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# A piece of tranquility amongst the city centre

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Situated in the heart of bustling Prague 2, the Charles University Botanical Gardens area is a sacred spot of tranquility. Originally founded on the other side of the river Vltava in 1775, the gardens were moved due to frequent flooding. They reopened in Albertov, a higher location, in 1898. Nowadays, the gardens boast some 3,000 plant species in the outdoor exhibits alone. Each plant in the large outdoor Central European Collection has been transferred to the garden from their original sites around the region, with each representing a unique collection of genetic



resources.

The gardens are predominately divided into separate categories according to their species with areas dedicated to plants such as cacti originating from South America. The garden is not only home to some of the most beautiful flowers and plants in Europe but it also houses so called 'useful plants' such as tomato, celery and artichoke along with aromatic shrubs like peppermint and lavender.

Walking through the gardens, it's hard to hear any of the traffic passing through the busy streets surrounding the gardens. With plenty of benches dotted around the garden and a dedicated gazebo, there are plenty of spots to sit back and take in the beautiful scenery, or to just take a break from city life.

It's clear to see that the garden is forever developing and expanding with space dedicated to stock plants awaiting their turn to be featured in the public display areas. Whilst these areas are not open to the public, many of them are visible from the myriad of walkways and paths located around the gardens.



The garden is set out in a somewhat terraced design, with different levels accessible by the numerous pathways and steps throughout the space. With views changing from level to level, the most spectacular sights are clear from the top terrace which overlooks the entire garden and gives a glimpse of the greenhouses and the Faculty of Science buildings located on the site.

Alongside the extensive gardens there is also a group of large greenhouses, which are home to a wide variety of more exotic plants and flowers. The greenhouses are divided into three main sections, with two segments dedicated to tropical and subtropical plants respectively and the final focusing on plant cultivation and technical purposes.

The tropical greenhouse features some of the most beautiful plants in the world including the much-loved waterlilies. Perhaps the most special of them all is the Santa Cruz water lily (*Victoria cruziana*), known for its large round thorny plate-shape leaves that can carry a small child; the flower of this water lily blooms for just two nights. Amongst all of the tropical flowers, including the delicate orchids, is a small selection of tropical fish species which can be viewed by the public. The greenhouses are also a home for a group of parrots.

The subtropical greenhouse has been split into two different atmospheres; dry and humid. Within the humid atmosphere there is a large selection of Mediterranean and Australian plants, which during the summer months are located either outside of the greenhouses or in the outdoor container garden near the main entrance. This area of the greenhouse is home to some of the most interesting and unique plants the gardens have to



offer.

Finally, the dry section of the subtropical greenhouse is a home to an impressive range of cacti and dry climate plants. The atmosphere in this greenhouse is maintained to ensure that its tenants are in optimum condition at all times. This area is the part of a large permanent exhibition which is constantly replenished.

The gardens and their greenhouses are a piece of tranquility amongst the hustle and bustle of the capital city. Situated just a quick tram ride from Wenceslas Square (Václavské náměstí) or Charles Square (Karlovo náměstí), which are both interconnected with Prague metro lines, the gardens are easily accessible and well worth the visit. Whether you are interested in plants and flowers from all around the world or are just looking for a bit of peace and quiet, there is something for everyone. The entry to the outdoor collection is free of charge and you will pay only a minor fee for visiting the greenhouses.