





Travel Buds

Eight impressive gardens in Upstate New York



BY ALLISON KENIEN

May and June mean Upstate is blooming and there's so much to see. Our region is packed with gardens that offer treasures for every visitor. From the historic blooms of Fort Ticonderoga to Buffalo's elegant glasshouse, each garden offers a truly different experience. We're highlighting eight stand-out gardens within driving distance. We hope you will head outside and enjoy the color, fragrance and beauty of the season.



PHOTOS BY JAY POTTER/CORNELL UNIVERSITY, BOB GLEN, N. SCOTT TRIMBLE, BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY BOTANICAL GARDENS, GLENN COIN

Left, overlooking the Herb Garden, arranged in 17 different themed beds at Cornell Botanic Gardens.



ROOT GLEN

Calling all peony lovers! Many of the varieties that we enjoy today were first hybridized at Hamilton College and are on display at the Root Glen in Clinton.

This garden traces back to 1850 when Oren Root purchased the land and adjoining house. Root and his wife filled the space with trees, shrubs and flowers. Root's son, Elihu, inherited the house and found time to help oversee care of the glen despite his work serving as Secretary of War, Secretary of State, U.S. Senator and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

He eventually passed the property to his son, Edward, and daughter-in-law, Grace, who were responsible for much of the garden's development that public visitors enjoy today.

Edward was an art professor at Hamilton College and he became interested in hybridizing plants. For mentorship, he turned to his friend and fellow professor Arthur Percy Saunders, whose work in hybridizing peonies would lead him to be considered the "father of the modern peony." There are

as many as 150 Saunders-named peonies that exist today, according to Lois Girton, director of the American Peony Society, and many of them are on display near the entrance to the Root Glen. The peonies bloom each spring, typically reaching their peak in late May or early June.

In addition to peonies, Hamilton College has cultivated other impressive flowers, plants and trees in its globally accredited arboretum. It boasts more than 2,700 tagged shrubs and trees, including New York state's largest Norway spruce.

Hamilton College strives to keep Root Glen captivating all year, and September through April, the college offers a free Saturday Speaker Series covering practical topics.

Recent sessions included growing and arranging cut-flowers, creating a landscape master plan and using native plants in your garden.

The college invites anyone to attend the sessions and explore the glen.

 *Root Glen, Hamilton College, 6909 College Hill Rd., Clinton, 315-859-4892, hamilton.edu/arboretum*



SONNENBERG GARDENS & MANSION STATE HISTORIC PARK

Sonnenberg Gardens transports visitors back to an extravagant time in American landscape design. Originally owned by Frederick Ferris Thompson and Mary Clark Thompson, the grounds were built during the Cottage Place Era when wealthy Americans invested in elaborate gardens inspired by European estates.

The property has nine formal gardens and an impressive collection of statues dating back to ancient times (think fourth century). Each formal garden is distinct, creating a wonderland to be explored one site at a time.

Looking out from the house, visitors can see the Italian Garden with a 16th-century Italian well-head and a Fountain of Hercules.

Flowers are laid out in a Victorian carpet bed-style, which

forms the flowers into identifiable shapes. The Italian Garden has four beds that are designed to resemble fleurs-de-lis.

Three intimate gardens also near the mansion were designed with particular colors and blooms in mind: a Blue & White Garden, a Pansy Garden and a silver-and-white Moonlight Garden.

By walking a short distance from the mansion, visitors can find a Roman bath that featured a boiler-warmed swimming pool, a true novelty in the early 1900s. There is also a Japanese Tea Garden, the first to be installed at a private American residence, and an aviary that once housed 216 different species of birds.

Visit this estate to uncover more delights including a rose garden, “secret garden,” greenhouse and Victorian rockery.

 *Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion State Historic Park, 250 Gibson St., Canandaigua, 585-394-4922, sonnenberg.org*



CUTLER BOTANIC GARDEN

Cutler Botanic Garden in Binghamton is not just a beautiful space. It's also a site for learning and development of horticultural skills.

Visitors can pick up tips and information related to propagation, composting, conservation, native plants, landscape design, food gardening, pest management and more. Cutler hosts workshops to provide practical information that homeowners and eco-conscious people can use in their everyday lives.

Workshops aside, just a walk through the grounds is an

enriching experience with 2,000 annual flowers throughout the property. The true luminaries of the space are the 100 shrub rose varieties and 300 daylily varieties. Beyond the impressive vegetation, Cutler has distinctive hardscapes and structures that are open to the public, including a brand-new hardscape labyrinth.

This spring, Cutler will host a special event to celebrate World Labyrinth Day on May 4. Find details about the spring plant sale, a Shakespearean festival and a full list of events and educational brochures on the Cutler website.

 *Cutler Botanic Garden, 840 Upper Front St., Binghamton, 607-584-5016, ccebroomecounty.com/gardening/cutler-botanic-gardens*



LANDIS ARBORETUM

Harmony and balance are the vibe at Landis Arboretum where visitors enjoy the peaceful refuge of old-growth forests in the scenic Schoharie Valley.


