

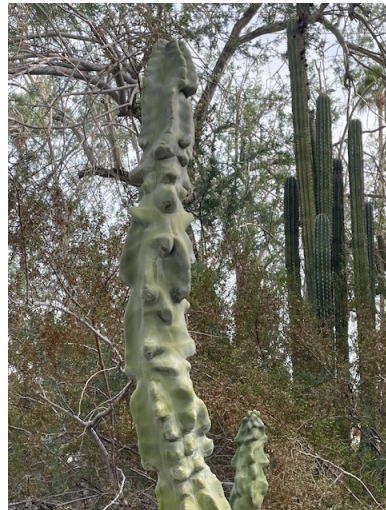


Moorten Botanical Garden - another California Gem

My husband Bob and I visited this amazing private arboretum the Moorten Botanical Garden, a living museum of desert love in Palm Springs the Friday after Christmas. Created by Chester "Cactus Slim" Moorten and his wife, Patricia. Cactus Slim was an original Keystone Cop and a stand-in for Howard Hughes. He developed tuberculosis on a film set and recovered in Cottonwood Springs, near Joshua Tree, where he panned for gold and collected beautiful cactuses. He learned mining was hard work and selling prickly plants paid better. In search of more customers, Chester came to Palm Springs in 1938, met Patricia, who also had an interest in succulents, and they bought the property, which became the Moorten Botanical Garden, from renowned nature and desert photographer Stephen Willard.



Together the couple expanded Chester's business to include landscape design and were soon hired by such luminaries as Walt Disney, Red Skelton, Jimmy Van Heusen, Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby to create backyards at their desert homes. Walt even tapped the duo to curate the foliage for Frontierland at his soon-to-be-built Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, CA.



We took advantage of their tour led by Janet Seaman, a Master Gardener. She was very knowledgeable and passionate about sharing this garden and all the species of desert trees and cacti from around the world. She had an album of pictures showing the blooms that adorn each plant, and explained how each plants multiplies - some send out "pups" (lower right).



The collections on display are comprised of more than 3,000 varieties of plants placed in concentrated habitats along the nature trail. In the world's first Cactarium, a word coined by the Morten's, Janet shared a special exhibition of rare plants seen nowhere else here in California. I loved how this cacti was "snaking" its way around its neighbors (lower middle) and the cacti (lower right) growing downward out of its hanging pot to be closer to his friends in the raised planter below!



At the end of the tour is a collection of relics from the pioneering days of the gold rush and a small nursery with cacti and succulents and beautiful glazed pots. I fell in love with this little guy (lower middle) with his unusually wide and white not so poky spines, so he came home with me and is now a resident in my newest Prehistorical Fairy Garden (lower right).



You'll find the Moorten Botanical Garden at 1701 S Palm Canyon Dr in Palm Springs.

From now till April is the perfect time weather wise to visit this California Gem of a garden.

Say Hi to Dinny and Mr Rex as you drive by the Morongo Casino in Cabazon.

They were dressed in their Christmas best to celebrate the season and to greet the New Year!



And... speaking of the New Year and visiting gardens, we'll have 40 of them for you to view in just 116 days. See you in the gardens on May 4th and 5th!