

Vienna Botanical Garden

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We welcomed spring with a walk in the Vienna Botanical Garden, which is one of the oldest in Europe and traces its traditions back to the time of Maria Theresa and the renowned botanist Nicolaus von Jacquin. Every year in mid-April, the garden also hosts the popular rare plant fair, from which avid gardeners can take home exotic seeds, flowers, and vegetables.

The Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna covers eight hectares and is in the immediate vicinity of the gardens of Belvedere Palace in Vienna's third district. Tracing its history back, we reach the year 1754, when Empress Maria Theresa founded the Hortus Vindobonensis Botanicus together with the famous botanist Nicolaus von Jacquin, who was also one of the first rectors of the garden. His son Joseph von Jacquin succeeded him in the position and worked together with a number of other botanists from the country. The building of the Institute of Botany was opened in

1905. The Pharmaceutical Garden, which is in Baroque style, also dates from 1754 and belongs to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Vienna.

Unfortunately, during the Second World War the institute and its greenhouses (around 1,500 square metres) were completely destroyed in the bombing of the city. They were later renovated and repaired, but are not open to the public. They are used mainly for scientific purposes, but sometimes host special exhibitions, during which visitors are admitted. After certain modifications, the Botanical Garden represents a synthesis between 19th-century garden landscapes and specific functional buildings from the present day. Several smaller areas in the garden are dedicated to specific themes such as useful plants, alpine flora, plant species in Austria, plant genetics, and evolution. Here you can “lose yourself” in the bamboo forest, which is widely used in the prevention of global warming.

Today, more than 9,000 plant species can be seen in the gardens, including arboreal tropical species, with particular interest attached to families such as *Annonaceae*, *Rubiaceae*, *Gesneriaceae*, *Bromeliaceae* and *Orchidaceae*.

Rare Plant Fair

For the 16th time, the plant fair organized by the Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna presented rare and unusual plants and seeds from all over the globe. Companies and organizations in the field of horticulture, including staff of the Botanical Garden, private suppliers, collectors, and experts, showcased a wide range of unfamiliar plant species and held informative seminars for all those wishing to immerse themselves in the world of plants. We learned curious facts about the origin of the first plant and about the “strategies” that plant species have developed over time to survive under unfavourable conditions, how they communicate with one another, how they reproduce, and why life on planet Earth is unthinkable without their existence.