



The Ringling

BAYFRONT GARDENS





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The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art is renowned for its influential collection of European, Asian and contemporary art and its spectacular circus collection, but did you know The Ringling is also home to 66 acres of grounds and gardens? The Ringling is proud to be a Level II Arboretum, featuring the Millennium Tree Trail and spectacular views of Sarasota Bay. Stunning gardens include Mable Ringling’s Rose Garden, the Dwarf Garden—a shade garden featuring bamboo and banyan trees, and the Secret Garden featuring Florida-friendly plants and pollinators.

WHY EXPLORE THE GARDENS?

The Bayfront Gardens are ripe with lesson opportunities. Whether you teach science, math, English language arts, visual art, social studies, or are just looking for a great picnic spot, the Bayfront Gardens provide a rich learning environment for students of all ages. The student workbook “Growing at The Ringling”, provides STEAM activities for students to take a learning scavenger hunt to key environmental areas throughout campus. This teacher guide has been designed to provide background and contextual information for teacher use in all areas of the Bayfront Gardens.

DWARF GARDEN

Lunch Spot



The Dwarf Garden is named for the statues that can be found throughout the garden. Dwarf statues such as these are associated with *commedia dell'arte* theatre during the Italian Renaissance, where each statue represents a stereotypical character in Italian comedy. These statues were originally installed surrounding the Historic Asolo Theater and continue to delight visitors adjacent to the theater. This garden includes ample picnic tables and a shady lawn perfect for large or small group lunches.

Bamboo and banyan abound in this secluded garden. There are three species of trees colloquially known as the Banyan on campus. The species predominating in this garden *Ficus altissima*, sometimes known as strangler figs, were originally imported from Indonesia and thrive in South Florida's warm climate. Banyans are hemi-epiphytes, spending part of their lives with roots above ground. These trees attach themselves to a host tree and send down long rope-like roots, known as aerial roots, which resemble tree trunks. Can you find a host tree in this garden?

KEY PLANTS



Banyan
Ficus altissima



Blue Bamboo
Bambusa chungii



Black Bamboo
Bambusa lako



Croton
Codiaeum variegatum



Devil's Ivy
Epipremnum aureum



What examples of ecological relationships can you find in this garden?

How have these plants adapted to thrive in the shade?

What types of animals might make this shade garden home?

TURTLE POND

The koi pond located adjacent to the Museum of Art is a fan favorite among our school students! This pond is home to a variety of wildlife including koi fish, a large colorful species of carp. Birds commonly frequent this pond, and you are likely to spot an egret, cormorant, or even a great blue heron while visiting. Keep a close eye on students while exploring this pond, as slippery plastic lines the edges of this pond to protect against erosion.

This pond is one of three filtration stations located throughout The Ringling campus. Water runoff from the roads collect in this pond, where the sand and sediment at the pond bottom filters out toxins or chemicals. Water filters through multiple filtration stations before ending up in Sarasota Bay.

KEY SPECIES



Koi
Cyprinus rubrofuscus



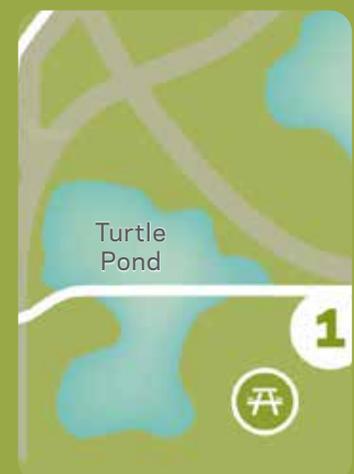
Soft-Shelled Turtle
Pelodiscus sinensis



Umbrella Flat Sedge
Cyperus involucratus



White Ibis
Eudocimus albus



How many animals can you see who make this pond their home?

What role do the reeds and flat sedge play in this ecosystem?

Why might The Ringling have created a series of man-made ponds to filter water? What environmental benefits does this filtration system create?

BOLGER PLAYSPACE

Lunch Spot 



The Bolger Playspace provides space for children to run, jump, and play in the lush environment at The Ringling. In addition to the jungle gyms, swings and slides you will discover laurel oak trees, banyan trees and an abundance of ferns. This shady playground also has ample picnic tables, making it a perfect location for lunch.

The Bayfront Gardens at The Ringling are free year-round. Families are always welcome to bypass the admissions counter and spend the day playing, exploring, and enjoying the tranquil grounds.

KEY PLANTS



Banyan
Ficus altissima



Laurel Oak
Quercus hemisphaerica



Cabbage Palms
Sabal palmetto



This playspace was designed to reflect the natural environment. What elements do you see repeated in both nature and in the equipment?

MABLE RINGLING'S ROSE GARDEN

Mable Ringling (1875-1929) loved gardening, especially growing roses. When Mable moved to this property in 1911, she started this elaborate rose garden, laid out in an Italian wagon wheel design. While none of the original roses planted by Mable survives, many of the 425 rose plants are of the same varieties she planted.

