



Lily Ponds Fact Sheet

Overview

The Lily Ponds encompasses four acres in total, including two large and three small ponds, and stands of bamboo and conifer. The ponds are home to koi, turtles, frogs, waterfowl, and aquatic plants.

History

The Lily Ponds were the first garden created at the Huntington. William Hertrich established them in 1904 at a site where natural springs emerged from rocks along the Raymond Hill Fault. At one time, the ponds were heated so that giant AMAZON WATER LILIES could be grown there. In 2008 the ponds were relined with concrete for the first time since their creation. In recent years concrete walkways and a viewing area were added, as well.

Landscape

The ponds are completely man-made with pumps recycling and recirculating the water. Surrounded by bamboo and conifers, the ponds are home to a seasonal assortment of aquatic plants and well as some notable sculptures. The bronze St. Francis, patron saint of animals, was sculpted by Clara Huntington (Henry's daughter-in-law), cast in 1924-26, and bequeathed to the Huntington in 1965. The other two sculptures at the east side of the lowest pond were purchased by Mr. Huntington in 1910. One is a stone fountain ornament depicting a seahorse emerging from an acanthus leaf. The other is a gothic stone basin (vasque) on eight columns from the 15th century.

Collections

Aquatic plants have various adaptations for life in the water. Shoreline plants like wet roots but can tolerate flooding and short, dry spells. Emergent plants grow in shallow water with their roots and part of their stems underwater. The leaves, stems, flowers and seeds of emergent plants grow above water. Free floating plants are small, even tiny, and do not stay in one place; they float with the water. Submerged plants grow entirely underwater and are rooted in the bottom bud. Submerged plants can grow in shallow water if there is enough light.

- Along the shoreline of the uppermost pond is the very same type of GIANT PAPYRUS (*Cyperus papyrus*) that was used to make writing paper in ancient Egypt.
- Two of the emergent plants at the ponds garner a lot of attention. After centuries of cultivation, today's WATER LILIES (*Nymphaea* species) are a mixture of many cultivated kinds. These plants bloom in various hues from mid-spring through mid-autumn. And don't miss the summer flowering LOTUS (*Nelumbo* species), which usually blooms in mid-July. First planted here in 1905, these magnificent relatives of the water lily unfurl pink and white flowers eight or nine inches wide.

- RUSH (*Juncus*), NEW ZEALAND FLAX (*Phormium*), SWAMP IRIS (*Iris* species), *Miscanthus*, and DWARF PAPYRUS (*Cyperus prolifer*) are shoreline plants found at the ponds.
- WATER HYACINTH (*Eichhornia* species) and WATER LETTUCE (*Pistia stratiotes*) are floating plants that can be found seasonally in the ponds.
- ALGAE can be either free-floating or submerged.

BAMBOO belongs to the grass family. The Huntington grows more than seventy-five kinds of bamboo. Six species form dense groves and passages around the lily ponds. Most are either clump-forming or running. The difference is in how far they send out underground stems, called rhizomes, before sending up vertical stems called culms. After bamboo culms emerge, they grow in height, but not in diameter, until they reach their ultimate height in two to four months. Bamboos rarely flower, but once they do, the stand may die. Some of the tropical, clumping bamboos around the Lily Ponds are 100 years old.

- PUNTING-POLE BAMBOO (*Bambusa tuldoidea*) west of the lower ponds; to 55' tall
- BEECHEY BAMBOO (*B. beecheyana*) west of the lower ponds; to 40' tall
- TIMBER BAMBOO (*B. oldhamii*) east of the ponds is a specimen planted in 1906 as one of Henry Huntington's first garden acquisitions; grows to 55' tall
- SILVER STRIPE BAMBOO (*B. glaucescens* 'Silver Stripe') has decoratively colored leaves.
- PANDA BAMBOO (*Thamnocalamus spathiflorus*) is the favorite food of pandas.
- GIANT BAMBOO (*Dendrocalamus brandisii*) grows to be the tallest in the world (to 118')
- BIG LEAF BAMBOO (*Indocalamus tessellatus*) has the largest leaves of any bamboo.

CONIFERS: West of the ponds is the conifer collection with several landmark trees, including one known to be the largest specimen in the United States: TAIWANIA (*Taiwania cryptomerioides*), a redwood relative native to Taiwan and China, planted about 1908. Another landmark, the DAWN REDWOOD (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), had been known only from fossils until the discovery of a living tree in 1948. Native to a small area of China, it is a relative of California's coast redwood.

Other notable trees to look for in this area are the ARAUCARIAS, tall cone-bearing trees native to South America, the Pacific Islands, and Australia, and the largest SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA (*Magnolia grandiflora*) on the grounds, which dominates an area northeast of the ponds.

Programs

- As staffing permits, a Plant Discovery Cart designed to facilitate exploration of the Lily Ponds is stationed near the lower ponds. It has activities for families with an emphasis on the young children who love this area.