

# THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

*Studying, exhibiting, and conserving plants for 120 years*

April 2011

## MAJOR EXHIBITION, *SPANISH PARADISE: GARDENS OF THE ALHAMBRA*, TO EVOKE ICONIC PALACE COMPLEX

*Multifaceted presentation will feature plants, decorative elements, folios,  
manuscripts, drawings, photographs, objects, and poetry*

*May 21–August 21, 2011*



The lush gardens and poetic vistas of the Alhambra—the legendary Islamic palace and fortress in Granada, Spain—will be re-imagined in a large-scale, multipart exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden this summer. On view from May 21 through August 21, 2011, *Spanish Paradise: Gardens of the Alhambra* will provide a powerful evocation of the 13th-to-14th-century ensemble of landscape and buildings and the ways in which it has been viewed since its creation.

The exhibition will explore the Alhambra through three components: a spectacular **15,000-square-foot interpretation of its gardens in the Botanical Garden’s landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory**, curated by world-renowned garden writer, designer, and historian Penelope Hobhouse; *Historical Views: Tourists at the Alhambra*, a **display of rare folios, prints, photographs, watercolor drawings, and objects** in the Garden’s William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery, organized by Patrick Lenaghan, Ph.D., Curator of Prints and Photographs at the Hispanic Society of America; and an outdoor **Poetry Walk featuring selected works of Federico García Lorca**, native son of

Granada, selected in collaboration with Alice Quinn, Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America. A beautifully illustrated, full-color exhibition catalog will also be available.

**Gregory Long**, president of the Botanical Garden, notes, “The Alhambra is one of the world’s great works of art, one in which buildings and gardens have been exquisitely orchestrated into a complex, stunningly beautiful whole. Nearly 600 years after its completion, the Alhambra’s rhythmic arcades, splendid columns and arches, reflecting pools, and fragrant plants continue to beguile and captivate us. The New York Botanical Garden looks forward to welcoming people of all backgrounds and ages to the sights and scents of the Alhambra in New York.”

### ***Spanish Paradise: Gardens of the Alhambra***

The art of the garden reached new heights in al-Andalus, the region that was under Islamic rule between 711 and 1492, and that at its height comprised all of modern-day Spain and much of Portugal. Andalusian gardens included inventive water features that reflected highly sophisticated engineering skills; allées of trees and carefully designed beds of plants selected for their aesthetic, medicinal, culinary, or commercial qualities; arcades and vaulted pavilions; and textures and shapes specifically chosen by architects to harness sunlight. Today the Alhambra remains the principal monument of Islamic Spain and contains the most iconic gardens from this period. Moreover, it is a living symbol of the cosmopolitan outlook and cultural exchange that characterized al-Andalus, and includes not only elements of the traditional Islamic garden but also ideas derived from Roman, Renaissance, and modern architectural and garden design.

#### In the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory

The largest component of *Spanish Paradise* will be in the Haupt Conservatory, where plants, fountains, and architectural elements will combine to illuminate the Alhambra’s transcendent integration of nature and design. This lavish display will represent the Alhambra as it stands today, evoking not only its original elements, but also some added in later centuries.

A Mediterranean palette of plants will demonstrate the diversity of those used in the lush Alhambra gardens. These will include rosemary, lily of the Nile, century plant, calla-lily, salvia, bougainvillea, heliotrope, and thyme, among other examples. Trees will include date palms, citrus, pomegranate, and Italian cypress, while rambling vines and jasmine will climb pillars and spill from terra-cotta containers. Species roses and ancient hybrids will provide color and fragrance, as they have done at the Alhambra since Medieval times.

The Conservatory galleries will feature displays that illuminate many of the salient characteristics of the Alhambra: These will range from a basin with flowing water that demonstrates the Alhambra's sophisticated hydraulic system, to an example of quadripartite courtyard gardens, to a composition of triple arches, a simple parterre, and a fountain that overflows into a pool, illustrating the blending of architecture, horticulture, and engineering to create an environment that is at once peaceful and pleasing to all the senses and entirely evocative of the Alhambra.

