



Vine
LINE



Spring 2024

Learn about how to prevent invasive species. Get out of your head and into sensory gardens. Discover the powers of *Passiflora incarnata*.



Hello, My Fellow Plant Enthusiast!

Well, we did not have to wait long for spring this year! I can't remember the last time we had so many 70-degree days in February. At the Garden we have lots of things in bloom:

Tulips, Daffodils, Cornus Mas, Don Egolf redbuds, Hellebores, Edgeworthia, Epimedium, Spicebush, amongst other things. The weeds did not waste time popping up either! We have been busy this past month putting out pre-emergent, mulching, pruning back our late summer blooming plants, and a myriad of other spring gardening tasks. If you're like me, you've had to fight the urge to plant the veggies in the ground and move tropicals back outside, but I would still hold off until early April. Memphis is known for a last minute freeze or two just when you think you're out of the woods!

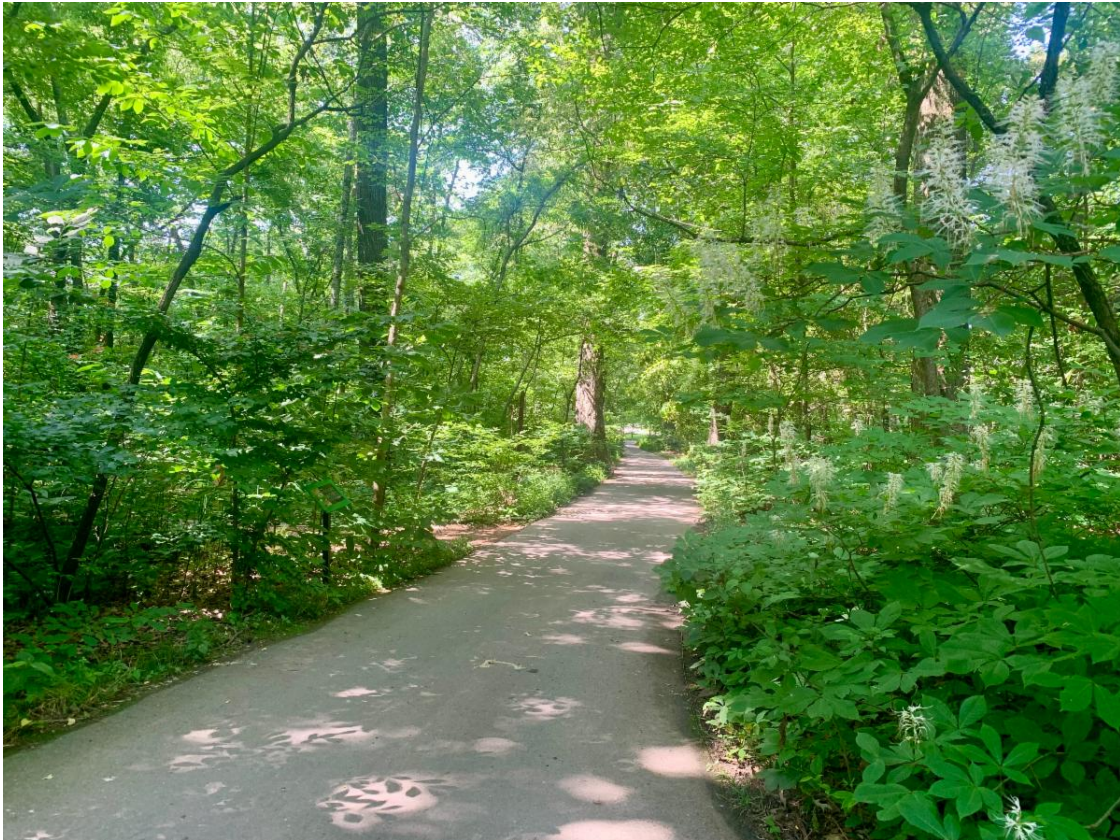
We have an exciting year ahead of us. Our Herb Garden has gone through a 50% renovation and many of our native medicinal plants are already starting to break dormancy. We are currently renovating the entryway to our Japanese Garden, the structure is in and we are working on the new plantings around it. If you happen to be here for a visit you may notice huge open beds outside the path to My Big Backyard. Those are our Parade of Color beds, a new display this year that we intend to be the biggest and most vibrant display of annual colors Memphis has ever seen. Of course, the biggest and possibly the most exciting new project is our new Youth Education and Tropical Plant House which opens on May 3 and will be the only glasshouse of its kind in Tennessee.

