

Take a Road Trip: Beth Turlington

Now that the heat has broken, and we know what has survived in our gardens, how do you suppose the professional did? In 3 hours driving time or less, south of us there are four wonderful botanic gardens where you can find out.

The Dallas Arboretum is set on 66 acres of the former DeGoyler and Camp Estates, with a spectacular view of White Rock Lake. There are enough gardens here to keep you busy all day long. Be sure to bring your camera and note book.

Jimmy Turner, the Senior Director of Gardens, conducts plant trials every year, with approximately 3000 different items. His slogan "If we can't kill it no one can", tells you if it grows there, it should grow here. He's been known to award some of his winners the title of Flame Proof. You have to love a man with that kind of humor.

Visit their website at www.dallasarboretum.org for hours of operation, event and class schedules as well as all the information on the plant trials.

Heading west from there, you'll want to see the Forth Worth Botanic Garden. Set on 109 acres, it is the oldest botanic garden in the state of Texas, set in the cultural district of the city.

With 23 theme gardens, there is a garden to suit everyone's taste. The rose garden it just beautiful and it smells great, and that's just one of many spots that will take your senses by storm. You will find trail gardens here as well, with a wealth of information to take home with you.

Steve Huddleston is Senior Horticulturist and the author of [Easy Gardens for North Central Texas](#). This is one of the books you want in your library. All the plants in this book have been grown at some point in time at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Visit their web site at www.fwb.org.

Westward we go to Weatherford and Chandor Gardens. Owned by the City of Weatherford, this 3.5 garden is the former estate of Douglas and Ina Chandor. Hacked out of the rock hard ground of Parker County, in the early 1930, this is a true testament to their love of gardening. There are some wicked views in the gardens that will take your breath away. The history of these gardens is as fascinating as the grounds themselves and well worth your time to read. To realize that at one point this marvel had become overgrown, neglected and nearly lost, will make you very grateful to the family that purchased and restored it and to the City of Weatherford for purchasing and then opening these gardens for the rest of us to enjoy.

Chandor is overseen by Chief Horticulturist Steven Chamblee, a big bear of man with an electric smile and marvelous wit. If you have the opportunity to talk with him, you will walk away with a wealth of information and probably end up being a groupie just like me. The web site for this jewel is www.chandorgardens.com.

Last but by no way least is Clark Gardens Botanical Park in Mineral Wells. Down a gravel road, off the beaten path, Clark Gardens was started in 1972 by Billie and Max Clark, strictly for themselves. Fortunately for us, over time, they established the Max and Billie Clark Foundation, donated 143 acres with the gardens included and opened to the public in 2000.

With fourteen different areas to explore, this could take all day, and that's a good thing. One of the really cool things is the Historic Tree Trail. The trees were purchased from American Forest's, Historic Tree Nursery and are direct descendents of historic trees from around the county. Each tree has it's pedigree with it for you read as you go along. Another fun spot is the scale train and 700 feet of track running through one of the gardens. Adults are just as enamored of it as children are.

When several of the Master Gardeners made a road trip to Clark Gardens in 2010, we were fortunate enough to run into Mr. Clark and one of his chocolate Labs. It was obvious from our conversation that gardens and dogs rank right at the top of this extraordinary man's list. If you go, I hope you get the chance to meet him too. Their web site is www.clarkgardens.org.

So there you are, four great places for you visit, look for outstanding gardening ideas, and the opportunity to meet some really awesome folks. Visit each locations web site for all the details on days of operation, hours and all the great, unique things each has to offer.