

MERCER Botanic Gardens

22306 Aldine Westfield Road
Humble, Texas 77338-1071

(281) 443-8731
(281) 209-9767 fax
www.hcp4.net/mercer

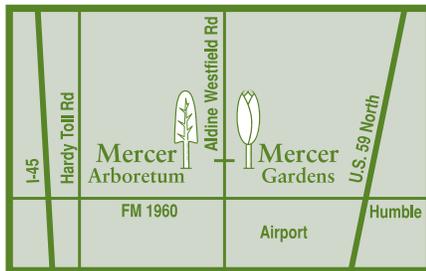


Hours of Operation

8 a.m. to dusk from March through October

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from November through February

Check website for seasonal hours of operation



Directions

Near Bush Intercontinental Airport, Mercer is 22 miles north of downtown Houston. From I-45 or the Hardy Toll Road, exit FM 1960 and turn east. At Aldine Westfield Road, turn left. At the second traffic light (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ miles), turn right for the Visitor Center and gardens or left for the arboretum, picnic grounds, and playground. Mercer shares a common entrance with the Baldwin Boettcher Branch Library.



R. Jack Cagle
Commissioner



MERCER Botanic Gardens

Connecting people with plants

V I S I T O R M A P



Charles



Thelma

"Gardening is the art that uses flowers and plants as paint, and the soil and sky as canvas."

-Elizabeth Murray

Mission

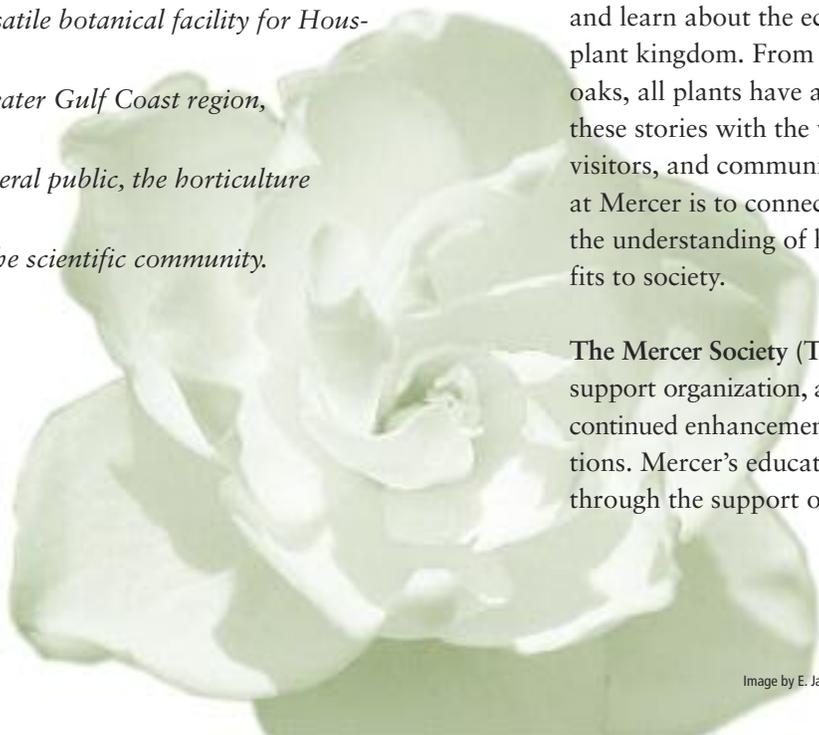
In pursuit of an enhanced quality of life through a greater appreciation of the essential value and beauty of the plant world, Mercer Botanic Gardens seeks to establish and maintain a versatile botanical facility for Houston and the greater Gulf Coast region, serving the general public, the horticulture industry, and the scientific community.

History

Thelma and Charles Mercer had a dream of sharing their small, private garden with the community. Their personal oasis along Cypress Creek was preserved as a Harris County Precinct 4 park in 1974. Through community support and volunteer commitment, Mercer has grown to be a nationally recognized arboretum and botanic garden.

