

2012 GARDEN TRIPS WITH GEORGE



**Join Garden Writer George Weigel
On Visits to These Great Gardens**

*Operated by Lowee's Group Tours, Harrisburg
Sponsored by Stauffers of Kissel Hill garden centers*

Treat yourself to a day with a bus load of fellow gardeners seeing some of our region's finest gardens. Trips include all admissions, transportation and some meals. George will give you timely gardening tips, answer your gardening questions and offer insights on what you'll be seeing -- plus giving away garden prizes and \$25 gift cards to Stauffers of Kissel Hill garden centers.

Philadelphia Flower Show

March 5, 7, 8 and 9 (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday)

This is the world's biggest and oldest indoor flower show and is a spectacle that everyone – including non-gardeners – should have on their must-see list. Many people make it a point to go every year. All three dates sold out last year, so we're adding a fourth in 2012. The 2012 theme is Hawaii, and the show will feature 40+ blooming display gardens, more than 100 vendors and an impressive amateur plant competition. Cost is a bargain at \$79, which includes your show ticket and drop-off at the front door.

Temple's Ambler Arboretum & Jenny Rose Carey's Garden

Fri., June 22

Originally home to the ground-breaking Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women, the Ambler Arboretum is now a 187-acre campus of Temple University with 14 themed garden areas, including conifers, groundcovers, woodland plants, native plants, tropicals and herbs, plus a winter garden, a labyrinth and the newest feature, the Ernesta Ballard Healing Garden.

Jenny Rose Carey is director of the Ambler Arboretum, and her 4½-acre home garden ranks No. 1 on George's list of best home gardens he's ever seen. It's got numerous sitting nooks, a gardener cottage, a dry garden that's never watered, a beautiful pond with paver sitting area and many great plant combos and whimsical surprises.

We'll then tour the private gardens of landscaper Michael Colibraro, who built Ambler's conifer garden and who has an interesting bonsai and conifer collection. Cost is \$115, including lunch.

Garden Walk Buffalo

July 27-29

You like garden tours? This one's the big mamma of them all, featuring more than 350 home gardens open to ogglers on a single weekend each July. Even with two days to see them, you'll barely make a dent in the number, which is why we're offering this return trip in 2012. Ideal for getting ideas for your own yard.

We'll stay over two nights at the classy Buffalo Hyatt Regency, stopping at Sonnenberg Gardens in Canandaigua and Casa Larga Winery in Fairport on the way up. We'll also see the flower trials at the Erie Basin Marina, take a cruise on Lake Erie and visit the Buffalo Japanese Garden. Cost is \$399 per person double, including hotel, wine-tasting, cruise and four meals.

New York Flowers By Rail and By Sea

Fri., Sept. 14

The rail part of this day trip is New York City's new High Line, a unique landscaped park with grasses, trees, wildflowers and seating atop elevated rail tracks that used to be a train route through the West Side's meat-packing district. It also offers a new look at the city below.

The by-the-sea part is an afternoon visit to Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island. The highlight is the Chinese Scholars Garden, authentically built by 40 Chinese artisans in the late 1990s. We'll also see several smaller gardens, two museums and other cultural buildings in an 83-acre park that used to be a seaside home for retired sailors. Cost is \$137, including dinner.

Autumn Color in the Capital

Fri., Oct. 19

We'll start with a tram tour through the huge tree and shrub collection at Washington's U.S. National Arboretum, which should be taking on fall color by then. We'll also have time to tour the arboretum's conifer collection, the bonsai garden, the herb garden and more.

In the afternoon, we'll tour Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Md. This is a county park that has a better collection of theme gardens and great home-landscape plants than a lot of botanical gardens. It's also got a butterfly house, a woodland walk and many nice fall-foliage plants. Cost is \$95, including lunch.

New York Botanical Garden Christmas Show

Fri., Nov. 30

This venerable NYC botanic garden has one of the most beautiful conservatories in the world, and for Christmas, it houses an amazing collection of miniature New York landmarks all made out of plant materials. Trains run through the whole thing. Crowded but worth it. Cost is \$159, including lunch.

Winterthur and Longwood for Christmas

Fri., Dec. 7

We'll spend the morning at the "other" duPont place down the road from Longwood Gardens – Winterthur, which offers an intriguing house tour, a pretty fair holiday-decorating display in its own right, and if the weather is reasonably decent, a tram tour of the rolling grounds.

December is actually Longwood's most-visited month -- and you'll see why with its stunning outdoor lights and Christmas-adorned conservatories. We'll have lunch there, then hours of free time to peruse the plants and decorations. We're staying after dark to see the lights better. Cost is \$99, including lunch.

D.C. Holiday Conservatories and Shopping

Wed., Dec. 12

This Christmas-time trip is for conservatory lovers (or plant geeks who don't give up just because they're chased inside). We'll spend the morning at Merrifield Garden Center -- one of D.C.'s best -- where we'll hear a talk on decorating with plants and have free time to shop the greenhouse and Christmas shop. Then we'll head to the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington to see the tropics decorated for Christmas along with D.C. landmarks made out of plant materials and trains running throughout. The last stop is an after-dark visit to Brookside Gardens' amazing Garden of Lights, featuring 1 million lights strung over topiary frames and live plants. It also has two conservatories with trains. Cost is \$105, including lunch and dinner.

For more information or to register for any of the trips:

Call Lowee's at 657-9658 or at toll-free 1-888-345-6933.

Or email CKelly@Lowees.com

Pickups are at both East Shore and West Shore locations.