



Canadian Summer Splendor: The Magical Gardens of Québec **Q & A With AHS Host Holly Shimizu**

Québec's horticultural identity blends French colonial roots with a northern climate. What adaptations or design traditions do you find most fascinating about gardening in Québec?

Gardens in Québec must focus on hardy plants that will thrive in a cold climate with plenty of snow. Although rooted in the formal elegance of French gardens, Québec is now known for artistic expression that pushes the boundaries of historic garden design, often featuring avant-garde installations that reflect our changing climate as well as our relationship with the natural world.

The lavender fields at Seigneurie de l'Île d'Orléans and the historic estate gardens at Domaine Joly-De Lotbinière each reflect Québec's blend of European influence and local ecology. What do these gardens reveal about how design and horticulture evolve in response to place?

The island of l'Île d'Orléans has evolved since its early establishment in 1636 when it was an agricultural center as well as a place for hunting and fishing. As the island developed with roads and a bridge, the population continued growing. Farming has become more focused on specialty crops such as strawberries, viticulture, and cheese production with many artisanal family farms.

The island's garden, The Joly de Lotbinière Estate, began as an estate garden in 1851, owned by politician Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière. Done in the picturesque style, the garden stayed in the family as they continued developing it as a romantic garden-park. In 1985 the garden became a public garden, still highlighting its historic character, along with increasing the types of plants and development of theme gardens. The

natural beauty of this site stimulated an emphasis on the natural and informal design. An ancient forest has 300-year-old trees, the manor is a museum, and the location along the St. Lawrence River is spectacular.

Montréal's Jardin Botanique is one of the world's great public gardens, with extraordinary spaces such as the Chinese Garden, Japanese Garden, First Nations Garden, and Alpine Garden. As someone who has visited and evaluated top gardens globally, what makes Montréal's botanical collections stand out?

Le Jardin Botanique de Montreal is one of the finest Botanical Gardens I have ever visited. The astonishing creativity of the gardens and exhibits is incredible. Plantings are extremely well labeled and set within excellent designs. The Japanese Garden, Chinese Garden, Alpine Garden, and First Nation's Garden are among some of the outstanding thematic gardens. The Garden's strong scientific research program focuses on plant-environment interactions, conservation of biodiversity, and phytotechnologies - using plants for environmental solutions.

The Roger Van den Hende Botanical Garden showcases more than 4,000 species selected for Québec's climate. What plant groups or design strategies there do you think will most surprise AHS travelers, especially those more familiar with temperate U.S. gardens?

It is interesting to see plants arranged by their botanical family to study their similarities, differences and relationships. With over 4,000 species and cultivars growing in The Roger Van den Hende Botanical Garden, the garden is like a plant encyclopedia. Other features include a water garden, rose garden, as well as a unique collection of plants native to Québec.

The Québec itinerary includes several private gardens that reflect a lifetime of creativity, such as the poetic Glen Villa Art Garden and the elemental Jardin de Vos Rêves. How does visiting gardens shaped by personal vision differ from public garden experiences, and what do you hope travelers observe in these intimate spaces?

Gardens that are created through personal vision tend to express the personality of the person or people designing them. This is especially true in Glen Villa Art Garden, a 750-acre extraordinary landscape that combines nature with art and history. Created by visual artist, garden designer, and author, Patterson Webster, this magical garden has ponds, cascades, wild gardens, artistic installations, and sculpture. Located on the

traditional territory of the Abenaki, proceeds from “Open Garden Days” support the Massawippi Foundation.

Les Jardins de Vos Rêves is a theatrical, spiritual garden inspired by the five elements: earth, fire, wood, water, and stone. Built in 1975, the gardens were inspired by travels around the world. Located in the Appalachian Mountains, the gardens are arranged to create a peaceful atmosphere. Les Jardins de Vos Rêves translates to The Gardens of Your Dreams.

From Old Québec’s stone streets to Montréal’s modern cultural energy, this journey spans centuries of garden evolution. What overarching theme or horticultural storyline do you hope travelers notice as these landscapes unfold?

Early gardens in French Colonial Québec and Montreal were primarily utilitarian, providing food and herbs. Gardens were often walled to protect from animals and to create warmer microclimates. After the British conquest in 1763 there was more focus on decorative but naturalistic gardens that were popular in England. I think the 20th century to the present is particularly interesting, as the focus is on plant biodiversity, environmental education, creative exhibits, and integration of art with gardens.

Québec’s art museums, history, and garden culture intertwine throughout this itinerary. How does exposure to fine arts and historical landscapes, such as the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, help to provide insights on garden design?

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is known for its innovation in creating bold and creative exhibits as well as its integration of architecture with garden design. Old and new sections harmonize in garden settings. The museum specializes in works related to Québec or created by Québécois artists as well as featuring extensive Inuit art. Exciting temporary installations and immersive exhibitions explore topics such as the ecological impact of lawn care while promoting contemplative and environmentally sound design. Such exhibits are timely and essential in helping to move ecological gardening forward.