

GUIDE TO THE
Gardens
OF
Florida

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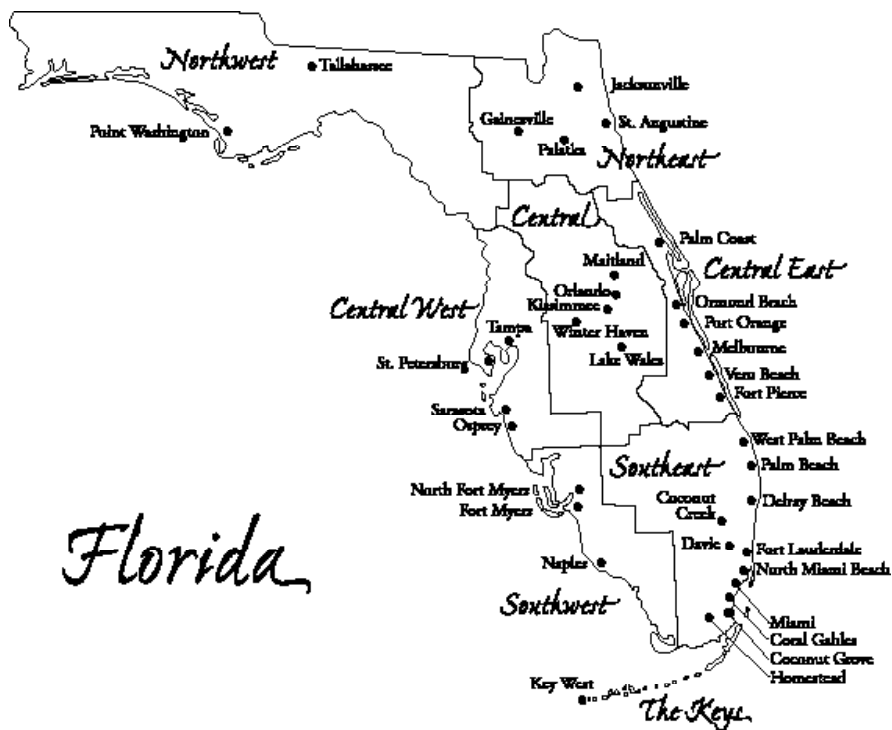


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Maclay State Gardens



A 28 acre garden where native plants are used extensively in landscaping. Over 150 varieties of camellias and 50 varieties of azaleas are represented.

Address: 3540 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, FL 32308

Directions: From I-10 take exit 30 (U.S. 319) and go north about 3 miles. The gardens will be on your left.

Hours: Open daily 8:00 a.m. to sunset

Admission fee: yes

Wheelchair access: partial

Facilities: none

Available: Guided tours are conducted Saturday and Sunday during the peak bloom around mid-March. Special tours may be arranged with three weeks advance notice.

Area: 28 acres

Phone: (850) 487-4556

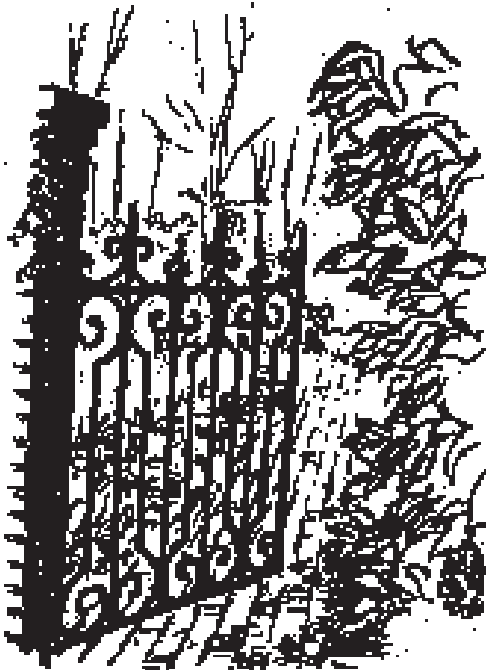
Just a few miles from the Florida state capital of Tallahassee, tucked away in the rolling hills overlooking Lake Hall, are the Maclay State Gardens. Initially the property served as the southern retreat of New York financier Alfred B. Maclay and his family. In 1923 he decided to develop the gardens and in the process created a masterpiece of floral architecture. After his death in 1944, Mrs. Maclay continued the development according to his plans. Mrs. Maclay donated the gardens to the state of Florida in 1953.

As one approaches the gardens, the **pines** and **mixed hardwoods** so typical of this area are readily apparent. Once inside, massive oaks and huge pines tower over smaller understory specimens. The garden seems to be composed of several smaller gardens, every turn of the walkway revealing something new or unexpected to admire. Native plants are used extensively in landscaping, but there are also more than 160 exotic species or varieties adding diversity in shape, texture and color. Over 150 varieties of **camellias** and 50 varieties of **azaleas** are the predominant flowering shrubs throughout the gardens.

As one walks the house walk from the entry gate to the house, especially during the spring months, the unbelievable color experi-

ence begins to dazzle: a profusion of azalea blossoms, **southern magnolia** (*Magnolia grandiflora*), **saucer magnolia** (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) blossoms, white blossoms of the **dogwood tree** (*Cornus florida*), purplish/pink blossoms of the **redbud tree** (*Cercis canadensis*) and in late spring the blossoms of the beautiful native **mountain laurel** (*Kalmia latifolia*). Blossoms, blossoms everywhere!

The camellia walk, connecting the house and the walled garden, certainly showcases the beauty of thousands upon thousands of camellia blossoms with a color spectrum ranging from snowy white, through pink, to the deepest of reds. At the beginning of the camellia walk stands the first camellia planted in the gardens in 1923. At that time, when it was moved into the garden from another location, it was already said to be eighty to one hundred years old. Brick walls covered with climbing fig enclose the walled garden with its central fountain and white and blue della Robbia plaque on the west wall. A look through the gate on the east wall provides a gorgeous view of a long reflecting pool bordered by azaleas and tall palms with Lake Hall in the distance. Just outside the walled garden the magnificent pink blossoms of the native but now endangered **Chapman's rhododendron** (*Rhododendron chapmanii*) quietly contrast with the brick wall.



When you take the pine needle path from the walled garden to the pond, you will be surrounded by walls of camellias and gardenias growing under the tall **viburnum trees** (*Viburnum macrocephalum*) and **tea olive** (*Osmanthus fragrans*). The dark red, starlike flowers of **Florida anise** (*Illicium floridanum*) add still another dimension to the color spectrum.

The pond itself was built to reflect the colors of the surrounding plantings in its calm water. It

certainly does that and more. This area is peaceful and serene. The tall evergreens to the south of the pond form a solid backdrop for flowering trees; a multitude of irises and daylilies provide splashes of color closer to the ground. The azalea hillside and **Oriental magnolia** plantings gently rise from the bank of the pond under the canopy of native oaks and pines. This section is simply breathtaking.

Or maybe you want to find the Secret garden? It is really not that difficult to find and you will enjoy it when you find it.

The lakeside path will lead you to Lake Hall, a habitat for fish, turtles, alligators and migrating water birds. In this area one can see one of the few remaining stands of **Torreya trees** (*Torreya taxiflora*). This beautiful evergreen tree was completely decimated by fungal blight in many other areas. The native plant arboretum showcases the native plants for use in landscape design.

When is the best time to visit here? Hard to say. The gardens change from week to week; there are always new blossoms and colors to admire. Plan to return here; one visit may not be enough.

Worth Seeing: Maclay House is open January through April and is complete with original furnishings from the Maclay family.