Walt Disney World News

The Land at Epcot Mixes Science with Entertainment Inside Experimental Greenhouses to Grow One-of-a-Kind Plants

Be on the look-out for Mickey Mouse-shaped pumpkins, cucumbers and more!

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Behind the brightly colored, mosaic façade of The Land pavilion at Epcot, greenhouse magic takes place. Horticulture and entertainment blend to create some of the most visually interesting fruits and vegetables and innovative cultivation methods found under one roof anywhere in the world.

From Mickey Mouse-shaped food and sweet potatoes grown on "trees" to Cinderella pumpkins and plants that thrive above a fish tank, food crops cultivated by the Epcot Science team give guests aboard the Living with the Land boat-ride attraction in The Land a peek at something they can't view anywhere else. The 14-minute experience showcases the team's research and work inside The Land's four greenhouses. Guests also can venture "behind the seeds" on a unique greenhouse tour.

Some of the horticulture highlights:

Plants that thrive on water from a fish tank: The integrated aquaculture system is a new show element added to the Creative Greenhouse after years of research and preparation. In this innovative cultivation method, hydroponic crops—that's crops grown without soil—are grown above a re-circulating aquaculture system populated by fish. The plants' roots are bathed by the nutrient-enriched water from the fish tank. The water is cycled through a series of filters before it is circulated through the plants and returned eventually back into the fish tank.

Above-ground sweet potato production: Sweet potatoes usually are grown in the ground, but The Land Science team is developing a novel, re-circulating system that allows them to grow sweet potatoes on a "tree" without soil. By using this method, a sweet potato plant can produce more potatoes that can be harvested continuously instead of once as in the traditional method.

Mickey Mouse-shaped pumpkins and cucumbers: Pumpkins are produced and harvested year round at The Land, and Mickey Mouse-shaped pumpkins have quickly become a guest favorite. Some weigh nearly 100 pounds and are harvested and placed inside the greenhouses for guest viewing. Also featured: the Cinderella pumpkin, named for the shape it shares with Cinderella's famous coach.

The Land Science team also developed a special, elongated mold that is placed around a young cucumber. As it grows, the vegetable forms the familiar shape of Mickey's silhouette. The cucumbers are harvested and served atop salads at Walt Disney World Resort.

Thousands of tomatoes from one tree: A "tomato tree" growing inside the theme park's experimental greenhouses is the only one of its kind in the United States. The plant yields thousands of golf ball-sized tomatoes from a single vine which are harvested and served at Walt Disney World Resort. This plant's predecessor produced a world-record harvest of more than 32,194 tomatoes with a total weight of more than 1,151 pounds.

Similar in concept to the "tomato tree," The Land's "cucumber tree" produced 2,563 individual fruits. That's equal to 2,078 pounds of harvested cucumbers – a record from a single plant in one year. Today, a new plant just like it is

thriving in the greenhouse.

Guests on the Living with the Land attraction also see:

The Tropics Greenhouse, growing crops native to Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and the southern United States. Pineapple, dragon fruit, papaya, jackfruit, coffee, cacao, bananas and a 59-foot peach palm flourish under a 60-foot dome.

The Aquacell, showcasing aquatic animals including alligators, sturgeon, catfish, tilapia, hybrid bass and American eel.

The Temperate Greenhouse, featuring interesting and unique agricultural crops and vegetables, like nine-pound lemon, giant winter melon, fragrant cassabanana, tasty Brussels sprout, all familiar cotton, sunflower and more.

The Production Greenhouse, where tons of tomatoes, peppers, lettuce and other vegetables are grown for use in The Land's Sunshine Seasons restaurant and other Epcot restaurants. The Land scientists are constantly working to develop newer growing systems that are kinder to the environment and improve productivity.

The Creative Greenhouse, which showcases imaginative ways to grow crops – using fish water, hanging in the air, even on a space station. USDA scientists currently are working at The Land to develop dwarf pear trees for greater production efficiency.

Behind the Seeds greenhouse tour: Guests who want to get an even closer look can take the Behind the Seeds greenhouse tour, a one-hour journey of discovery during which they travel through the greenhouses, fish farm and laboratories at The Land. Guests can explore the advanced—and often experimental—plant-growing techniques, take a closer look at fascinating crops from around the globe, learn the secrets of the latest innovations, and gather ideas from leading-edge scientists that they can try in their own garden. Tour highlights can include tasting produce grown in The Land, taking an herb and spice challenge, feeding fish at the fish farm or releasing ladybugs.

Cost is $16 for guests ages 10 and over, and $12 for guests ages 3-9. Same-day reservations may be made at the tour desk to the left of the Soarin' entrance or guests may book a tour 90 days in advance by calling 407/WDW-TOUR (407/939-8687).

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