

## FEATURES & FACILITIES

### Bland Garden

- Gazebo\*
- Iris Beds & Native Flowers
- Cypress Boardwalk (approximately 1/2 mile)

### Heath Garden

- Swan Lake Visitors Center (Visitor information, facility rentals, souvenirs available, Conference Room seats 125 guests)\*
- Iris Market (Concessions--open seasonally)
- Children's playground; FREE covered picnic shelters available (*Shelters are first come, first served. All parties and gatherings must have prior approval.*)
- Camellia Island
- Garden Street Shelter (Seats 65 guests)\*
- Heath Pavilion (Seats 200 guests)\*
- Butterfly, Braille & Chocolate Gardens
- Talking Tree Trail
- Swan Walk
- Statuary by artists including Grainger McKoy and Zan Lee Wells
- McDuffie Crosswalk joining the two gardens. Elevator accessible.

\*Facilities available by rental only. Please call for availability and pricing. Guided tours of the gardens are available by appointment (two weeks notice required) from January to April and June to November.

## EVENTS

### Sumter Iris Festival

The Iris Festival celebrates the annual blossoming of the garden's thousands of Japanese Iris. One of South Carolina's oldest events, the Iris Festival attracts people from around the globe every Memorial Day weekend for food, music, arts and crafts, fine arts, children's activities, and much more. Admission to the festival is FREE.

### Fantasy of Lights

Children and "children at heart" will marvel at the spectacular display of lighted imagery as the gardens twinkle with the magnificent glitter of more than one million lights. The Fantasy of Lights is open nightly the entire month of December. One of South Carolina's largest Christmas light displays! FREE admission.

### Other annual events include:

- Earth Day Celebration
- Recovery Road Race
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Easter Sunrise Service
- Nature Walks...and more!

For park information and event listings:

Swan Lake Visitors Center  
1-800-688-4748  
tourism@sumter-sc.com

Sumter, SC is located between I-95, I-20, I-26 and I-77, and easily accessible from I-85. US Highways 76, 378, 521 and 15 also run through the city. West Liberty Street (US Highway 76/763) is easily reached from any of the routes listed above.

### GPS Coordinates:

N33°55.192 W080°22.297

Rev 09/15



## Swan Lake Visitors Center

822 West Liberty Street  
Sumter, South Carolina 29150

Post Office Box 1449  
Sumter, South Carolina 29151

**Sumter**  
SOUTH CAROLINA

(803) 436-2640

Toll-Free 1-800-688-4748

[www.sumtertourism.com](http://www.sumtertourism.com)



Sumter, South Carolina  
**Swan Lake**  
**Iris Gardens**  
Always in Season!



# Step into a scene from a fairy tale...

## Welcome...

Welcome to Sumter's Swan Lake Iris Gardens, home to all eight known species of swan and some of the most intensive plantings of Japanese Iris (*Iris avata*) in the United States. Teeming with life all four seasons of the year, Swan Lake offers tranquility and enchantment to visitors of all ages. A gift to the Sumter community from the Bland and Heath families, the gardens encompass 150 acres, with more than 120 varieties of iris that explode into a late-spring burst of color. The gardens also feature a rainbow of other seasonal blossoms and are a birdwatcher's paradise of swans, Canada geese, mallards, wood ducks, waterfowl, anhingas, herons, egrets and other waders.

## The Beginning...

In 1927, Sumter businessman Hamilton Carr Bland purchased a piece of swampland adjacent to West Liberty Street, with the intention of developing it as a fish pond and private sanctuary. Assorted materials were used to construct islands in the pond, and the banks were built up with refuse and clippings. Also along the banks of the new pond, Mr. Bland tossed Japanese iris bulbs that had failed to thrive in the garden at his home. The discarded bulbs took root in the damp, acid soil, and more than 85 years later, the iris blooms transform the gardens in spring into a paradise of singular beauty. Referred to by *Southern Living* magazine as a "lovely mistake," named "One of America's Best Freebies" by *Better Homes & Gardens*, and featured as a "AAA Travel Treasure" by *Home & Away* magazine, Swan Lake Iris Gardens is the crown jewel of the City of Sumter, a showplace of breathtaking natural splendor that brings visitors from up and down the Eastern seaboard and across the world.

