U.S. Botanic Garden offers sign language interpretation upon request. If possible, please allow at least 5 business days to schedule an interpreter.

Transcription (Online programs)

Real-time speech-to-text transcription is available for online programming. This service is ideal for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing communities as well as people with autism, auditory processing disorders, and other communication needs.

Visitor Guides

The Garden's Map and Visitor Guide is available in nine languages and may be picked up at the front desk or downloaded as a PDF here: English, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. Braille and large print guides are available at the front desk upon request and a PDF version of the large print guide may be downloaded here.



Sensory Tip Sheet: Additional Visitor Services and Onsite Resources (cont.)



Visitor Information Services

Upon arrival, please feel free to stop at our visitor information area where trained staff and volunteers can provide information and updates on the daily schedule and calendar of events. The Garden is a living collection and as such changes in displays and navigation may occasionally occur. The Garden team is here to help you plan your onsite visit to ensure a successful museum experience.

Wheelchairs

The Garden loans wheelchairs to our visitors as a courtesy on a first-come, first-serve basis. A valid driver's license or government-issued picture identification card is needed to borrow a wheelchair and will be returned upon the return of the wheelchair. Wheelchairs are to remain on U.S. Botanic Garden property.