Over 325 acres of East Texas Piney Woods showcase the region's largest collection of native and cultivated plants. This living museum stimulates the senses with texture, color, and fragrance. Visitors enjoy the gardens for their aesthetic value, appreciate the critical role of plants in environmental and quality of life issues, and learn about the economic significance of the plant kingdom. From delicate ferns to majestic oaks, all plants have a story to tell. Mercer shares these stories with the world—through children, visitors, and community programs. A major goal at Mercer is to connect people with plants to link the understanding of horticulture with its benefits to society.

The Mercer Society (TMS), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) support organization, assists with funding for the continued enhancement of programs and collections. Mercer's education department is funded through the support of TMS and Harris County.



*Mercer
in the
spring*



Suzanne Chapman



Suzanne Chapman

summer



Suzanne Chapman

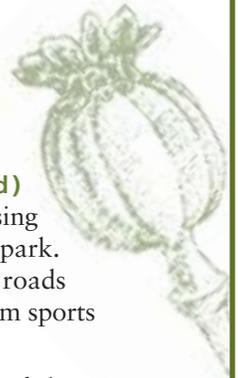
fall



Suzanne Chapman

winter

*"Take nothing but pictures;
leave nothing but footprints..."*

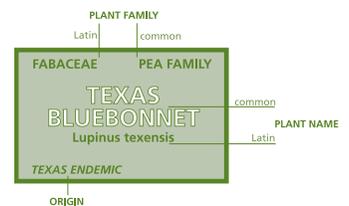


(Garden Etiquette, continued)

- Jogging, in-line skating, and exercising are allowed on the west side of the park. Bicycles are allowed on the asphalt roads of the west side. Swimming and team sports are not permitted at Mercer.
- Please help keep Mercer clean and safe by using trash receptacles and designated picnic areas. Fires are allowed in barbecue pits only during designated periods. Overnight camping is not available.
- Alcoholic beverages are not allowed.
- Glass containers, balloons, confetti eggs, and piñatas are not allowed, as they can be harmful to park patrons and wildlife.
- No food services are available at Mercer, but beverages and snacks are available for purchase at the Visitor Center and The Gift Shoppe. Picnicing is only allowed in designated areas on the west side arboretum, not in the botanic gardens.
- Children under age 15 must be supervised at all times within the park.
- The animals in the park are wild and should not be approached. They are a part of nature and should not be harmed or harassed. If you see an animal acting strangely or in a situation that puts people or the creature at risk, please contact park personnel immediately.

How to Read Our Plant Labels

Labels and interpretive signage throughout the gardens provide plant information. Display labels include the plant's common name, Latin name (scientific name), plant family, and geographic origin. This information reveals how plants are related and suggests suitable growing conditions.



Annual Events at Mercer

Please call for exact dates and times.

March Mart—Mercer's largest plant sale—is held in March and highlights unusual and choice plant varieties unavailable in local markets.

Special activities may include:

- Garden Party and Auction.
- The Summer Color Conference and Plant Sale, features guest speakers on a variety of "tropical-look" and heat-tolerant plants with related topics including culture, what to grow, and the best growing conditions.
- Lunch Bunch meets on the second Wednesday of the month from noon to 2 p.m. Bring a lunch to enjoy while listening to a lecture on a variety of garden topics.
- The Garden Faire, held the fourth Saturday and Sunday in September, features local plant societies, artists, and garden-related vendors. It is a great chance to find unique plants and artwork. Held at the west side picnic area.

Educational Programs

Mercer places a high priority on education. Adult programs include horticultural workshops, seminars, demonstrations, and continuing education. Children can attend a nature-related story time in the garden each month, and internships may be available for high school and college students.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers are an essential part of Mercer and are involved in activities including gardening, teaching, fundraising, guiding interpretive tours, hospitality, and native plant conservation. Become a volunteer in this beautiful and stimulating environment by contacting the volunteer coordinator.



Group Tours and Reservations

All groups are asked to make advance reservations. Self-guided group tours may be scheduled at any time. Allow three weeks notice for guided tours. There is no charge for tours; however, contributions to offset program costs are appreciated. Groups may reserve the barbecue pavilions for use during their visit.