## The Gardens Today...

The Bland Garden, the original Swan Lake site, is located on the north side of West Liberty Street. It offers a peaceful "back to nature" experience to visitors with seasonal iris beds, abundant native plants and a boardwalk stretching deep into the cypress swamp. The Bland Garden Gazebo is the site of some of Sumter's loveliest outdoor weddings. Across Liberty Street the Heath Garden, a gift from the A. T. Heath family in 1938, offers picnic areas, a children's playground, the Swan Lake Iris Gardens Visitors Center, the Iris Market concessions shop and more. A leisurely 3/4 mile stroll around the lake reveals the Braille, Chocolate and Butterfly Gardens to delight the senses, Camellia Island and the "swandominiums" where cygnets are hatched and raised. Whimsical sculptures by Zan Lee Wells and other artists add charm, and the towering *Recovery* by Grainger McKay is a beautiful focal point. The gardens are joined by the McDuffie Crosswalk that soars over Liberty Street. Throughout the park, towering oak and pine trees shade walkways and rustic bridges, and the magnificent cypress trees tint the mirror-like waters an inky black.

The garden's swans, the royalty of waterfowl, are gathered from all over the world. They grace the pond and gardens with their beauty all year around. Although the birds are generally friendly, they may exhibit territorial behavior during the mating season and should be approached with reasonable caution.

Swan Lake Iris Gardens is owned and operated by the City of Sumter for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors to the area. The Friends of Swan Lake, a 501(c)(3) non-profit support organization, is devoted to the continued

beautification and improvement of the gardens, and is permitted to accept donations. Sumter's Master Gardeners also lend a hand with landscaping and maintenance of the specialty gardens.

*Please enjoy the gardens responsibly. The following are prohibited at Swan Lake Iris Gardens:*

- Alcoholic beverages,
- Bicycles or skateboards,
- Feeding birds or any other wildlife,
- Fishing,
- Flower picking,
- Inflatables (bounce houses, balloons, etc.),
- Litter,
- Loud music or radios,
- Smoking,
- Pets,
- Poles or staked equipment,
- Profanity,
- Soliciting,
- Visitors under age 16, unless accompanied by an adult guardian.

All parties and events must have prior written approval. Please contact (803) 436-2640 or [sumterse.gov](mailto:sumterse.gov).

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Swan Lake Iris Gardens is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to dusk, except when extreme weather conditions require that we close for the safety of visitors. **FREE admission.** The Swan Lake Iris Visitors Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Visitors Center is closed on holidays.

Come bask in the beauty and serenity of Swan Lake Iris Gardens!

## SEASONAL BLOOM SCHEDULE



**SPRING**  
Azalea  
Carolina Cherry Laurel  
Camellia Japonica  
Carolina Jessamine  
Clematis  
Deutzia  
Dogwood  
Eastern Redbud  
Forsythia  
Flowering Quince  
Flowering Crabapple  
Fringing Tree  
Iris  
Loropetalum  
Oakleaf Hydrangea  
Ohio Buckeye  
Pinckneys Rubens  
Spiraea  
Star Magnolia  
Sweet Bay  
Trumpet Honeysuckle  
Snowball Viburnum  
Wisteria  
Yoshino Cherry



**FALL**  
Camellia Sasanqua  
Cassia  
Lespedeza  
Spider Lily



**WINTER**  
Camellia Japonica  
Helleborus  
Holly  
Sweet Breath of Spring  
Winter Jasmine



**SUMMER**  
Banana Shrub  
Butterfly Bush  
Carolinis Silverbell  
Crape Myrtle  
Daylily  
Golden Rain Tree  
Gordonia  
Mophead Hydrangea  
Hosta  
Sweet Mock Orange  
Southern Magnolia