Arboretum founder Fred Lape began laying the groundwork for the current space when he challenged himself to grow every species of woody plant that could survive on his family farm in Esperance. Captivated by his project, Lape's friends contributed financially, with the biggest gift offered by George Landis, a professor and plant collector who left his full estate to Lape. Thanks to Landis' generous contribution, the arboretum was officially established in 1951.

While Lape did not manage to collect every woody plant species that could possibly survive at the farm, the arboretum does contain nearly every native New York tree, shrub and vine.

Beyond New York state vegetation, there are collections of ornamental trees, towering oaks, vibrant conifers and an historic Dawn Redwood tree. This tree was considered extinct until it was rediscovered in China in the 1940s. A limited number of seeds were distributed in the United States at that time. One of the seeds was given to Lape and now visitors can see the majestic redwood in the arboretum.

In addition to the hundreds of labeled trees and shrubs, the grounds offer walking trails, wetlands, a meditation garden and bird watching opportunities.



 *Landis Arboretum, 174 Lape Rd., Esperance,
518-875-6935, landisarboretum.org*



HIGHLAND PARK

Tourists travel from afar to see the lilacs in Rochester's Highland Park, and when they arrive, they are likely to realize that this garden has much more to offer than its famous flowers.

One of the oldest public arboretums in the United States, Highland Park grew out of 20 acres of land that nursery owners and developers George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry donated to the City of Rochester. They wanted to share the beauty of the countryside with city residents, a goal that was achieved when "father of landscape architecture" Frederick Law Olmstead was commissioned to be the designer.

Soon after the park's inception, horticulturalists introduced lilacs and cultivated a collection that grew to be one of the largest in the world. Today, more than 500 varieties are represented across approximately 1,200 lilac shrubs. The

fragrant flower is celebrated annually at the Rochester Lilac Festival, which will be held May 10-19 this year.

While lilacs tend to steal the show, there is much more to experience at Highland Park. In late May and early June, 700 rhododendrons bloom to full glory. During the fall months, a rainbow of autumnal colors is formed by Japanese maple leaves that turn vibrant shades of red, gold, purple and bronze. The pinetum (py-NEE-tum) contains around 300 conifers and shrubs (not all of which are evergreen), and the Lambertson Conservatory has a stunning showcase of biomes with desert plants and rainforest flowers. A playground of reclaimed wood gives kids and adults alike a chance to physically interact with the arboretum by climbing massive log structures and balance beams.

 *Highland Park, 180 Reservoir Ave., Rochester, 585-753-7270, highlandparkconservancy.org*



BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY BOTANICAL GARDEN

Within a city known for snow, there's an oasis waiting to dazzle visitors with warm temperatures and exotic plants. Located in Buffalo's South Park, the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Garden is an impressive glasshouse opened in 1900 and modeled after the Crystal Palace in England. When it was built, it was the third largest greenhouse in the country.

The conservatory features a massive glass dome above a collection of palms and tropical plants. Stretching out from that central greenhouse, additional exhibits showcase horticultural specimens from deserts, rainforests and other environments.

The garden is filled with plants from around the world, but the specialty collections are a major source of pride for

the garden staff. These treasures include orchids, bonsai, corpse plants and a koi pond, and they require extensive skill and resources to cultivate.

When you visit, follow the self-guided tour that covers the indoor and outdoor exhibits. You may also want to see the two child-friendly gardens or bask in the calm of the meditative Peace Garden.

This summer, the conservatory will burst with color for a special "Flora Spectra" event. From June 1 through August 5, horticulturalists will use the glasshouse as their canvas and plants as their paint to create a vibrant celebration. Be sure to look for arrangement techniques like color blocking, dimension building, texture variation and patterning that aim to make you feel emotions and excitement.



Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Garden; 2655 South Park Ave., Buffalo, 716-827-1584, buffalogardens.com

PHOTOS BY N. SCOTT TRIMBLE, BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY BOTANICAL GARDEN



CORNELL BOTANIC GARDENS


With cultivated gardens, an arboretum and natural areas, Cornell Botanic Gardens stewards 3,700 acres. No need to feel overwhelmed by the size, though. Simply start your visit at the Nevin Welcome Center and from there peruse the nearby collections.

In the 35 acres surrounding the welcome center, you can find exhibits of flowers, groundcovers, ornamental grasses, shrubs, vegetables and more. The herb garden is a must-see display with more than 500 species. Many are used for practical purposes like wellness, fragrance and cooking.

