

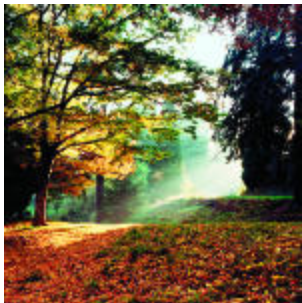
# Top 10 western gardens

You don't have to know a zinnia from zoysia to be wowed by these dazzling gardens



Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix

Photo: David Fenton



## **The Top 10 of Everything**

Find the West's best fall hikes, weekends, rafting trips, beach strolls, romantic cottages, ski resorts, waterfalls, bike rides, and more

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### **1. Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix**

#### **Chihuly in the desert**

**Go for the...** Dale Chihuly show, which busts out beyond gallery walls to plant his shimmering, neon-colored glass sculptures throughout the 145 acres of landscaped desert.

**You'll fall for the...** way Chihuly's fluid forms mimic the lines of the garden's agaves, cactus, and succulents, helping you see more clearly the plants' own sculptural beauty. Chihuly exhibition through May 31; \$15; reservations required; 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.; 480/481-8188. —Nora Burba Trulsson

## **2. The Water Conservation Garden, El Cajon, CA**

### **A succulent experience**

**Go for the...** exhibits and classes on how to keep your water bill from breaking the bank.

**You'll fall for the...** hardy plants that live with just a smidge of water. We're talking fleshy succulents in pink, yellow, green, burgundy, and blue, plus cactus blooming with magenta flowers. Bring the kids along as you learn how to grow veggies in a raised bed or check out dollhouse-size models of fire-safe landscaping. Have a lawn you love to neglect? Find smart solutions at the new meadow of drought-tolerant ornamental grasses. Free; 12122 Cuyamaca College Dr. W.; 619/660-0614 ext. 10. –Nan Sterman

## **3. Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena**

### **Alfresco art**

**Go for the...** galleries filled with Rembrandt portraits, Degas dancers, and Matisse prints.

**You'll fall for the...** sculpture garden outside, where the Maillol nudes nestled in reeds at the lily pond's edge look as inviting as mermaids. Beyond the daylilies, lavender, and bamboo, Gwynn Murrill's Sitting Cheetah seems so at home under the trees, you expect its tail to twitch.

A cafe tucked into one corner is a pleasant spot for a break before you head back to the galleries. Closed Tue; \$8; 411 W. Colorado Blvd.; 626/449-6840. –Sharon Cohoon

## **4. Earthbound Farm, Carmel Valley, CA**

### **A farm for all the senses**

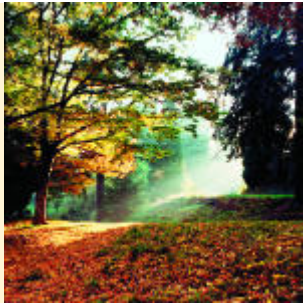
**Go for the...** loaded salad bar (and excellent veggie lasagna) at the farmstand run by Earthbound, the organic farm that pioneered pre-washed lettuce.

**You'll fall for the...** hands-on attitude at Earthbound's 30-acre research garden. Get dirt under your fingernails with a harvest-your-own-flowers walk or a pick-your-own-vegetables chef demo, or visit the snip-your-own-herbs garden. For a full-on sensory experience, wander barefoot through a low-growing chamomile labyrinth. Involve your kids in farm life at the children's garden, which has a tipi, tunnels, and peanut butter-scented plants that could be straight out of Dr. Seuss. \$20; 7250 Carmel Valley Rd.; 831/625-6219. –Abigail Peterson



• San Diego Zoo, San Diego

Photo: Andrea Gomez



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**5. Market by Jean-Georges, Vancouver, B.C.**

**Dinner in the sky**

**Go for a...** meal at the buzzy new restaurant (Jean-Georges in New York City earned three Michelin stars), set in the Shangri-La, a luxe hotel in British Columbia's tallest (61-story) building.

**You'll fall for the...** view from Market's terrace. Peer down at a Mondrian-inspired pattern of red, blue, and black plants carpeting a nearby rooftop. The terrace's bamboo grove is a peaceful place to soak in the scene. \$\$\$; 1128 W. Georgia St.; 604/689-1120. —Jim McCausland

**6. Kahanu Garden, Hana, Maui, HI**

**Tropical temple**

**Go for the...** black lava rock and awesome views of the jagged coastline from this garden along Maui's famous road to Hana.

**You'll fall for the...** Pi'ilanihale heiau, built out of lava rock in the late 13th century. One of the largest Hawaiian temples, it's as big as two football fields. Near its base, get a quick history lesson at the Canoe Garden, where you can see plants the first Hawaiians brought to the islands by canoe, including Niu (coconut), Ko (sugarcane), Kalo (taro), and Ki (ti leaves). Closed Sun; \$10; 650 'Ula'ino Rd.; 808/248-8912. —Kathleen Brenzel

## **7. San Diego Zoo, San Diego**

### **A walk on the wild (animal) side**

**Go for the...** chance to see endangered African monkeys cavorting in the Monkey Trails and Forest Tales exhibit.

**You'll fall for the...** layers of rain forest you discover as you descend from a walkway high in the canopy through the deep green leaves of a huge ficus that was painstakingly transported to this spot from its old zoo location — at the breakneck pace of 91 inches a day. Closer to the forest floor, you'll find bamboos, mango trees, papayas, and a dozen kinds of bananas. But the monkeys' favorite snack is the bright pink flower of the Hong Kong orchid tree. \$35; in Balboa Park, 2920 Zoo Dr.; 619/231-1515. —N.S.

## **8. Cornerstone Gardens, Sonoma, CA**

### **Wine country whimsy**

**Go for the...** good browsing in design shops and a boutique-wine collective.

**You'll fall for the...** whole concept of gardens as art. Check out the quirky work of top landscape architects in this nine-acre complex, including a “flying” picket fence that soars 5 feet above the ground, a tree encrusted in sky blue Christmas balls, and an orchard of plastic daisy pinwheels. These eye-poppingly unconventional landscapes make you really think. Free; 23570 State 121; 707/933-3010. —Katie Arnold

## **9. Denver Botanical Gardens at Chatfield, Littleton, CO**

### **Green family adventure**

**Go for the...** 10-foot sea scorpion and 9-foot slugs among the awesome giant prehistoric models in Jurassic Gardens: Evolution and Extinction, opening April 17.

**You'll fall for the...** birds that twitter along the banks of the creek in this nature preserve. The kids will go nuts for a 19th-century working farm that has chickens and sheep, plus the rough-hewn wooden treehouse in the new Deer Creek Discovery Children's Area. \$5 per vehicle; 8500 Deer Creek Canyon Rd.; 303/973-3705. —Lora J. Finnegan

## **10. Red Butte Garden and Arboretum, Salt Lake City**

### **Outdoor ed**

**Go for the...** hiking trails, walking paths, and primo picnic sites in Red Butte Canyon, which in summer swirls with butterflies and hummingbirds.

**You'll fall for the...** classes on herbs and native plants. Talk about an education; these workshops are offered by the University of Utah. And take in the carpets of 96 types of daffodils, blooming through late April. \$6; at the University of Utah, 300 Wakara Way; 801/581-4747. –L.J.F.