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# In Bloom

The Santa Fe Botanical Garden at Museum Hill breaks ground this August

By [Tim Kraemer](#)



Don't let the lack of paintings fool you, the **Santa Fe Botanical Garden at Museum Hill** slated to open next year is a museum through and through—only one that beautifully exhibits flowers, grasses and trees.

The 13-acre, three-phase project even has a curator, lead designer and landscape architect **W Gary Smith**. Smith, who has designed gardens across the country for decades and currently works from Austin, Texas, sees sculpting a garden in an arid climate as both a challenge and an opportunity.

"Austin has great water resources, and in Santa Fe it's a much more precious commodity. So we have to be careful about drought and using **plants that don't require excessive irrigation**," Smith tells SFR. "But it's a chance to make a garden that's really

connected to the sense of place in Santa Fe."

In addition to New Mexico plants, the Botanical Garden at Museum Hill incorporates international plants that bloom in similar conditions, native to places as diverse as New Zealand, Africa and the Middle East. Flora ranges from more rustic plants in the **Naturalistic Gardens** to colorful ornamental plants in the **Courtyard Gardens** and **Orchard Gardens**. The Orchard Gardens also contains a collection of fruit trees.

Smith finds much of the appeal of garden design to lie in its ever-changing nature, with the search for the elusive perfect moment encouraging people to revisit gardens again and again.

"One of the things that makes gardening an interesting art is that there are **three different scales of time**," Smith says. "During one day, the sun and the light change. Then you've got seasonal changes; throughout one year different plants are offering different kinds of beauty. Then year-to-year, through the decades, a garden grows and changes over the long term.

"You have these three different scales operating simultaneously, so that means any one moment in a garden is totally unique and can never be duplicated. You never know when that perfect moment is going to occur."

But don't hop in your car or on your bike to visit just yet: The Botanical Garden does not break ground on its first phase, the Orchard Gardens, until late August, and is estimated to open to the public at some point in mid-2012. Construction on the Courtyard Gardens and Naturalistic Gardens phases continues for several subsequent years. The complete project is budgeted at \$7.5 million.

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