Please note: During the months of February and October the estate gardeners, with the help of many dedicated volunteers, cut back all of the roses. It usually takes two weeks to complete this work. Upon completion of the cut-back there are very few blooms. A beautiful flush of new blossoms is usually expected approximately six weeks after the cut-back.

KEY PLANTS



Cramoisi Superieur
China



Anna Olivier
Tea



Madame Antoine Mari
Tea, Earth-Kind



Spice
Bermuda, found, Earth-Kind



Marie Daly
Polyantha, found, Earth-Kind



Arctic Blue
Floribunda

Bermuda - refers to roses indigenous to the island of Bermuda

China - refers to roses indigenous to Southwest China

Earth-Kind - roses that are naturally disease resistant and require fewer pesticides to care for

Floribunda - meaning "many-flowering", roses that were created by humans to flower abundantly

Found - roses naturally found in the wild, with no human tampering

Tea - roses with pointed petals, named for their fragrance being reminiscent of black tea

What is your favorite rose in the garden? Why?

What differences do you notice between the roses' shape, smell, or color?



SECRET GARDEN



Just north of Ca' d'Zan is Mable's Secret Garden, where she, John, and his sister Ida Ringling North are buried. Mable created this garden with plants given to her by friends and neighbors during her winters at Ca' d'Zan. Though none of Mable's original plants survive, today the Secret Garden is full of Florida-friendly plants. Students can expect to see bees, beetles, and butterflies busy at work in this garden.

Mable originally planted many varieties of plants in this garden, but over time, nature reclaimed the garden and the garden was lost. The Secret Garden was rediscovered in the 1970s by a local Boy Scout Troop who helped restore the once overgrown and hidden garden.

KEY PLANTS



Powderpuff

Calliandra haematocephala



Bottle Brush

Callistemon viminalis



Salvia

Salvia coccinea



Porterweed

Stachytarpheta cayennensis, S. indica



Sweet potato vine

Ipomoea batatas



Blue Daze

Evolvulus glomeratus



Firebush

Hamelia patens

What characteristics of Florida weather might these Florida-friendly plants need to withstand?

What adaptations do you recognize in these plants that help them thrive in Florida's tropical climate?

BOLGER CAMPIELLO & PROMENADE

The Bolger Campiello and Promenade offer stunning views of Sarasota Bay and Longboat Key. This paved walk runs alongside the bay whose clear water offers glimpses into the ecosystems below. The Bolger Campiello is a paved area perfect for large group activities and picnic lunches by the bay. The marbled terrace of Ca' d'Zan is open to the public and infuses the glamor of historic Ca' d'Zan with the stunning natural beauty of Sarasota Bay.

KEY SPECIES



Royal Palm

Roystonea regia



Mullet

Mugil cephalus



Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis



Anhinga

Anhinga anhinga



Bottlenose Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus



How are ecosystems under water similar to ecosystems above land? How are they different?

What plant life can you see along the bay? What plant life can you see in the bay?

Why do you think the Ringlings chose to build their house directly on Sarasota Bay? What draws people to the waterfront? What dangers does building this close to the water pose?



MILLENNIUM TREE TRAIL



The Millennium Tree Trail was created to celebrate the turn of the new millennium and showcases trees that thrive in South Florida's hot and humid climate. Florida native trees such as the cabbage palm (the state tree of Florida), slash pine and laurel oak are scattered throughout the trail. Interwoven throughout the trail are non-native trees such as the Chinese Fan Palm, Queensland Bottle Tree, and Royal Poinciana, all of which thrive in the warm, seaside climate.

