

The Botanical Garden of the University of Würzburg: An old garden with a strong modern scientific background

History

Founded in 1696 as a medicinal garden (*Hortus medicus*) for a local hospital, the Botanical Garden of the Julius Maximilians University of Würzburg was originally located in the city centre of Würzburg. In 1945, during the last weeks of World War II, it was almost completely destroyed by a bombing raid. This dramatic event and the city's need of space for development in the 1950s necessitated a relocation of the Botanical Garden to its present site on the outskirts of Würzburg. This relocation took place from 1960 to 1968. A former clay pit and a vineyard in the southern part of Würzburg were used as grounds for the Botanical Garden as it presently exists. Today it covers a total area of about nine hectares, including 2,500 m² of greenhouse space.



North American prairie (left) and guided tour in the tropical greenhouse

The Botanical Garden was strongly influenced by the outstanding characters of its directors e.g. August Schenk (1856-1867), Julius von Sachs (1868-1897), Gregor Kraus (1898-1914), Hans Burgeff (1925-1958), Wilhelm Simonis (1958-1967), and Otto L. Lange (1967-1992).

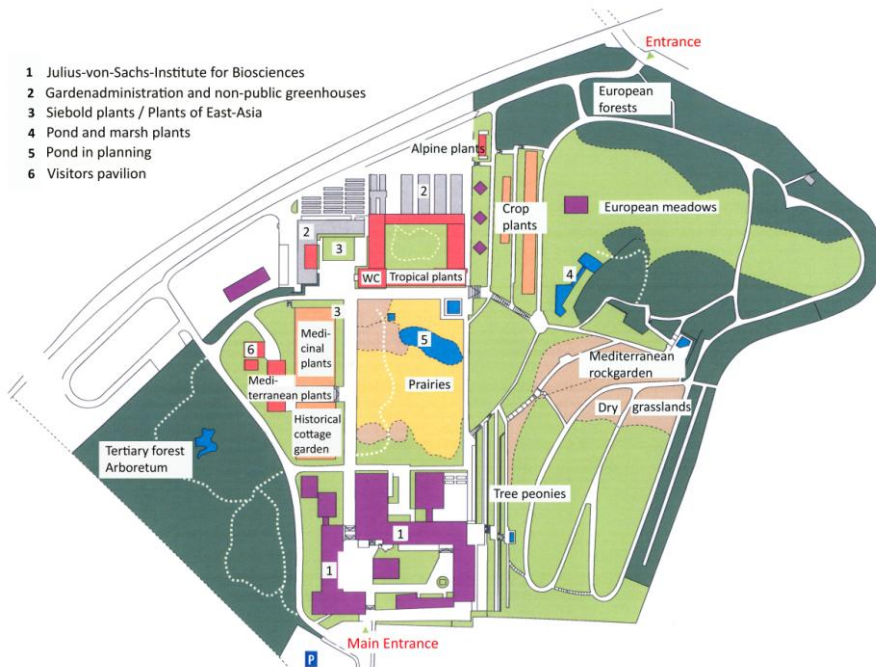
The Botanical Garden is located in the direct neighborhood to three botanical research departments, forming the campus of the Julius von

Sachs Institute for Biosciences. Currently, the Garden's main purpose is to support research and teaching. In 2003 it became a central unit of the University. Seven of the Garden's 15 glass houses are accessible to the public while eight are devoted to propagation and maintenance of the collections. From 2006 to 2008 the greenhouses with tropical and subtropical plants were technically modernized.

with about 200 species is related to Philipp-Franz von Siebold, who was born in Würzburg in 1796 and substantially contributed to the botanical exploration of Japan.

Research and Teaching

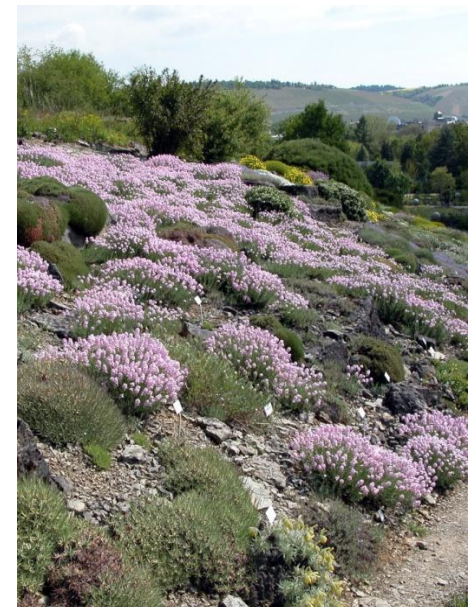
The Botanical Garden is strongly involved in the education of students on the B.Sc., M.Sc. and Ph.D. levels. Students of many different disciplines are provided with the opportunity to get in touch with plant biodiversity. More than 10,000 plant species are cultivated in the Botanical Garden. Many important scientific collections and a herbarium with about 100,000 specimens are available. The Botanical Garden supports a wide range of research projects and scientists from various disciplines access its resources. The Institute of Organic Chemistry at Würzburg University, for example, screens tropical plants grown in the Botanical Garden for the presence of phytochemicals potentially useful in pharmaceutical preparations.



Plan of the Botanical Garden of the University of Würzburg

Structure of the Garden

The Botanical Garden is situated in the vicinity of vineyards on a limestone slope facing south-east. This allows a multifaceted structuring of the area into different thematic divisions. Generally, most of them are designed according to geographical units, e. g. forests or meadows representing typical plant communities. Favorable climatic conditions with dry and hot summers allow cultivating communities originating from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean area. Other thematic divisions, for example, present collections of medicinal plants, crops and an arboretum. A special collection



Scientific collection of bulb plants (left) and Mediterranean scrubland (right)

In a recently initiated project the Botanical Garden provides special opportunities for the education of students aspiring to become teachers. In a practical approach the students accompanied by scientists and didacticians learn how to develop and perform classes or guided tours for pupils of different ages and from different types of schools. This practical experience is intended to expand their practical teaching capabilities.

Conservation

In the Botanical Garden a considerable number of highly endangered species is cultivated. These so-called *ex-situ* projects are carried out in close collaboration with regional conservation authorities. The garden also holds important scientific collections of bulb plants e.g. of the genera *Iris*, *Crocus*, *Cyclamen*, *Fritillaria*, and *Narcissus*. Some of these rare and endangered species are propagated for re-introduction or population reinforcement.

Outreach

The Garden is open daily and admission is free. This reflects the University's obligation to provide botanical, horticultural and environmental knowledge to the general public. Each year about 30,000 visitors profit from this opportunity. Numerous guided tours, exhibitions and workshops are offered round the year. Special guided tours are organized for about 200 school classes each year. And last but not least, many people enjoy the Botanical Garden for inspiration and recreation.

Contact information

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Open daily, free admission
April – September: 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
October – March: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.