



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN



**Explore a garden
where all your
senses can bloom.**

A Garden for the Senses

Even though we experience gardens through our senses, many of us limit our enjoyment to what we see.

The William T. Bacon Sensory Garden is designed to be a beautiful garden that appeals to more than just the eyes. It is a great place to awaken your other senses and experience beauty in a whole new way.

Explore with your senses:



Feel the leaves, bark and flowers to discover interesting textures.



Smell the plants and compare their fragrances.



Listen in each part of the garden for “living” sounds—water, wind, birds, insects, rustling grasses, leaves and branches.



Look around you at the landscape and notice the colors, sizes and shapes of the trees, shrubs, grasses, leaves and flowers.

10 Easy Ways to Make Your Garden a Sensory Experience

1. Plant fragrant flowers and herbs in raised beds or containers to bring pleasant scents closer to your nose.
2. Plant fragrant plants near doors and windows for maximum enjoyment.
3. Include the soothing sound of water by building a fountain, pond or stream.
4. Create a mood with color. Choose yellow, red and orange plants to create a warm, inviting garden. Select green, blue and violet plants to create a serene atmosphere.
5. Make your own natural music by planting a variety of trees, grasses and shrubs that rustle in the wind.
6. Select plants with colored and textured leaves, flowers, berries and bark to make your garden visually interesting all year long.
7. Choose plants that are furry, spongy, prickly or silky to add tactile delight to your garden.
8. Combine tall, medium and short plants to create visual interest.
9. Group plants with subtle fragrances in drifts to combine their scent and intensify the effect.
10. Plant shrubs, flowers and trees that attract bees, birds, butterflies and other wildlife to your back yard.

TO LEARN MORE

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The Chicago Botanic Garden is owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Sensory Garden Areas

- 1 Sensory Beds**
Discover raised beds and containers filled with textured, scented or colorful plants.
- 2 Water Walk**
Look for water-loving plants and animals and a wonderful view of the lake along this sunny shoreline.
- 3 Woodland Walk**
Along rocky paths, stroll under a canopy of trees among shade-loving plants. Step from this cool space into a warm and sunny spot.
- 4 Hilltop Garden**
Watch and listen for birds, or just relax and enjoy an open-air arbor set in a fragrant pine grove.

Selected Sensory Plants for Midwest Gardens

Texture

Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*)

This low-growing perennial has soft, fuzzy, silver-gray leaves. Its pink-purple flowers bloom from early summer to early autumn.

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

The flowers of this tall perennial feature a hard, bristly, rust-colored center. The plant blooms in shades of pink or purple throughout mid- to late summer.

Summer Glow tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima* 'Summer Glow')

This small tree is filled with green, feathery foliage. In late summer and early autumn, it produces five-petaled pink flowers.

Fragrance

Curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*)

True to its name, this plant fills the air with the scent of curry. It has silver-gray leaves and long-lasting yellow flowers that bloom in the summer.

Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*)

Long, arching clusters of sweet-scented flowers bloom midsummer, attracting butterflies and bees.

Green eyes (*Berlandiera lyrata*)

This spring and summer bloomer has flowers with chocolate-scented, light green centers surrounded by brown or yellow ray-shaped florets.

Sound

Sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*)

Glossy, lance-shaped leaves rustle in the wind, and the cup-enclosed nuts "pop" in the spring.

Narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*)

The linear leaves of this aquatic perennial whisper in the breeze. Its fuzzy brown flower spikes bloom in midsummer.

Color

Blue Supercascade petunia (*Petunia* × *hybrida* 'Blue Supercascade')

Huge deep-blue flowers, measuring up to 5 inches across, bloom from late spring to late summer.

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

This Illinois native features scarlet-red flowers, reddish-purple stems and bronze-tinged, bright green leaves. It blooms from late summer through early autumn.

White Angel crab apple (*Malus* 'White Angel')

A profusion of white blossoms appear on this tree in early spring, with red, glossy fruit emerging in late summer or early autumn.

