Walt Disney World News

# Epcot World Showcase Gardens Celebrate Flora of Many Nations

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — From the seasonal explosion of the Canada pavilion's floral displays to the ancient beauty of China's reflective ponds and water lilies, the gardens of Epcot are among the most extensive at Walt Disney World Resort. In all 11 nations of World Showcase, the gardens set the stage to help tell each country's "story" and provide continuity and transition from one nation to the next. This showplace of themed landscapes is maintained by a horticulture staff of more than 50.

Many flowers, trees and shrubs are individually labeled, and a casual walk around World Showcase reveals a colorful landscape of beauty as guests also discover the culture, cuisine and celebrations of 11 nations.

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***Mexico***

Landscaping of the Mexico pavilion represents two regions of the country: the jungle and the desert. Facing the Mayan temple, you see plants and flowers typical of the jungle surrounding the building. This section of the Mexico pavilion, with its several varieties of palm trees, is the most tropical area represented at Epcot. One of the most notable plants in this area is the floss silk tree, located near the steps to the left of the temple. These showy trees present springtime blossoms and, in other seasons, an odd-shaped fruit hanging from its bare branches.

Epcot gardeners take great care to make this landscape look "unmaintained" as if it were a genuine jungle. "We wanted to steer clear of creating a 'perfect' landscape and use irregular spots of colorful flowers to give it a more exotic look," says Eric Darden, Walt Disney World horticulturist.

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***Norway***

The walk toward the Norway pavilion is lined on the right with camphor trees, used around the World Showcase to provide continuity and to soften the transition between the different landscapes. The trees, which also provide shaded areas for guests, are "cousins" of the cinnamon tree and are the source of camphor oil.

Approaching the Norway pavilion, one of the first things the eye sees is the sod roof. This technique was often used in traditional houses in mountainous regions of Norway as added insulation from the cold.

Landscaping this pavilion was challenging because native Norwegian plants cannot survive the Florida heat. In their place, “look-alike” plants such as birch, maples and sycamores are used to produce the same effect.

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***China***

Chinese gardens follow completely different rules than those of the West. “In Chinese gardening, there’s no central plan,” Darden says. “Someone once said that if you want to create a Chinese garden you could fly the plants up in a plane and push them out of the window and wherever they land is where you plant them.” Things in the garden don’t appear disorganized — just naturally placed. For example, the grass in the China pavilion is not mowed, but allowed to grow naturally producing a tufted appearance.

The one essential in every Chinese garden is water. As Darden explains, an old Chinese saying states that “A garden without water is like a portrait of a lady with her eyes closed.” The water is usually still and frequently has water plants such as lilies or lotuses growing in it. The lilies at the China pavilion actually grow in containers placed underwater.

The Chinese respect age and want their gardens to appear old. Disney landscape architects have selected trees with