

Gardens Galore – Five-Day Itinerary

Northeastern Oklahoma has long been known as Green Country, but the whole state blooms with color — especially during the spring. This tour takes travelers on a journey through central and eastern Oklahoma to see some of the state’s most beautiful gardens.

Day 1

The tour begins in Oklahoma City at **Tony’s Tree Plantation**, a garden center, nursery and landscaping contractor. There, you’ll explore the 10-acre outdoor showroom, a beautifully landscaped area with koi ponds and water features that blend right into the natural landscape. You’ll attend one of the center’s fascinating classes on a topic like container gardening before leaving for lunch. Then it’s on to the **Myriad Botanical Gardens**. This lush paradise in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City is a favorite of locals and visitors alike. Its showpiece is the **Crystal Bridge Conservatory**, a stunning structure filled with thousands of tropical plants. You can tour the gardens and conservatory and maybe even attend one of the gardens’ fascinating workshops. Next up is the **Oklahoma City Zoo & Botanical Gardens**, where you’ll tour the zoo’s 10,000-square-foot water conservation garden, which displays water-tolerant plants. Also found throughout the zoo are many Oklahoma-native species, along with trees and plants rarely seen in the state like hardy bamboo and cold hardy palms. You can also see tons of colorful flowering bulbs like tulips, hyacinths and iris. The next stop will be the **Will Rogers Gardens**, where you can take a class on a fun topic like floral design or vertical gardening. You’ll then have time to explore the gardens, taking in the stunning perennials in the Charles E. Sparks Color Garden and the native and rare trees in the arboretum. The true showpiece of the garden is the elegant conservatory, a refurbished Lord & Burnham greenhouse from the 1920s.

After dinner at one of Oklahoma City’s delicious restaurants, you’ll check into your hotel for the night.

Day 2

After breakfast, you’ll head northeast to the college town of Stillwater to tour **The Botanic Garden of Oklahoma State University**. This lovely area serves as the studio garden for “Oklahoma Gardening,” the longest-running how-to gardening program in the nation, and you’ll get to see projects from the show. These manicured gardens have a little bit of everything, including a vegetable garden, an orchard and a Japanese garden. Because of the variety of plants, there’s always

something blooming. Afterward, you can enjoy a box lunch at the gardens or try one of Stillwater’s many restaurants.

Next you’ll travel on to Ponca City, a beautiful town in northern Oklahoma with a rich history. Ponca City was settled during the 1893 land run but really came to life with the oil boom that began in the 1910s. Your first stop in the city will be the **Lester & Mary Cann Memorial Botanical Gardens**, where you’ll see an eclectic variety of plants as you stroll along the six-acre gardens’ many paths. There are annuals, perennials, herbs and tropical plants like banana trees, and you might even catch a glimpse of local wildlife like geese and white-tailed deer. You can also tour the grounds’ 1908 farmhouse, which is used for events and by local garden clubs.

Next is the **Ponca City Art Center**, where you’ll check out the center’s current exhibits and tour the Soldani Mansion, the 1920s-era building that the center calls home. As you explore the two-story, prairie-style mansion, you’ll hear the story of the Soldani family — successful farmers and ranchers who made it big during the oil boom. Then you can make some art of your own with an instructor-led activity like glazing a birdhouse or painting a garden scene.

After that, it’s time to move on to the **Marland Mansion & Estate**. Built in the 1920s, this opulent former home of politician and oil baron E.W. Marland has long been nicknamed the “Palace on the Prairie” for its staggering size and sense of grandeur. You’ll tour the Italian-inspired mansion and beautifully kept grounds while hearing tales of the stranger-than-true past of Marland and his family.

Day 3

The tour’s third day begins with a trip to the tiny northeastern Oklahoma town of Shidler to visit **The Bivin Garden**, where what was once six acres of pastureland with a few trees on it has been transformed into a vibrant garden. The garden started in the 1980s when the late Ray Bivin decided his English wife Mollie needed some flowerbeds. Things blossomed from there, and the Bivins added a little bit of everything to see

what might grow in the Osage County climate. Today, the charming garden has something to see in every season, including many varieties of roses. Unusual rocks Ray brought back from trips to Ecuador and West Africa add an international flair.

Next, you'll head southeast to Pawhuska to **The Pioneer Woman Mercantile**. This two-story, early 1900s building that long ago housed the Osage Mercantile is now a bustling deli, bakery and general store created by Food Network star Ree Drummond. Take time to shop for some Pioneer Woman merchandise and made-in-Oklahoma goodies, and then enjoy a box lunch from the deli.