KEY TREES

FLORIDA NATIVES



Cabbage Palm
Sabal palmetto



Crepe Myrtle
Lagerstroemia indica



Southern Magnolia
Magnolia grandiflora



Gumbo Limbo
Bursera simaruba

RARE AND INTERESTING



Queensland Bottle Tree
Brachychiton rupestris



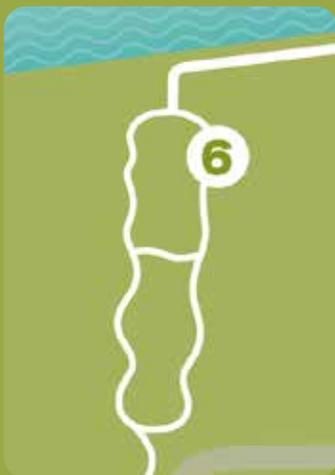
Royal Poinciana
Delonix regia



Chinese Fan Palm
Livistona chinensis

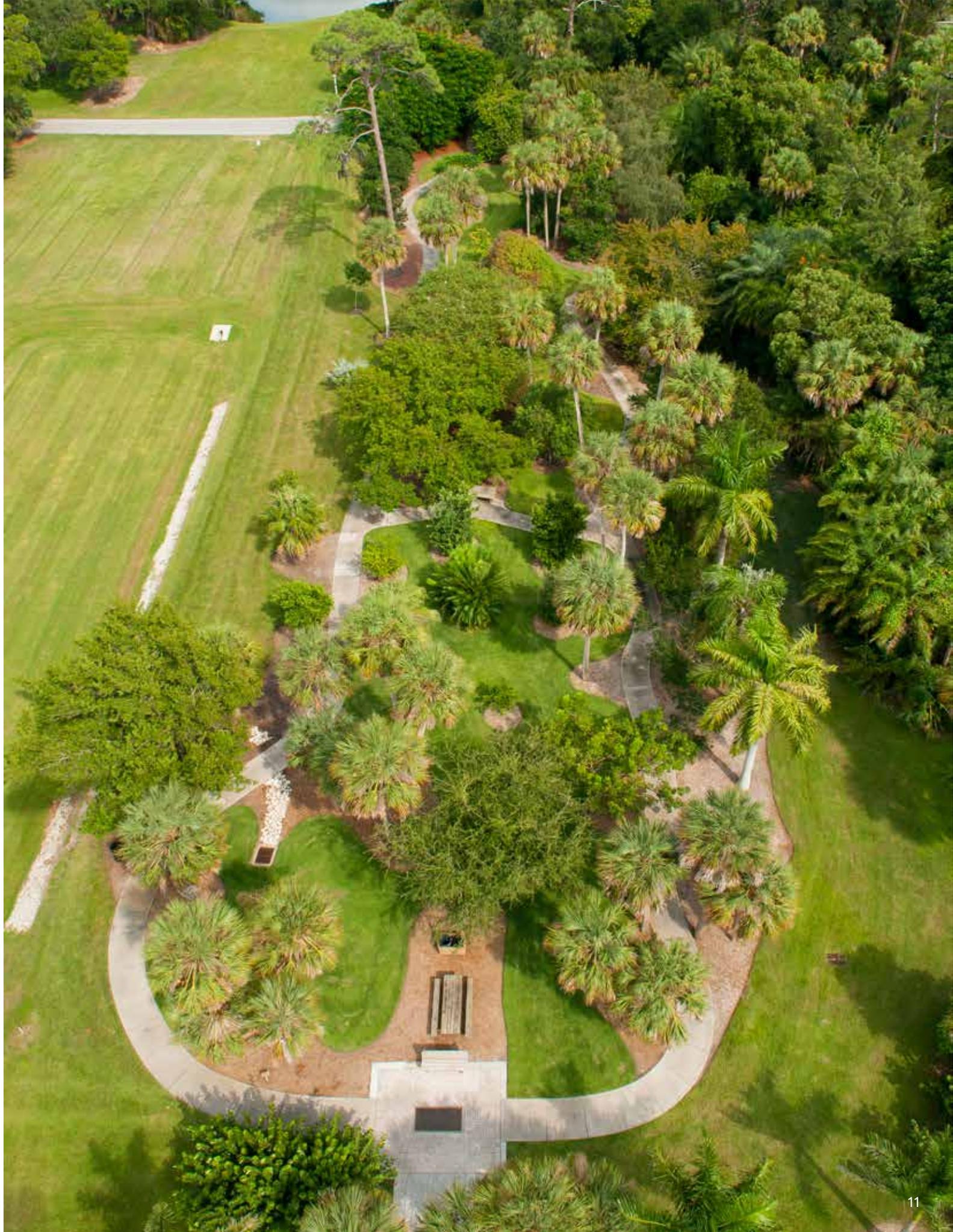


Silver Bismarck Palm
Bismarckia nobilis 'Silver'



What is your favorite tree on this trail? Why is that?

Sketch your favorite tree paying attention to trunk and leaf shape, height, canopy spread, and root formation. How is this tree similar to and different from those around it?





MAP KEY

- WALKWAY**
- TRAMWAY**
! Pedestrians please use caution on tramways
- ♿ **ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES**
- 🍴 **DINING**
 - 🍴 Muse at The Ringling
 - ☕ Museum Coffee Shop
 - 🌿 Banyan Cafe
 - 🌳 Picnic Area
- 🛍️ **SHOPPING**
 - 🛍️ Museum Store

BAYFRONT GARDENS

- 1** Dwarf Garden
- 2** Bolger Playspace
- 3** Mable Ringling's Rose Garden
- 4** Secret Garden + Ringling Burial Site
- 5** Bolger Campiello and Promenade
- 5a** Bolger Family Reflecting Pool
- 6** Millennium Tree Trail
- 7** Ellis Tea House

JOHNSON-BLALOCK EDUCATION CENTER

- 8** Art Library
- 9** Education Classroom

MUSEUM OF ART

- 10** Chao Lecture Hall (3rd floor)
- 11** Chao Center for Asian Art
- 12** Monda Gallery
- 13** Searing Wing + Joseph's Coat, a Skyspace by James Turrell
- 14** Original 21 Galleries

MCKAY VISITORS PAVILION

- 15** Historic Asolo Theater
- 16** Kotler-Coville Glass Pavilion