



Naples Botanical GARDEN Parent and Caregiver Guide

Parent and Caregiver Guide

Introduction

This pre-visit tool is designed for parents, caregivers, and teachers of individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other sensory sensitivities. We hope to provide you with as much information as possible about Naples Botanical Garden in order to make your visit as special and enjoyable as possible.

General Garden Considerations

- Visit the Garden's website, www.naplesgarden.org, to purchase tickets in advance, learn about upcoming events, and seasonal hours.
- Certain times of day, such as lunchtime, can be busier than others. If your child or loved one is sensitive to crowds, perhaps consider visiting around opening or closing time.
- If you are planning on eating at the Garden's Fogg Café, view their menu ahead of time on the Garden's website. They have many delicious selections, but some might not be appropriate for picky eaters.
- Be aware of where your child or loved one is at all times. There are many places to hide and several path options throughout the Garden. After entering the Garden, choose a place to meet in case you get separated.
- It might be a good idea to give your child a 15-minute warning before you intend to leave. However, if there is lightning in the area, the Garden will have to close immediately.

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Paths

There are many different textured paths throughout the Garden, most of which are ADA compliant. All of the main paths are wheelchair accessible and made of:



Pavers



Concrete

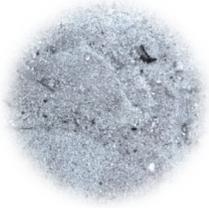


Wood



Coastal Stone*

Other paths in the Garden, which are not wheelchair accessible, are made of:



Sand



Mulch



Grass



Shell



Gravel

*Only in the Orchid Garden and parts of the Asian Garden.

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Sensory Considerations

- If your child is sensitive to weather conditions such as heat or rain, they may need to be prepared. There are opportunities to sit on benches, seek shade in pergolas and chickee huts, and there are water bottle filling stations available near the Fogg Café and Visitor Center.
- Bugs (mosquitoes, butterflies, bees, etc.) are all around. If a child has fears, you may want to prepare him or her and explain that the bugs are busy doing their jobs and likely won't bother us if we don't bother them.
- You may see a snake or other wild animal. If it is in a contained areas such as the Butterfly House, a Garden employee will come remove it.
- Waterfalls in the Brazilian Garden, Florida Garden, and Asian Garden can be loud at times. Occasionally, Garden staff will be using loud machinery or equipment.

Example Activity #1: Go for a walk in your yard or other familiar outdoor setting. Talk about what you feel, smell, hear, and see. Discuss how plants provide food and homes for many animals – including us! Explain that plants are alive and, like us, they need to grow: nutrients, water, air, and light. While experiencing outside can sometimes make us feel uncomfortable, it's okay because nature keeps the plants and animals happy.

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Behavior Considerations

- Visitors can touch plants, but cannot pick up or pull on plants. This is important as some plants can be harmful when ingested. If this is a concern, plants in the Enabling Garden are especially safe to explore, as they are void of spiky or very toxic materials.
- There are some areas where your child or loved one might need to wait in line or take turns. Tickets should be purchased ahead of time on the Garden's website, www.naplesgarden.org, but you may still have to wait in line to enter the Garden.
- During Dogs in the Garden (schedule can be found on the Garden's website), dogs can walk in some parts of the Garden, but they are not allowed indoors. Retractable leashes are not allowed, which is strictly enforced. (Note: Service dogs are exempt from these rules).
- Most of the gardens feature bodies of water, many of which border a path. Some walkways, such those in the Brazilian Garden and Asian Garden, do not have bumpers between the path and the water. It can be tempting to wade in or throw things into the water features, but that is not allowed.

Example Activity #2: Explore a plant together. What colors or shapes do you see? Touch its leaves and talk about how it feels. How do you think it grows? Explain the difference between touching and pulling. Discuss how a plant is alive and we want to respect it and not hurt or kill it by ripping off its leaves or flowers.

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Naples Botanical Garden has collaborated with the
Center For Autism & Related Disabilities at the
University of South Florida to provide this pre-visit tool.

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