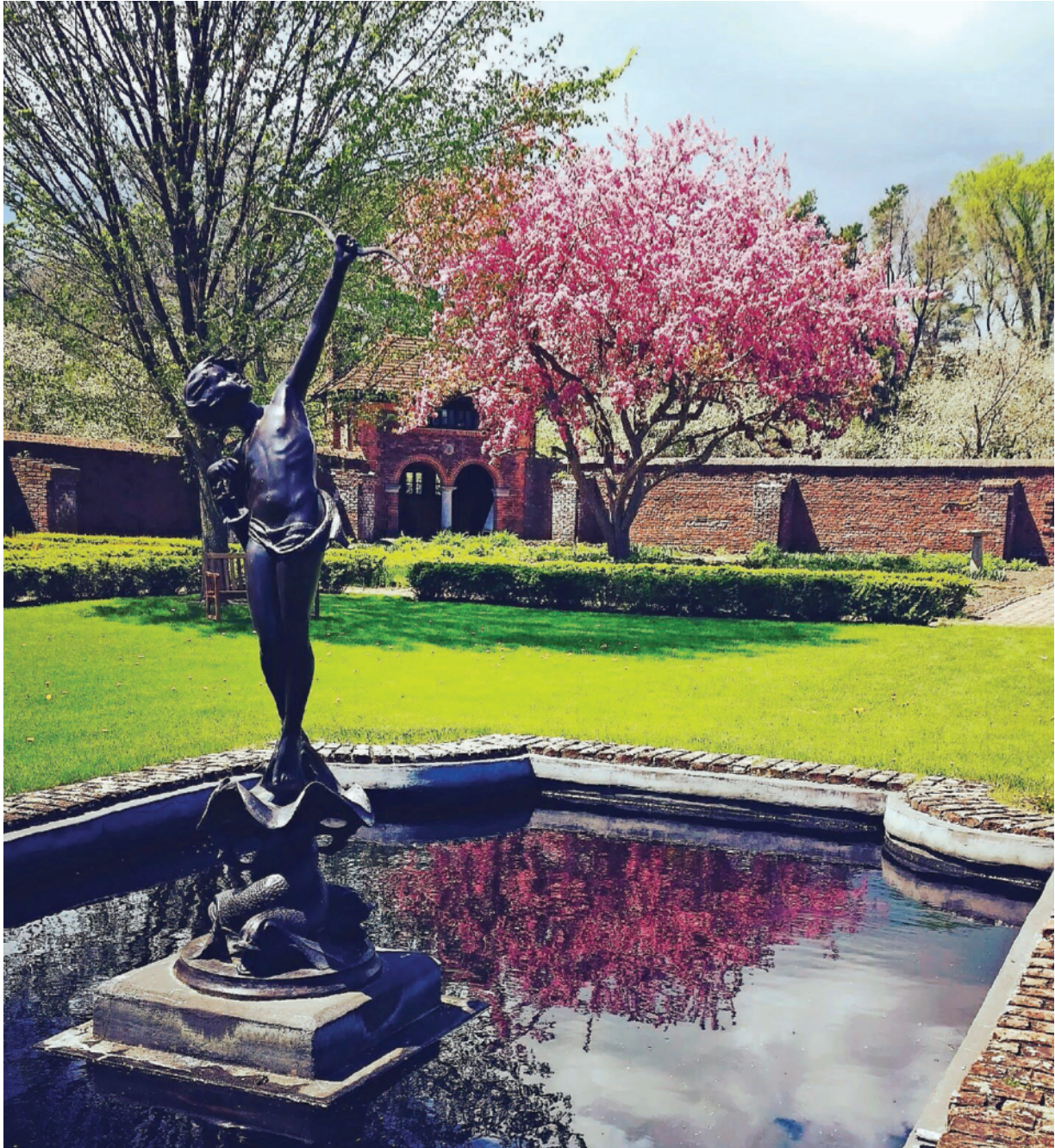
Spring is a popular time to visit the Comstock Knoll and the Mundy Wildflower Garden. On the knoll find a profusion of hues from rhododendrons and azaleas, and in the wildflower garden more than 600 varieties bloom for a brief time in May.

It's also the perfect time to visit the F.R. Newman Arboretum to see the blooms of redbuds, serviceberries, cherries, crabapples, magnolias, viburnums and Japanese primroses.

Don't forget to explore the many natural areas that are stewarded by Cornell Botanic Gardens, including the Cascadilla Gorge, Fall Creek Gorge and Beebe Lake.

 *Cornell Botanic Gardens, 124 Comstock Knoll Dr., Ithaca, 607-255-2400, cornellbotanicgardens.org*






KING'S GARDEN AT FORT TICONDEROGA

If you love history and gardens, make your way to King's Garden at Fort Ticonderoga on the shore of Lake Champlain. One of the oldest gardens in North America, King's Garden was planted during the French occupation of the fort in the 18th century. For the French, and then subsequently the British and American armies, the garden's purpose was to provide vegetables to feed the troops. Now visitors can tour the grounds to learn about the agricultural practices that sustained the soldiers while enjoying the heritage flowers that commemorate the colonial period of American history.

The fort is open from May through October and the daily garden tours kick off with a fife-and-drum march from the fort to the garden. If you'd like to take home a bit of history, plan your trip for June 8 when you can purchase the garden's flowers or dig your own selection with guidance from the fort's staff. If you visit in the fall, you can pick apples from the orchard planted by the Pell family, who purchased and restored the fort in the 19th century. Along with these garden events, there are weapon demonstrations, battle reenactments and other educational activities listed on the website.

 *King's Garden at Fort Ticonderoga, 102 Fort Ti Rd., Ticonderoga, 518-585-2821, fortticonderoga.org*