

Flower Power

Garden Roots Run Deep, Spread Wide

(NAPSA)—Since the first days of the Carolina Colony, fine gardening has been a tradition in this mecca of horticulture.

In fact, the distinctive butterfly gardens at Middleton Place in South Carolina can boast of being the first formal gardens in the English Colonies, forged from marshy woodlands along the banks of the Ashley River around 1740. Next door is eclectic Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, owned by the same family for more than 325 years and a birthplace of ornamentally grown azaleas and camellias.

Nowadays, visitors can take in those historic sites along with leading-edge horticulture and everything in between with just a short drive around the Palmetto State.

Highlights include Riverbanks Zoo & Garden in Columbia, where formal and informal plantings join an impressive stand of old rose varieties and a cooling shade garden.

There's also the 250-acre South Carolina Botanical Garden at Clemson University, itself a noted institution of horticultural and agricultural research. Notable public gardens also include Kalmia Gardens at Coker College, where a 60-foot drop in elevation provides for a surprising diversity in plants and wildlife. Hopelands Gardens in picturesque Aiken, meanwhile, is a 14-acre former estate where, behind a serpentine brick wall, there is a canopy of ancient oaks, deodara cedars and magnolias.



A winding path through Hopelands Gardens reveals a variety of beautiful plants, from daffodils and the explosion of azaleas to dogwoods and other flowering shrubs and trees.

Two commercial operations also bear mention. Park Seed in Greenwood is one of the nation's largest and oldest mail-order operations with a nine-acre trial garden. Orchid fans and plant lovers of all kinds also wouldn't want to miss Carter and Holmes Orchids in Newberry, where 18 greenhouses offer one of the largest lineups of the prized plants in the nation.

Last but not least is 9,000-acre Brookgreen Gardens on the coast near Myrtle Beach. Visitors will find the largest collection of outdoor sculpture in the country amid a Lowcountry setting of lush plantings, live oaks and even a pontoon boat tour of long-abandoned ancient rice fields.

For more information on all this and more, go to www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com.