Bearded: March/April  
Japanese: May/June

## A year-round wonderland!



## GIFTS & DEDICATIONS (See Map Key on Reverse)

1. Gregory Johnson, *Jack's Story Tree* (2003). Dedicated by the City of Sumter and the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens in Honor of C. Talmadge Tobias, Jr., City Manager 1990-2005.
2. *The Seagrove* (2013). City of Sumter In-track installed in 1970; restored by community partners and rededicated by the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens.
3. *Swan Lake Iris Gazebo: Bounce Relief Map*. Dedicated by the City of Sumter and the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens. Walkway given by Carmen & Robert Burgess; Burgess: Brogan Building Supply Company.
4. *Zan Lee Wells, Serenity* (2003). Dedicated by the City of Sumter and the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens.
5. *Grainger McKay, Recovery* (2010). Dedicated by the Williams-Brice-Edwards-Charitable Trust, the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens, and the City of Sumter.
6. *Zan Lee Wells, Boyhood Link* (2003). Dedicated by the City of Sumter and the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens.
7. *McDuffie Fountain* (2005). Dedicated by the Friends of Swan Lake Gardens in Honor of the Lives of Jimmie & Tillie Mc.Duffie.
8. *Awel Reis, Fantasia* (2015).
9. *Awel Reis* and the Students of Central Carolina Technical College, *Swans in Flight* (2015).

# Meet the Swans...



**Bewick's Swans**, from Russia and Japan, have a long black and yellow beak. They are similar to the Whooper Swan, but smaller, shorter-necked, with a more rounded head shape. They eat a mostly vegetarian diet, but younger birds enjoy insects and even an occasional mussel.

*Did you know...?* The yellow beak markings of the Bewick, unique to each bird, can be used for identification purposes.



**Mute Swans**, the swans of fairy tales, originated in the British Isles. They have orange beaks with a distinctive black knob. There have been records of Mute Swans living for 20 years. They have been in residence at Swan Lake since the early 1930's.

*Did you know...?* In the United Kingdom, all swans are considered property of the Crown, and are counted in an annual census on the River Thames, known as the "Swan Upping."



**Black (Australian) Swans** are solid black in color except for their red beaks, black legs, and a fringe of white underneath the wings. They mate twice a year—once in the spring and once in the fall, corresponding to the mating season in their native Australian habitat.

*Did you know...?* A black swan's irises change color, from red to white, during mating season.



The **Trumpeter Swan**, known for its distinctive call, is a native North American bird. It has a long, black beak and is the largest of the swans, with full height reaching as much as six feet and a wingspan of eight feet or more. The Trumpeter was until recently an endangered species.

*Did you know...?* Trumpeter Swans are some of the longest-lived, with a captive lifespan of about 30 years.



**Black-necked Swans** are native to South America, especially Argentina and the Falkland Islands. They are white birds with a black neck and head, and a fleshy red lobe on their beaks.

*Did you know...?* Black-necked swans are not often seen on land, as the position of their legs, near the rear of the body, makes walking difficult.



**Whistling, or Tundra Swans**, can be distinguished from Trumpeters by a small yellow marking below the eye. They are the most widespread of the North American swan species and the smallest of the natives, averaging 20 pounds and with a height of four feet. Their mating behavior is unusual in that new couples "go steady" for a year before breeding.

*Did you know...?* The name "whistling swan" does not come from the bird's vocalization. It comes from the sound that the bird's wings make when in flight.



The **Coscoroba swan** is the smallest species, weighing an average of 8-11 pounds. They are native to South America. The birds have pure white feathers with pink beaks and pink legs.

*Did you know...?* A male swan is called a **cob**. A female is known as a **pen**. All babies are called **cygnets**.



**Whooper Swans** are similar in appearance to Bewick's, but larger, with yellow beak markings extending below the nostril. Native to Europe and Asia, they are as noisy as their name implies—which perhaps helps to account for their unusual 6% divorce rate.

*Did you know...?* Although they are more commonly known as a flock or herd, one of the more unusual collective names for a group of swans is a **lamentation**.

# Swan Lake Iris Gardens

## HEATH GARDEN

- A. Visitors Center
- B. Vending
- C. Iris Market
- D. Playground
- E. Picnic Shelters
- F. Grainger McKoy's Recovery Sculpture
- G. Talking Tree Trail
- H. Heath Pavilion
- I. Garden Street Shelter
- J. Butterfly Garden
- K. Camellia Island
- L. Chocolate Garden
- M. Braille Garden
- N. Swan Walk
- O. McDuffie Crosswalk

## BLAND GARDEN

- P. Hydrangea Garden
- Q. Cypress Boardwalk
- R. Gazebo



Circled numbers designate garden sculptures—key on reverse.