The water feature is already up and running, and it looks awesome!

So even if you've been to MBG a thousand times, this year will offer many new and exciting additions and changes to our property. It is always our goal to help you all learn about and connect more with the magic of plants! That being said, please enjoy the articles here by some of our wonderful horticulturists. You'll find an article by Anna Vo on invasive species, Adam Gann on sensory gardens, and our Herb Garden horticulturist Agustin Diaz on our native passionflower vine.

Daniel Drose

MBG Director of Horticulture



Invasive Species

By Anna Vo, Woodland Horticulturist

For years, I remained oblivious to the concept of invasive plant species and the extent of their proliferation and ecological harm. Now, equipped with the knowledge to identify these intruders, I notice them virtually everywhere. Preventing the introduction of invasive plants is crucial, as once they become established, controlling them can be challenging and expensive. Early detection and rapid response are key strategies for managing invasive plants effectively. How did these plants find their way here in the first place?

Primarily, invasive species hitch rides through human activities, both intentionally and unintentionally. These plants, not native to their current habitats, reproduce rapidly, swiftly overtaking native species. Surprisingly, horticultural practices account for about 60% of the introduction of invasive species. Many of these invaders are innocently stocked in local nurseries and then find their way into people's gardens. Additionally, 30% of invasive species are introduced through conservation efforts, often with good intentions such as erosion control or habitat improvement such as windbreaks. Unfortunately, around 10% of these introductions are entirely accidental.



These invasive plants are in fierce competition with our native flora, vying for essential resources like water, sunlight, nutrients, and space. This fierce competition detrimentally impacts the quality and quantity of wildlife habitats. What's more, these invaders thrive because they lack natural predators. They do not integrate into the local ecosystem and contribute minimally to wildlife habitat. Many form impenetrable thickets, casting dense shade that suffocates native vegetation.

Many of these invasive species are readily available for purchase in nurseries. By educating yourself about invasive species and avoiding their purchase, you can play a vital role in reducing their spread. If we refuse to buy them, nurseries will cease selling them, ultimately curbing their proliferation. Join us in the fight against invasive plants by volunteering at your local parks! Most parks host volunteer days where the community gathers to learn about and combat these invasive species. With their relentless growth, our efforts must be constant, but with dedicated volunteers like yourself, we can truly make a difference.

In the fall and winter, spotting invasive species becomes remarkably easier. While our native plants lie dormant, these invasive species have extended growing seasons, standing out conspicuously as the sole green presence in the forest, aside from the American Holly (*Ilex decidua*) and the Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). Species like Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Mahonia (*Mahonia bealei*), Cherry Laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*), Italian Arum (*Arum italicum*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Winter Creeper vine (*Euonymus fortunei*), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*) are among the most prolific. Never purchase these plants, and promptly remove them when spotted.

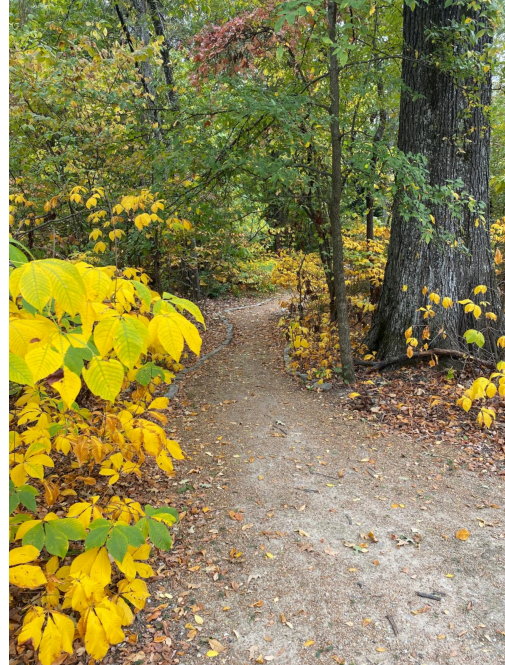
Invasive species aren't just confined to wooded areas; they can be found anywhere. You might expect to find them on a hike or deep in the woods, but a simple stroll through your local streets reveals their presence. They cling to fences, creep through alleyways, sprout from concrete cracks, and unfortunately, are planted in home gardens. It's clear that reducing their numbers is a task we can all contribute to.

