

Chanticleer — A Plant-Geek Pleasure Garden®

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Chanticleer, 786 Church Rd, Wayne, Pennsylvania 19087 U.S.A.

Chanticleer is a pleasure garden with a staff of creative, design-oriented plant geeks. Located 20 min. west of Philadelphia, Chanticleer was the estate of the Rosengarten family from 1912–1990. When the last owner, Adolph Rosengarten, Jr., died in 1990, the property of majestic trees and beautiful lawns was turned over to a Foundation to be run as a public garden. Almost all of the “garden” development has happened in the last 15 years. The design, with a strong emphasis on plants, has been led by staff.

A tour of Chanticleer begins in the Teacup Garden, named after its central water feature. Here, as in most of the property, foliage color and texture provide most of the interest, with flowers as accents. Light colors, such as chartreuse, orange, and silver, play off various shades of purple throughout the garden. Here in the Teacup Garden, glaucous agaves grow near purple alternantheras, and *Dichondra argentea* ‘Silver Falls’ cascades below *Cordyline australis* ‘Red Sensation’. A new plant for us this year was *Sprekelia formosissima*, a summer-blooming Mexican bulb, mixed in plantings of *Lavandula x intermedia* ‘Grosso’ and *Arundo donax* var. *versicolor*.

The Tennis Court Garden is entered by a stone staircase with a planted railing and features plantings of yellow and purple. Among the yellows are *Deutzia gracilis* ‘Duncan’, Chardonnay Pearls™ deutzia, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Filifera Aurea Nana’, *Cercis canadensis* ‘Roethgold’, Hearts of Gold™ redbud, *Spiraea thunbergii* ‘Ôgon’ [Mellow Yellow spiraea], *Picea orientalis* ‘Skylands’, and *Carex elata* ‘Aurea’ (syn. ‘Bowles’ Golden). These contrast with the dark leaves of *Physocarpus opulifolius* ‘Diabolo’ PBR, *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’, *Cotinus coggygia* ‘Velvet Cloak’, and *Weigela florida* ‘Alexandra’ [Wine and Roses® weigela].

Nearby, the trees of the old orchard have been replaced with crabapples and flowering cherries and underplanted with nearly 150,000 spring flowering bulbs. Following bloom, the bulb foliage is allowed to mature until the end of June, resulting in tall, unmown grass. We are experimenting with seed mixes of hard fescues, which mature at about 8 inches.

The main house sits on a hill south of the orchard. The house’s entrance court is a circle of reddish brown gravel, raked daily. The gravel patterns, which can change daily, are particularly effective when highlighted by the falling petals of the surrounding *Prunus* ‘Accolade’. A sun porch off the side of the house welcomes visitors to sit and feel as if they were special guests of the Rosengartens.

South-facing terraces extend from the back of the house. Here containers reign supreme, with celebrations of orange and yellow and contrasting touches of purple-black. Much of the orange comes from the *Solenostemon* (coleus) cultivars ‘Rustic Orange’ and ‘Sedona’ and *Begonia boliviensis* ‘Tanais’®. The yellows include *Cotinus coggygia* ‘Ancot’, Golden Spirit™ smoke bush PBR, *Leycesteria formosa* ‘Notbruce’, Golden Lanterns® Himalayan honeysuckle, *Phygelius xrectus* ‘Moonraker’, *Hedera helix* ‘Buttercup’, *Xanthosoma* ‘Lime Zinger’, and *Hakonechloa macra* ‘All Gold’. The dark foliage of *Colocasia* ‘Black Dragon’, *Aeonium urbicum* ‘Zwartkop’, and *Colocasia esculenta* ‘Illustris’ (syn. *Alocasia antiquorum* ‘Illustris’) completes the effect.

A reflecting pool is lined with *Cyperus papyrus* and, nearby, ceramic rooster-inspired bamboo emerges from a group of *Hibanobambusa tranquillans* 'Shiroshima'. A winding path takes one down the great lawn to serpentine beds of dwarf amber sorghum, edged with *Juniperus virginiana* 'Corcorcor', Emerald Sentinel™ eastern red cedar.

At the bottom of the hill is the pond garden, filled with exuberant flowers, while in the water itself are hardy *Nymphaea* and *Nelumbo* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum'. A nearby bog garden is filled with species and hybrids of hardy pitcher plants, *Sarracenia*.

Asian Woods, at the far western end of the estate, brings cool shade to the visit. The area features plants from China, Korea, and Japan. Here one meets the stream that runs the entire northern side of the garden. Growing in the wet areas are *Petasites japonica* (kept controlled by the creek) and *Lysichiton americanus* and *L. camtschatcensis*.

Further upstream is a hillside of native wildflowers shaded by *Cercis canadensis* and *C. canadensis* f. *alba* (syn. 'Alba'). The stream itself here is lined with masses of *Camassia*. On a hill above the stream is the Ruin Garden, viewed first through a sea of *Sporobolus heterolepis*. The Ruin features plants with dark green leaves (including *Ilex crenata* 'Sky Pencil' and *Cephalotaxus harringtonii* 'Fastigiata') contrasted with silvers of dichondra and purples of maples and beeches. A dry garden stretches westward down the slope, featuring a combination of native (such as *Asclepias tuberosa*) and exotic (*Stapelia gigantea* and *Eschscholzia californica*) plants in gravel beds. The tour ends at a cutting and vegetable garden, edged with a 210-ft-long hedge of asparagus.

Chanticleer's gardeners lead the design process, enabling the garden to feel personal and showing great creativity. Almost any plant is welcomed, but is always placed carefully and with lots of thought to aesthetics. There are no "behind-the-scenes" research areas; instead, plants are trialed on location. The garden is open April through October, Wednesday through Sunday. Professionals in the horticulture and landscape industries receive free admission.