

# SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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## Botanical Gardens to Love

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### Gabis Arboretum at Purdue University Northwest

Six years ago, when last I visited, this garden was called Taltree Arboretum. Sometime in the intervening years, the Arboretum has been purchased by Purdue University Northwest and renamed. There are 300 acres, including a marsh garden, rose garden, small shrub and perennial areas and a very large collection of oak trees from all over the world. Indeed, the signature plant of the Arboretum is the oak and there are huge specimens of various varieties to be enjoyed. Pathways wend throughout the acreage, not all of which are handicap accessible. The best part of this arboretum is, in my opinion, the miniature railway garden. The 8 working lines travel through 10 vignettes which span historic periods from 1863 to 1915. The miniature plants and landscapes created in the “G” (Garden) gauge railway exhibit are simply captivating. “G” gauge is 1/2 inch = 1 foot, much bigger than usual train displays, which allows visitors to be visually transported into the world before their eyes. There are hundreds of conifers, dwarf and miniature, as well as deciduous trees, such as ginkgoes, so tiny you have to wonder if they are real (*they are!*). There were even blooming “waterlilies” no bigger than the tip of my little finger! Signs throughout the exhibit outline the creation of the garden, which has over 800 tons of limestone, 6 water features including some spectacular waterfalls, and 14 feet of elevation (which represents 336 feet in the perspective of the garden). Other signage describes the individual plants used in each vignette.

The pathways surrounding the railway garden are handicap accessible.

Gabis Arboretum is located between Merrillville and Valparaiso, Indiana, and the railway garden is tended by the Porter County Purdue Master Gardener group. Admission is \$10 a carload, but if you happen to be a member at Bernheim Arboretum, the entrance fee is waived when you show your card.

While the Arboretum itself is open from April 1 to October 31 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time, the railway garden opens May 1st to the public on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - but the trains run only in good weather! The exhibit is still open, however, and the plantings will still wow you! Check it out at: <https://www.pnw.edu/gabis-arboretum/>

*Editor's Note: Some wonderful miniature plants and garden items are available at Benedict's Nursery, 5623 W. 1300 N, Nappanee, IN 46550, (574)773-2254 (they do not have a website). They have been a vendor at several state Master Gardener conferences.*



All photos:

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