



Wander the Cloister and Terrace gardens for a pleasant mini-getaway among columns and arches, hummingbirds and honeybees. Photo by Linda B. Gay

SECRET SANCTUARY

The Gardens of Festival Hill Charm Gardeners, Music Lovers and Round Top Enthusiasts

BY LINDA B. GAY

The Gardens of Festival Hill are still one of the best-kept secrets in Texas, but the awareness continues to grow. Festival Hill in Round Top is a destination, and there is something for everyone, from the gardener to the music lover to the weekend traveler.

Gardeners know of Festival Hill because of the Herbal Forum held each spring in March. The two-day event, set this year March 17 and 18, includes lectures and workshops,

herbal plant sales and foods that will titillate your taste buds prepared by the finest chefs in Texas. The 2017 theme of the Herbal Forum is coriander, also known as cilantro, that well-loved Texas herb.

GARDEN THEMES

The grounds of Festival Hill cover 210 acres and include many different themed gardens. One of the gardens is the Shakespeare Garden dedicated to the poet, playwright and actor himself and displays roses, poppies, larkspur and columbine that you will find blooming in spring.

The Pharmacy Garden contains plants used for medicinal purposes from all over the world and are arranged by country. Plants on display are from Africa, India, Mexico, South America, Asia, Europe and our own America.

The McAshan Herb Gardens are a series of spaces growing botanical specimens from the world over to see which ones



The Concert Hall at Festival Hill is the heart and soul of this area, a worthy competition to the historic concert halls found across the lands. Photo by Linda B. Gay



Fig ivy grows on the stone walls in The Cloister and Wall Gardens, with niches cradling dramatic displays of statues, containers and plants. Photo by Linda B. Gay

thrive and persist in the Round Top climate. Many of the herbs and flowers grown in this garden are used by the talented chefs to enhance their tasty creations.

The Cloister and Wall Gardens draw you into the space. The area consists of a multi-stone structure with columns, arches and niches cradling angelic statues. Fig ivy grows on the stone walls offering softness to the eyes.

The Terrace Gardens are adjacent with three levels of flowers, perennials and herbs. In this sunny spot you will find hummingbirds drinking nectar from their favorite flowers and honeybees busy at work hauling pollen around the garden.

MUSIC & MORE

The music lover may enjoy visiting Beethoven's Woods to see the unusual fruit trees of loquat, pomegranate and jujubes growing under the indigenous, giant Loblolly Pine trees while waiting for a concert to begin.

Weekend travelers looking for a new adventure can stay at the historic Menke House, or groups doing the spring Round Top Antiques Fair can find lodging on campus in artist residences or dorm rooms with a three-night minimum.

The Concert Hall at Festival Hill is the heart and soul of this area, offering concert series and music festivals and hosting musicians and student interns from across the globe. The hall itself is worthy competition to the historic concert halls found across the lands. The interior has elaborately detailed wooden designs, handcrafted, one-of-a-kind creations with a five-pointed compass star nestled in the background of a richly detailed wooden Fibonacci spiral that covers the ceilings.

The Gardens of Festival Hill are under the watchful eye and gentle hand of Henry Flowers, a hardworking horticulturist, creative chef and a talented storyteller in his own right. So on your next trip to Round Top, stop in and say hi to Henry, who always has time for someone who loves gardens, too!

For more information about The Gardens of Festival Hill, contact Flowers at henryf@festivalhill.org, 979-249-3129, 248 Jaster Road, Round Top, www.festivalhill.org.

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The 2017 theme of the Herbal Forum is coriander, also known as cilantro, that well-loved Texas herb. Graphic courtesy of the Herbal Forum on Festival Hill