These invasive plants are so prolific you do not have to venture far to find them, maybe just in

your backyard or your neighbor's yard. They're not hard to find; every plant we remove and discard helps diminish their presence in our ecosystem. While pulling up just one may not seem significant, it prevents thousands of potential offspring. If each of us pulls up just one invasive plant, the collective impact could be millions fewer.

By raising awareness and actively participating in removal efforts, we can reclaim our landscapes from these invaders. Every individual who cares and learns about these species adds to the momentum of our cause. Together we can restore balance to our ecosystems.

If you're interested in helping remove invasive species in the Memphis Botanic Garden, join us for one of our upcoming Weed Wrangles. [Click here to learn more.](#)



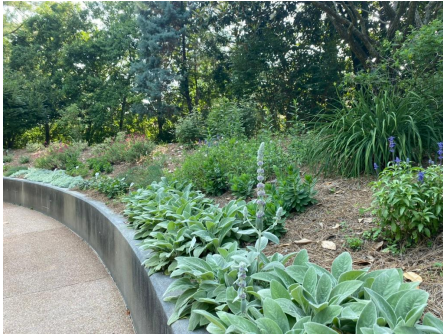
Sensory Gardens

By Adam Gann, Sensory Garden Horticulturist

Sensory gardens are a fairly new concept as far as garden designs go. The first sensory garden was the Belmont Sensory Garden in Exeter, United Kingdom, built-in 1939. Early sensory gardens were primarily designed with people with blindness in mind. Since then they have been expanded to incorporate all of the senses. Sensory gardens are not exclusive to people with disabilities though. They can be accessible and enjoyed by everyone. The idea is to have plants and hardscapes to stimulate all five senses: Sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste.

Having all five senses present in your garden can enhance a visit for a person with disabilities to experience the senses they may be lacking. Likewise, most people whose senses have been dulled from living in our modern civilization can benefit from a stroll through a garden that helps them tune in to our natural state of being. People with dementia can also benefit through this type of horticulture therapy which can help reduce symptoms by eliciting positive emotions from stimulating various parts of the brain.

Whether creating a community garden or improving your home garden, here are a few ideas to incorporate.

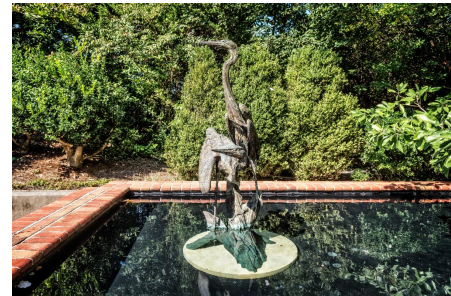


The easiest sense to start with is sight. Think about starting with a color theme. Cool colors like violet, white, or blue are easy on the eyes and easy to mix and match. Warm colors like red, orange, or yellow are bold and showy and can be exciting if done right. Think about the layers. Putting tall and colorful plants towards the back of the bed and the low-growing shrubs or creeping perennials near the edge is a good template to start your design.

Preserving the edge of the beds for the touch and smell elements is essential unless you want people to walk through the beds to experience them. Herbs are my go-to plants for the edges. They can provide so many different textures and scents. Geraniums are a great herb for sensory gardens. Their textures can range from fuzzy to rough and scents can range from mint-chocolate to apricot to coconut. Soft plants like Lamb's Ear or Artemisia are lovely to touch. Rosemary, Sage, and Lavender are great for rubbing and smelling as you walk by them.