After that, it's time to travel on to Tulsa. The state's second-largest city has long been known for its world-class cultural attractions and natural beauty, and one of its newest attractions is the **Tulsa Botanic Garden**. The garden opened in 2009 and has grown rapidly, adding a spring bulbs display and the Children's Discover Garden — an enchanting environment that's also been a hit with adults — in 2016. The garden has both expertly manicured areas and more natural spaces with wildflowers. Make sure to take in the A.R. and Marylouise Tandy Floral Terraces. This beautiful area features more than three acres of trees, shrubs, roses and perennials set in terraced beds on a hillside with lovely views of downtown Tulsa. After touring the gardens, you'll go to dinner at one of the city's many great restaurants and then check into your hotel for the night.

Day 4

Start the day at Tulsa's **Woodward Park**, where there's much to see. Azaleas and tulips are among the plants you'll find throughout the expertly manicured grounds. The park is home to the **Tulsa Garden Center** and includes several must-see areas. The beautiful **Tulsa Municipal Rose Garden** has been blooming since 1934, and the **Linnaeus Teaching Garden** is a volunteer-maintained area where visitors can learn techniques for growing vegetables, annuals, perennials and other plants.

The next stop is one of Tulsa's crown jewels: the **Philbrook Museum of Art**. Built in the 1920s as a home for oilman Waite Phillips and later donated to the

city of Tulsa, the museum holds an expansive collection that includes European, African, Asian and Native American art, plus modern and contemporary collections. Its greatest treasure, though, might be its 23 acres of gardens. Inspired by the gardens at Villa Lante in Northern Italy, this area offers a lush landscape that is truly breathtaking, and you'll also see a variety of outdoor sculptures as you walk along the gardens' footpaths.

After a lunch overlooking the gardens at the museum's restaurant, you'll head over to **Garden Deva Sculpture Company**. This gallery and studio is filled with whimsical, metal sculptures and art pieces for homes and gardens that are designed by artist Lisa Regan, along with works by other local artists. You can look around the store and take a peek at the shop in the back to learn how Regan works her magic. And if you find a bench or trellis you just can't live without, Garden Deva can ship it back home for you.

Next, you'll travel southeast to Muskogee and **Honor Heights Park**. This 132-acre park is legendary for its azaleas — best seen during the monthlong Azalea Festival in April — but tulips, redbuds and dogwoods are among the other beauties you'll find in abundance. If you're visiting from mid-May through October, you can also go inside the park's butterfly house to see free-flying, native species of butterflies. Then it's off to **Whitlock Wishouse Bed & Breakfast**. Built in the 1950s, this 10,000-square-foot home holds art and furniture collected from 38 different countries. The grounds are just as exquisite, with colorful azaleas and roses. You'll tour the home and gardens and then settle in for a delicious dinner. After that, you'll head to one of Muskogee's many hotels for a good night's sleep before starting your journey home in the morning.

Point to Point Gardens Galore

Day 1

10:00 am Tony's Tree Plantation – Container Gardening or similar class and tour
12:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm Myriad Gardens – herb and edibles and tour
3:00 pm Oklahoma City Zoo & Biological Garden
5:00 pm Will Rogers Gardens
6:30 pm Dinner
Overnight Oklahoma City

Day 2

9:00 am Depart
10:15 am Botanic Garden at Oklahoma State – demonstration and tour
12:00 pm Lunch (can do boxed lunch at the garden)
1:00 pm Depart
2:00 pm Cann Memorial Garden – Ponca City
3:30 pm Ponca City Art Center – Make a bird house
5:00 pm Marland Mansion – dinner and tour
Overnight Ponca City

Day 3

9:00 am Depart
10:00 am The Bivin Garden
11:30 am depart
12:15 pm Pawhuska – The Mercantile (box lunch)
2:00 pm Depart
3:00 pm Tulsa Botanic Garden – Tour and activity
5:00 pm Depart
Overnight Tulsa

Day 4

9:00 am Depart
9:15 am Woodward Park: Tulsa Garden Center / Linnaeus Teaching Garden / Tulsa Municipal Rose Garden
12:00 pm Philbrook – Lunch and Garden Tour
1:45 pm Garden Deva
2:30 pm Depart
3:30 pm Honor Heights Park Tour and Butterfly House
4:45 pm Depart
5:00 pm Dinner at Whitlock Wishouse Bed & Breakfast
Overnight Muskogee

Day 5

Return Home