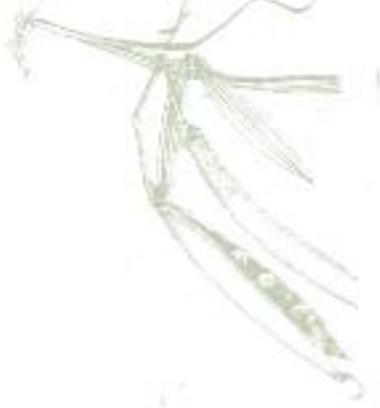
Accessibility

Most garden areas are accessible to wheelchairs and strollers. Please call ahead to request special accommodations or to reserve a wheelchair.

Garden Etiquette

Mercer's plant collections are priceless, like art in museums. For their protection and your safety, please abide by the rules and regulations while visiting the gardens.

- Please admire the plants, flowers, fruits, and labels, but do not remove *anything* from the gardens.
- To ensure a safe and pleasurable visit, please stay on the marked paths and nature trails.
- Artists and photographers are welcome. All are required to register at the Visitor Center and read the garden guidelines before proceeding with these endeavors. **At no time should anyone block paths or step in garden beds.**
- Seeing-eye and hearing-assistance dogs are allowed throughout the park. Pets, on leashes, may visit the west side only.



**East Side
Botanic Gardens
and Visitor Center**

**West Side –
Picnic Area,
Playground
and West
Arboretum**



KEY TO MAP

East Side

- 1 The Courtyard
- 2 The Gift Shoppe
- 3 Central Gardens
- 4 Herb Garden
- 5 Color Garden
- 6 Perennial Gardens
- 7 Rock Garden
- 8 Endangered Species/Native Plant
- 9 Renaissance Garden
- 10 Storey Lake and Pavilion
- 11 Bamboo Garden
- 12 Primitive Loop
- 13 William Dean Lee Iris Collection
- 14 Prehistoric Garden
- 15 Memorial Garden and Remembrance Walk
- 16 Tropical Garden
- 17 Shade Bog Garden and Boardwalk
- 18 Azalea Trail
- 19 Creekside Ramble

West Side

- 20 Jake Roberts Maple Collection
- 21 Bald Cypress Pond with Observation Platform
- 22 The Oxbow
- 23 Hickory Bog
- 24 Picnic Loop and Playground
- 25 Post Oak Uplands
- 26 Hawthorn Loop



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1 The Courtyard

The spacious courtyard is used for gatherings and activities such as classes and programs. It includes a seating wall and outdoor lighting. The fountain and benches offer a pleasant place to relax in the spring when blue-flowered Texas mountain laurels perfume the air. Graceful river birches provide shade and privacy.

2 The Gift Shoppe

Explore The Gift Shoppe and find that perfect keepsake or gift to remember your visit. An eclectic mix of garden ornaments, plants, books, clothing, toys and other one-of-a-kind items continuously change to encourage regular visits!

3 Central Gardens

These gardens transform throughout the seasons with annual color. A visit here will help gardeners learn which varieties of plants will tolerate full sun and gain inspiration for planting schemes.

4 Herb Garden

This informal garden greets visitors with playful colors, unusual leaf textures, and strong fragrances. Raised beds, in an asymmetrical landscape, hold traditional culinary and medicinal herbs, along with plants from historical and literary references.

5 Color Garden

The massive display beds are vibrant with seasonal color schemes. Plantings may include cool, pastel shades or vivid, hot colors of yellow, orange, and red.

6 Perennial Gardens

Curved garden terraces are lush with perennials grouped in

several popular gardening themes. Beds showcase plants to attract hummingbirds and butterflies, an all-season garden with bulbs and shrubs, an heirloom plant garden, and a cut flower garden.

7 Rock Garden

Experience the diversity of plants that are at home in this rocky, dry garden. These specially prepared beds use chalky soils with rapid drainage and feature drought-tolerant plants from around the world.

8 Endangered Species and Native Plant Gardens

These gardens conserve and display regional and endangered native plants. Visitors see rare plants and learn about the threat of disappearing habitats. A collaborative effort with the Center for Plant Conservation, the garden includes extremely rare plants of the National Collection. Some species are found in less than five sites worldwide.



Greg Harmon

Ponds, creeks and bogs provide wetland habitats for endangered native plants requiring moisture. A replica of a beaver dam illustrates how beavers help create these habitats, and the native trees provide needed shade. The circulating water provides moisture and a pleasant cooling effect. Patios with seating walls and an observation bridge facilitate viewing of plants and wetland creatures in this outdoor classroom.

