

100+ GREAT GARDEN IDEAS

Canadian
GARDENING

EARLY
SPRING
magic

18
FANTASTIC
GARDENS
FROM AROUND
THE WORLD

GARDEN
DESIGNS FOR
BEGINNERS

colourful
easy-care
GERANIUMS

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6 *unexpected gardens*

IN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES

TEXT WENDY HELFENBAUM

The world is filled with unique gardens to visit. We've narrowed down the selection to these six green spaces that are equally special and beautiful in their own right. Jump on board and hold on tight for a ride full of surprises and delights.

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This fully operational train track is a popular (and romantic) spot for couples to take photos and get engaged.



KLEVAN, UKRAINE

tunnel of love

Hidden in a lush forest in the small town of Klevan in western Ukraine is a one-kilometre stretch of train track. Although the secluded overgrown track appears abandoned, a train actually travels back and forth about three times a day, delivering wood to a local fibre-board factory. Over the years, the passing train has shaped the trees into an awe-inspiring leafy corridor that's been dubbed the Tunnel of Love. From May to October, tourists flock here in twos, for local lore predicts that if you visit the enchanted spot with your true love and make a wish, it will be granted. The picturesque site is the perfect place to pop the question, especially in summer when bright sunlight filters through the verdant tree canopy.



CALTAGIRONE, ITALY

la scala infiorata

Each spring in Caltagirone, a small town in Sicily famous for its pottery, the historic staircase of Santa Maria del Monte becomes a live canvas. Built in 1608, the 142-step structure – faced with thousands of different painted tiles – is transformed with thousands of potted plants arranged into an intricate design for La Scala Infiorata (Flower Festival). Held in honour of Our Lady of Conadomini,

the patron and protector of the city, the festival typically starts in May and features a new motif each year. Visitors are welcome to wade through the maze of flowers to appreciate each spectacular detail. In July and August, the stairs return to the spotlight during La Scala Illuminata (Light Festival), when 4,000 handmade lanterns are used to make another impressive display.



ALNWICK, ENGLAND 

the poison garden

Be careful which flowers you stoop to sniff while exploring the Poison Garden, as more than 100 of them have a licence to kill.

The lethal lot in the market town of Alnwick in northern England is the brainchild of the Duchess of Northumberland. She came up with the idea after visiting Italy's Padua Botanical Garden, which features a medicinal and poisonous plant collection established in the 16th century. The Duchess's version of a poison garden, built

within the contemporary five-hectare Alnwick Garden, opened in 2005.

Tucked away behind black iron gates, the Poison Garden features such legendary killers as deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), strychnine plant (*Strychnos nux-vomica*) and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). Visitors are often surprised that many of the Duchess's picks – such as opium poppies, foxgloves, laburnum and datura – likely grow in their own gardens.



PHOTOGRAPHY, MARGARET WHITTAKER, ROD WADDINGTON



CHANDIGARH, INDIA

nek chand's rock garden

Dotted with thousands of sculpted animals, rocks, pottery and human forms amid mazes, mirrors, tunnels and bridges, Nek Chand's Rock Garden in Chandigarh in northern India is a folk art paradise. With nearly as many daily visitors as the Taj Mahal, the garden is considered to be the largest folk art installation in the world.

During the partition in 1947, Nek Chand and his family moved to Chandigarh from Pakistan, where the young man became a road inspector. In the early 1960s, he cleared part of a

government-owned jungle and, in his spare time, slowly began secretly building a garden space, which included sculpting statues from broken crockery, rocks and coloured stones. About 10 years later when city officials stumbled upon the illegal five-hectare garden, they wanted it destroyed – but, luckily, public outcry convinced the powers that be to keep his creation, and they officially opened it to the public. Today, Nek Chand's 16-hectare oasis is one of the country's most famous attractions.

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Self-taught
artist Nek Chand's
specialty is creating
sculptures from
cement and recycled
materials.





crooked forest

It may look like the set of a twisted fairy tale, but this grove of about 300 curved pine trees growing with a 90-degree bend at their base is a real forest in northwestern Poland near the town of Gryfino. No one knows exactly why the trees – believed to have been planted around 1930 – curve dramatically northward. Some theories suggest that heavy snow followed by a drawn-out spring thaw could have

caused the deformation, or that enemy tanks may have flattened fragile saplings during the Second World War. Others believe that farmers manipulated the trees' growth when they were roughly seven to 10 years old to use the wood for building boats or furniture. Because the village was nearly destroyed during the war, most locals have no idea where the crooked forest came from. If only these trees could talk....



The Gardens of Alcatraz are open all year-round but the best time to visit is from January to September, especially in spring.



SAN FRANCISCO, USA

the gardens of alcatraz

On the rocky, windswept island of Alcatraz in the middle of San Francisco Bay, one wouldn't expect a flourishing environment, but that's exactly what you'll find. The infamous former prison grounds are home to old fragrant roses, fig trees, bulbs and succulents.

The beautification of Alcatraz actually began around 1865, while it was a military prison and a few Victorian-style gardens were successfully planted on its summit, thanks to the import of topsoil and fresh water (which is still brought in to this day). When the Federal Bureau of Prisons took over Alcatraz in 1933, the gardens continued to thrive. The secretary

to the warden, Freddie Reichel, convinced his boss to allow some of the inmates to tend and expand the existing gardens. The island's western slopes soon blossomed into lovely landscapes.

When Alcatraz slammed its cell doors for the last time in 1963, the gardens were abandoned. Many plants died, while others took over, damaging retaining walls and other structural elements.

Forty years later, the Garden Conservancy and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy partnered with the National Park Service to revive the gardens, paying tribute to those who had tended them. An astonishing 1.5 million people visit each year.

