

Spring Blooms at the Arboretum

WHAT'S COMING UP?

To find details on programs and attractions at the arboretum, call ahead or visit the website at OPKansas.org. Click on "Things to See and Do" and you'll find the Arboretum listed in a menu on the left side of the page.

Delicious Daffodils

April is daffodil month, and more than 60 varieties spring up in the Arboretum's daffodil collection, which winds through the Erickson Water Garden.

Peonies

You can see 35 varieties of spring peonies on the walk along the north side of Margaret's Pond from the amphitheater to the boardwalk. This year the Arboretum's gardeners are hoping to see their new tree peonies bloom.

Wildflower Walk

April 6, 13 and 21, 9-11 a.m.

The wildflowers are in bloom! Come take a walk and learn to recognize the woodland and meadow flowers all around us. Walks are free but limited to 20 people each, so call ahead to reserve a spot.

Bird Walk

April 30 8 a.m. & 9 a.m.

The Wild Birds Unlimited store leads these educational bird-watching walks free of charge. Reservations are necessary, as walks are limited to ten birders. Because birds are shy of noise and activity, the Bird Walk is reserved for adults only. Pre-register at 913.491.4887.

Whimsical art and beautiful gardens will soothe your senses

Article Claire M. Caterer | Photography Claire Caterer, Susan and Hannah Motley and the city of Overland Park

Few seasons are as redemptive as spring. After endless days of snow and slush, frigid temperatures and cabin-fevered children, you'll find no happier place to rejoice in the season than the Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. This gem, hidden in the southern reaches of Overland Park (179th Street and Antioch) is Johnson County's own private wilderness—and best of all it's free to the public. Thanks to countless volunteer hours, the Arboretum is gearing up for another season of riotous color and tranquil beauty throughout its 300 acres of trails and gardens.

The facility is roughly divided into two sections. There's the northwest corner, where concrete-paved walkways travel in a meandering loop around the Visitors Center, and which houses the botanical gardens—carefully cultivated themed sections devoted to different features. To the south and east of the gardens, trails wander through the woodland arboretum, where visitors can see dozens of tree species in their natural habitats. The wilderness setting includes many outlooks, benches and arbors where hikers can rest and enjoy the forest.

Water is an important feature throughout the gardens, from scattered waterfalls and streamways to larger pools and the centrally located Margaret's Pond. In the Monet Garden, just south of the Visitors Center, sparkling pools and streams play host to water lilies inspired by Claude Monet's Impressionist paintings. Ample bench seating creates a serene spot dotted with perennial flowers and willow trees. Even the stone walls nurse tiny plants that reach through the gaps.

Heading south from there takes visitors in a long loop through the gardens' most popular sites, including Margaret's Pond and Erickson's Water Garden, a beautiful spot featuring wildflowers and ornamental grasses cultivated to entice birds and butterflies. Waterfalls and streams tucked around the plantings provide a natural music and rhythm to the space. In spring, bulbs of every hue blanket the area.

The youngest nature lovers will enjoy the Children's Garden, tucked away at the edge of the woodland trails. Here, kids meet the native inhabitants of the frog pond, navigate the switch-grass maze and climb the winding pathways up to a low hill called the Sky Watch.

Visitors interested in observing different habitats will find eight separate ecosystems maintained throughout the gardens. Most can be found along the mulched trails. The mesic oak-hickory forest, for example,

~ LeawoodLifestyle.com ~



**The Overland Park
Arboretum & Botanical
Gardens**
8909 West 179th Street
Overland Park, KS
913.685.3604
Open seven days a week,
8 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Closes at 5 p.m. prior to April 10



lies along the south side of Wolf Creek and includes the arboretum's largest trees, such as red oak, shagbark hickory, and white ash. This is a great area to see spring wildflowers, which thrive in the rich soil of this system. Other ecosystems include the riparian woodland, dry-mesic prairie, and wooded draws, among others.

The arboretum's nearly five miles of mulched trails cover the "wilderness" south of the creek and across it in the western corner of the property. Here, creek and woodland coexist under the canopy of a wide variety of mature trees. Hikers can choose between the easygoing Rocky Ridge trail or the more challenging Bluff Loop that borders the limestone bluffs along the creek. If you're interested in a more leisurely woodland stroll, try the blacktop-covered loop, which is just under a half mile long and located south of the parking lot. Dogs are welcome only on the blacktop and mulched trails as long as they're kept on leash. ♪



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