9 Renaissance Garden

This serene setting offers a place for a quiet stroll and relaxation. Evergreen cypresses and clipped topiary specimens provide the backdrop for a series of flower-filled rooms.

10 Storey Lake and Pavilion

Located in a quiet corner, the Storey Lake and Pavilion boast signature collections of *Crinum*s, Louisiana iris, and other other aquatic species. The pavilion provides a place of rest, shelter and turtle-watching. No concession available.

11 Bamboo Garden

When the wind flows through the bamboo canes, hollow soothing tones echo through the garden. This collection of both spreading and clump-forming bamboo showcases these strikingly elegant grasses.

12 Primitive Loop

Enjoy a walk through the wilderness on the primitive loop. Natural fern gullies, oxbow ponds, and large, old bald cypress trees line almost two miles of trails through this undeveloped natural area of Mercer.

13 William D. Lee Iris Collection

This Louisiana iris collection featuring over 60 cultivars provides a rainbow of spring color reflected in the mirror-smooth water of Storey Lake.

14 Prehistoric Garden

Enter the age of dinosaurs as you trek through a lush jungle of unusual and wonderful plants, from mosses to magnolias. Fossils, animal tracks, and blocky stone benches complete this primeval setting. Look out for the pterodactyl that lives here!



Suzanne Chapman

15 Memorial Garden and Remembrance Walk

The heart of Thelma and Charles Mercer's original garden, these winding paths are lush with ferns framing mature camellias.

This serene space pays tribute to the memory of loved ones who have passed and honors those still living. The Remembrance Walk winds through the garden and is edged with engraved pavers commemorating special dates in people's lives.



16 Tropical Garden

Step into a magical world of palms and rare exotic plants from all over the world. This area holds unexpected horticultural delights as Mercer increases the diversity of plants that may be grown in our area. Most noteworthy is the collection of over 150 species and varieties of the Zingiberaceae (Ginger family), one of the largest in the United States.

17 Shady Bog Garden and Boardwalk

This cool, shady space is a natural wetland enhanced with native and exotic, shade-loving and bog plants.

18 Azalea Trail

A romantic leafy path, punctuated by dramatic overlooks, meanders atop a tall berm. Colorful azaleas, camellias and shade plants provide a kaleidoscope of seasonal color.

19 Creekside Ramble

Opening in 2016. Meandering paths lead through gardens featuring an outstanding collection of Japanese maples and magnificent views of Cypress Creek.

20 Jake Roberts Maple Collection

An alley of Trident maples produce a tunnel-like path that beckons one to pass through. In the fall, this area is alive with color as the maples put on their autumn foliage, producing fiery hues of red, orange, and gold.

21 Bald Cypress Pond with Observation Platform

Stately bald cypress trees, with sweeping buttresses and knobby knees, grow in the old creek bed. Their name graces the Cypress Creek waterway nearby.

22 The Oxbow

Streams like Cypress Creek seldom run in a straight course for any distance, but rather meander first one way and then another. Over long periods of time, a stream may change its channel many times. This is an old channel of the creek left when the stream moved a bit further north, perhaps in a time of flood. The curving meanders remaining are called 'oxbows' which act as overflow relief for the creek in times of flood.

23 Hickory Bog

Thick stands of water hickory and water elm are found in these seasonal wetlands. Lizard tail and other wetland plants flourish in this habitat.



24 Picnic Loop and Playground

A pleasant place to stop and have lunch in the shade of the oaks and pines. Peaceful seating areas, picnic tables, and playground equipment (appropriate for ages 2 to 5 and 5 to 12) are incorporated into this naturally shaded setting.

25 Post Oak Uplands

These gentle ridges are well above the flood plain of Cypress Creek. Less fertile, dry, sandy soils are home to many hardwood trees including post oak and red oak

26 Hawthorn Loop

Lacy, cream-colored flowers and feathery foliage grace the woodlands when the parsley hawthorn and pasture haw bloom. Virginia magnolia and post oak form a high canopy rising above these small, graceful native trees.