#### In the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Gallery

Paradoxically, the interpretation of the Alhambra in art, literature, and the popular imagination has until recently been shaped by the accounts of foreign visitors rather than Spaniards. In the Mertz Library's Rondina and LoFaro Gallery, *Historical Views: Tourists at the Alhambra* will look at the ways in which the palace complex was viewed by some of the many international travelers and artists who visited it. The material in the exhibition, drawn from the rich collection of the Hispanic Society of America, a museum and library devoted to Spanish culture, ranges in date from the 16th to the early 20th century. Many of the works of art are on view here for the very first time.

The Gallery presentation includes some of the earliest depictions of the Alhambra: 16th-century topographic views of Granada in which the palace was the preeminent structure. Also included are some of the first interior views of the palace, engraved in 1665–68 by the French artist Louis Meunier. A luxurious fold-out plate that includes meticulous illustrations of architectural details, from a book by Richard Twiss published in 1775, reveals the perception among the English at that time that Islamic architecture was one of the precursors to their own Gothic cathedrals.

Romantic notes begin to appear in 19th-century views of the Alhambra. English artists David Roberts and John Frederick Lewis, for example, created images peopled with what were considered by many to be “typical” Spaniards, including gypsies, bullfighters, bandits, fair maidens, and fat priests. However, it was renowned New York writer Washington Irving who created the popular image of the Alhambra as an alluring, mysterious palace. Irving lived in the Alhambra during the summer of 1829 and immortalized it in his *The Alhambra*, a collection of essays, verbal sketches, and stories published in 1832. *Historical Views* will explore Irving’s unique experience and interpretation of the Alhambra through such materials as a diary he wrote during his time in Spain, a first edition of *The Alhambra*, and a notebook in which he practiced the Arabic alphabet and Arabic script, among other items.

### Poetry Walk Along Perennial Garden Way

Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) was born a few miles from Granada, and viewed the palace as an iconic element of Spanish culture. The exhibition will include a selection of his works, presented on 16 poetry boards sited along pathways throughout the magnificent gardens surrounding the Conservatory. Many of the poems reference plants and flowers that may be found in the Garden during the beautiful spring and summer seasons. An audio tour of the poems will also be available, and related public programs have been developed (*see below*).

### **Public Programs**

The Garden will offer a range of special programs in conjunction with *Spanish Paradise*.

- **“My Lorca,”** co-presented with the Poetry Society of America, will comprise a four-part reading and discussion series. At each reading, three poets will recite their favorite Lorca poems and discuss the poet and the ways in which he inspired them. *Saturdays at 4 pm: May 21, June 11, July 16, August 20*
- **Home Gardening Demonstrations: Gardens of the Alhambra** will include a discussion of Islamic gardens, exploring the design and plants of the Alhambra. *Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm: May 21–22, June 18–19; August 20–21*
- **The Food and Culture of the Alhambra** offers tastings and special presentations that highlight the flavors of almond, citrus, olives, and eggplant. *Sundays: May 22, June 12, July 10, August 21; tastings 1–4 pm, with special presentations at 4 pm*

- **FLAMENCO: inside/out** brings the Garden alive with the sounds, rhythms, and movements of flamenco as music and dance are performed twice each day by artists from a variety of cultural and artistic backgrounds. *Saturdays & Sundays (May 21–August 21) at 1, 2, 3 pm*
- **Guided Tours of the Conservatory or Library Exhibition**  
*Saturday & Sundays (May 21–August 21) at 2:30 pm*

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*Audio Tour sponsored by Bloomberg*

## **The New York Botanical Garden**

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. During *Spanish Paradise: Gardens of the Alhambra*, the best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, Rock Garden, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$8 for children ages 2–12, free for children under 2. A *Grounds-Only Pass* is also available: \$6 for adults, \$5 for adult Bronx Residents, \$3 for seniors and students with ID, \$1 for children ages 2–12, free for children under 2. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org)

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden’s general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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### **Press Information**

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