
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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Botanical Gardens to Love

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We recently made a visit to Madison, Wisconsin, to visit my son and his family. We took the time to explore the nearby **Olbrich Botanical Gardens**. It was really fun to discover so many special gardens tucked into the 16 acres. We each had our favorites but all agreed that our top two choices were the Bolz Conservatory and the Thai Pavilion and Gardens.

The Bolz Conservatory was such a delight! The paths wind in and around and up so that you cross over waterways on a bridge and by a waterfall. The walkways lead you up to the upper story of the trees. Birds and butterflies dart around. My granddaughter was having such fun discovering so many hidden surprises and beauty tucked in and all around us. They showcase 650 tropical and exotic plants.

The second area we all agreed on as a favorite was the Thai Pavilion and Gardens. Gilded and so beautiful and unexpected! It was built as a thank you to the University of Wisconsin-Madison from the Thai Government and the Thai Wisconsin-Madison Alumni. UW-Madison has one of the largest Thai student populations of any US college or university. It was built in Thailand of teak with ceramic roof tiles so it can withstand the Wisconsin winters. It was then deconstructed, packed into shipping crates and traveled with the 9 Thai artisans that had built it. It was then reconstructed on Olbrich Botanical Gardens grounds near Lake Monona, since water represents good health and prosperity in Thai

culture. It was built with no nails or screws. The gold leaf etchings and intricate decorations are very spectacular! It is one of only four that are located outside of Thailand. The Thai Gardens that surround the Pavilion have glazed water jars, elephant sculpture, and clipped tree art to resemble a traditional Thai garden.

The Olbrich Botanical Gardens has won numerous awards. It was once voted as one of the top ten most inspiring gardens in America by Horticulture Magazine. They are a sustainable garden by design. The sixteen acres showcase Midwest hardy selections of plants for Zone 4 and 5. Olbrich Botanical Gardens are operated as a public-private partnership between the City of Madison Parks Division and the Olbrich Botanical Society.

Other specialty gardens on site to explore are the Rose Garden, Sunken Garden, Perennial Garden, Herb Garden, Rock Garden, Meadow Garden, Wildflower Garden, Rain Garden, and the Birch Walk. There are annual containers and sculptures to enjoy as well.

The outdoor gardens have free admissions and are open daily with summer hours being 10-6. The Bolz Conservatory had a \$6 fee with hours of 10-4. The address is 3330 Atwood Ave, Madison, Wisconsin. The website is www.olbrich.org. All references were taken from this website as well as personal observations and photographs.

