

THE JERUSALEM BOTANICAL GARDENS - ISRAEL

..... And their Friends

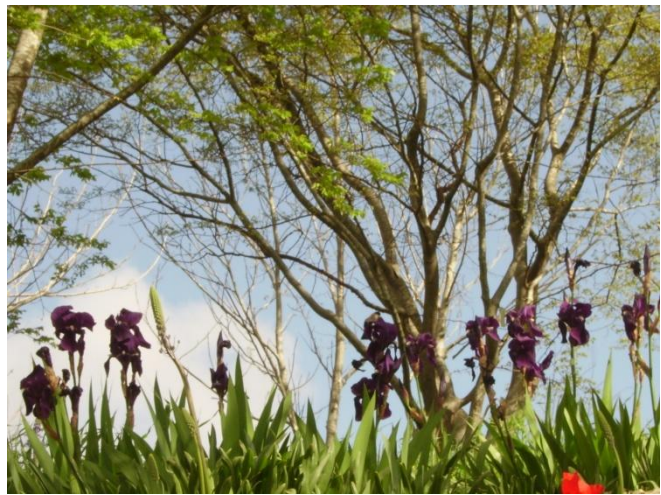
Started in 1956 on a site adjacent to the Hebrew University Campus in Givat Ram, the Gardens now contain more than 10,000 species of plants and flowers in an area of some 45 acres. Due to Jerusalem's unique climate, plant species from all over the world thrive and grow, arranged in phyto-geographic sections (a new concept when the Gardens were established). The sections represent the Mediterranean Basin, Southwest and Central Asia, Australia and New Zealand, North America and Europe. In addition there is a fine conservatory housing tropical plants. One of the Garden's aims is the conservation of native flowers and they have had some significant success in rescuing and propagating endangered native species. Many of these flowers can be seen during spring time when the Gardens are awash with colour and scent. The Gardens form part of the 'green lung' set up around suburban Jerusalem by the far-sighted Teddy Kolleck, who was probably Jerusalem's most famous and successful mayor.



Judith Baretz, a licensed guide and tour operator in Jerusalem, knows the gardens well. "Each week at the Gardens is a new experience, as the seasons' progression is expressed and reflected by a myriad of leaves, flowers, seeds, bark and pods. Winding paths and a generous smattering of benches allow both panoramic vistas of the ever-changing palette and quiet hideaways to contemplate, illustrate or meditate. Indeed, the gardens playfully court spiritual dimensions, gently teasing thoughts of nature and the universe. The Shinmin stone, set under an English Oak tree (*Quercus robur*) west of the Visitors' Centre on a hillock leading to South Africa, is a fine place to search for inspiration."

The gardens are formed of sections each with its own name, often a person's name; someone who has been associated with the gardens, such as the David Tchorz Waterfall. If Ruth and Max Guggenheim-Braunschweig Pool, the Sunlight Pool, tucked away in the tail of the Mediterranean Basin. Each with its own selection of plants and large stones.

It is the plants that make the garden: 10,000 species. Plants like the *Aloe thraskii* in the South African section (*right*), the wild lupins (*below left*), or the irises among the Spring trees (*below right*)



Photographs © Friends of the Jerusalem Botanic Garden

The Gardens nurture young people, and in particular an Arab-Israeli Children's Co-operation Initiative which started in 2008 and brings together annually some 300 children from villages in the surrounding areas.

Their education programme ranges across all the ethnic groups in Jerusalem, of all ages.

Volunteers work in the garden, both local



people and people from overseas. The British Friends were established in 1981 following a talk in London by Dr. Michael Avishai, then the Garden's Scientific Director.

Lack of funding has been a major problem for the Garden's management since its establishment. The Gardens Bill was only passed by the Israeli Parliament in 2008 and funding is currently provided by the government, the Jerusalem municipality and various foundations, as well as from entrance fees and memberships. The British Friends feel that expert help and maintenance are of primary importance and so, since 1983, we have funded more than 100 young horticulturalists to work in the Gardens



Volunteers laying irrigation pipes

Their highly competitive Scholarships, worth £7,500 pa (pro rata for shorter periods) are supported by Kew and universities and colleges offering horticultural and botanical degree courses. The graduates gain invaluable experience and many stay in touch, helping to publicise the Gardens.

The Friends have organised more than twenty successful Working Holidays in Jerusalem. Participants, often professional gardeners, pay their fares and hotel bills, and work in the Gardens for two weeks. The Israeli Friends offer home hospitality, and sightseeing trips are arranged. To keep costs as low as possible to participants, the Friends of Israel Educational Foundation and the British Friends subsidise these groups.

As well as funding scholarships, the British Friends have sent books, videos, plants and badly needed equipment to Jerusalem, supported a tree-planting scheme and helped finance the Garden's professional workers attending overseas conferences. We have also helped with finance for the establishment of the School of Horticulture. Money is raised through yearly subscriptions, visits to gardens of special interest, garden parties, plant sales, lectures and recitals in private homes, and in 1988 - a large exhibition *The Garden in Art*, with paintings, drawings and prints donated by artists from all over the country.

To celebrate our twentieth anniversary in 2001, Dan Pearson, who won a scholarship to work in the JBG in 1987, spoke to a large gathering, which included Professor Peter Crane, who, after

the death, in 2004, of the Duke of Devonshire, became President. There is a very close relationship with Kew and they were instrumental in helping to establish the JBG School of Horticulture. Many scholarship winners now hold important posts: Andy Jackson is the Director of Wakehurst Place and among Head Gardeners, Mark Poswillo is in charge of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Harvey Stephens is at the Savill Garden, and Wolfgang Bopp at the Hilliers Arboretum.

The JBG Friends number three hundred members of varied ages, nationalities and religions. Barbara Steinberg, their administrator says, " Our own long-term aim is to encourage the relationship between people of all nationalities with a common interest, to enhance Jerusalem's beauty and promote conservation and environmental standards."



Jerusalem Botanic train taking passengers through the gardens

Flower mix



SEE NEXT UPLOAD FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSE DENT, THE FOUNDER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE JERUSALM BOTANICAL GARDENS AND INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY FOR WORKING HOLIDAYS AND SCHOLARSHIPS.

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JULIE BARETZ grew up in Valley Cottage, New York and moved to Israel in 1985. She has a BA in English Literature, an MA in Creative Writing and is a trained horticulturalist. She has been a licensed tour guide since 1987 and has worked extensively with both Christians and Jews. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and two children. To read Judith Baretz's 2002 article on the gardens go to:
www.gemsinisrael.com/e_article000079509.htm