

Horticulturists Add Beauty, Character and Entertainment to Walt Disney World Landscape

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — A team of more than 600 horticultural professionals at the 40-square-mile Walt Disney World Resort direct a landscape “show” that includes more than 7 million trees, shrubs and flowers that are part of the entertainment at the Vacation Kingdom.

Disney’s attention to detail doesn’t stop at the architecture of its many theme parks and resorts. Each plant at Walt Disney World Resort is placed strategically to add character, color, mood or backdrop to one of the world’s largest and busiest “stages.”

Blooms for Show: More than 4,000 acres of the Vacation Kingdom are landscaped to add beauty and warmth to the four theme parks, Downtown Disney, five championship golf courses, resort hotels, Disney Vacation Club properties, Disney’s Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground and the many other recreational areas that comprise Walt Disney World Resort.

Rooted in Tradition: Since the dawn of Walt Disney World Resort in 1971, new plantings have included some 175,000 trees and more than 3.5 million tended shrubs. Disney gardeners also plant more than 3 million bedding plants annually in about 300,000 square feet of flower beds. Seasonal crop rotations are routine, flower beds are inspected daily, and replacement plantings maintain the desired high quality of show.

Theme Park Staging: Landscaping sets the scene in every theme park. There’s a lush green escape into The Oasis at Disney’s Animal Kingdom before guests encounter the remarkably authentic savanna of the park’s Kilimanjaro Safaris attraction. The exotic jungles of Adventureland in Magic Kingdom fade into the arid, cactus-dotted Frontierland. The Le Notre gardens of the France pavilion in Epcot are formal, while palm-lined Hollywood Boulevard at Disney’s Hollywood Studios exudes casual glamour.

Resort Magic: Similarly, each Disney owned and operated resort hotel is landscaped to match the theme. Guests to Disney’s Wilderness Lodge enter a lush forest reminiscent of the Northwest while Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge accentuates its safari lodge theme with a 33-acre savanna.

Roses Unlimited: As the official United States flower, the rose is represented by more than 100 varieties and nearly 13,000 plants on Walt Disney World property. Many varieties can be found at the All-American Rose Selection Display Garden near Cinderella Castle in Magic Kingdom.

Topiary Whimsy: Topiary can be found in more than 200 designs, ranging from trees pruned in geometric shapes to the many topiary figures in the shape of Disney characters which dot the theme park and resort landscape.

Other flora include nearly 8,500 major interior plants, such as that seen in the lobby of Disney’s Polynesian Village Resort, and 800 hanging baskets adding color at eye level.

The Land Lives in Epcot: Horticulture of the past, present and future comes alive in The Land pavilion at Epcot. From Mickey Mouse-shaped food to fruit the size of bowling balls, the Epcot Science team at The Land constantly works to include produce and other foods on the pavilion’s Living with the Land attraction to give guests something they can’t see anywhere else. Living with the Land, a narrated, 14-minute boat ride through the farms of yesteryear as well as the greenhouses of tomorrow, showcases the team’s research and work inside The Land’s four greenhouses.

Did You Know?

- Nearly 2,000 acres are devoted to six varieties of turf. Bahia grass covers highway approaches and unirrigated areas. A hybrid Bermuda grass blankets golf courses.

- Because the grass must be mowed at least twice (and often three times) each week, Walt Disney World gardeners figure if they were to mow in a straight line, the turf they cover would extend some 450,000 miles a year — equal to 18 times around Earth at the equator.
- Trees planted at Walt Disney World Resort come from all over the United States, but many of their ancestors have roots in Europe, Mexico or the Orient. In all, more than 3,000 species of plants representing flora gathered from all over the United States and 50 foreign countries can be found.
- Healthy growth requires the use of more than 2,000 miles of irrigation pipe and 65,000 sprinkler heads. A sophisticated computerized system is used to control and monitor irrigation throughout the four theme parks.
- Of the 600 specialists who maintain the landscape throughout Walt Disney World Resort, more than 30 operate the Walt Disney World Nursery. In addition to maintaining the resort's topiary collection, the nursery team produces more than 4,000 hanging baskets each year.

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