For edible plants, you can also use herbs like Stevia or Mint. Or go the classic veggie route using Cherry Tomatoes, Kale, Bell Peppers, and Snap Peas. Anything that can easily be picked off and eaten right there. Blueberries are a yummy choice and the fall color on them is stunning. Speaking of fall, seasonal layers are another concept to think about. Having interest through the different seasons provokes the senses all year round. Planting Daffodils and Hyacinths will give you color and scents in the early spring. Adding in common annuals in the summer like Marigolds and Lantana will give a quick pop of color and scent. Putting in small trees like Royal Star or Sweetbay Magnolias will give early interest with flowers and bring shade for anyone wanting to sit and take in the view. Native grasses like Little Bluestem or Switchgrass provide ecological benefits while filling in space and giving winter interest.

Last but not least we think about what sound elements to add that will give interest all year round. Most sensory gardens I've visited have water features. You don't need anything fancy. Something like a small fountain that produces the sound of water flowing does wonders. Bird baths are often my favorite feature to have in a garden. You will never get bored watching and listening to birds come and take a dip. It also provides a drinking source for them which is so important. Windchimes are another easy option that can put you in that dream-like state while surrounded by your favorite plants.



The final thing I want to address is accessibility. Having plants in raised beds or larger pots allows one to interact with the plants without bending over or having to kneel down. It also helps anyone who may be in a wheelchair to reach out and connect with the plants with ease. I've found that adding signage with and without braille can make a huge difference. Not everyone knows what a sensory garden is and telling people exactly what they need to do to understand the sensory element of a plant can elevate the experience.

One can use their senses in any garden they visit, but a sensory garden just gives a helping hand and serves as a good reminder to zoom in and have a deeper experience. So I hope these tips will help when considering adding some sensory elements to your already existing garden or building a garden from scratch. Happy planting!



The Passionflower

By Agustin Diaz, Herb Garden Horticulturist

Passiflora incarnata is one of the best documented species of the *Passiflora* genus, likely due to its therapeutic and medicinal properties. The aerial parts of the plant, as well as its flowers and fruits, are used for both medicinal and commercial purposes.

This plant is native to the southeastern region of the United States. It is a vigorous tendril-climbing vine with fascinating fragrant flowers. The flowers attract a wide range of pollinators and the plant is a host plant for several butterflies. The eye-catching blooms are followed by egg-sized orange and yellow fruits called maypops. The foliage consists of three-lobed dark green leaves. *Passiflora incarnata* is deciduous and one of the hardiest of its species.

Passiflora incarnata is a source of alkaloids, phenolic compounds, flavonoids, and cyanogenic glycosides. It is thanks to these flavonoids that the plant is used for added flavor in food and beverages. This plant is a common main component used in several natural products. Research suggests that the plant itself - as well as its preparations - can help reduce stress. Because of that, it can be helpful in the treatment of insomnia, anxiety, and depression.

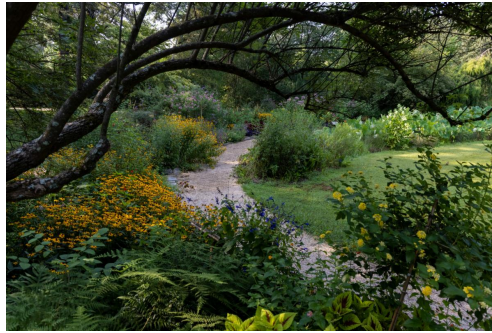


Passiflora incarnata is also used as a remedy to help relieve burns, diarrhea, menstrual cramps, hemorrhoids, and neurotic disorders. It can also be helpful for people who have seizures or nerve pain and is shown to lessen opiate withdrawal symptoms.

This virtuous plant is widely known by the name of “passionflower” to allude to the suffering that Jesus underwent when he was crucified. In 1569 when the Spanish conquistadors burst into Peru and saw it for the first time, they wrote that it resembled the crown of thorns that Christ wore: the five filaments/anthers to the five wounds inflicted on his body, the three styles/stigmas to the nails used on the cross, and the petals to the apostles.

The Cherokee in the Tennessee area called it Ocoee. The

Ocoee River and Valley are named after this plant, which is the Tennessee wildflower. For thousands of years, this noble plant was a staple food and medicine for the Cherokee, and to this day it is a revered piece of their heritage.



Something you want to learn more about?
Email our Director of Horticulture at
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