

# A Guide to National Orchid Garden at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Nestled in the heart of Singapore Botanic Gardens is the National Orchid Garden, a paradise showcase of tropical orchids amidst a fine profusion of lush tropical greenery.

The moment you enter the National Orchid Garden, you will see a cascading fountain with an iconic pair of Crane sculptures at its peak. The fountain is set against a majestic backdrop of spectacular trees and palms, luxuriant shrubs and a myriad of colourful orchids. Start your journey from the left of the Crane Fountain, where the path is flanked by thousands of golden blooms. These are the famous Golden Shower or Dancing Lady Orchids (*Oncidium Goldiana*).

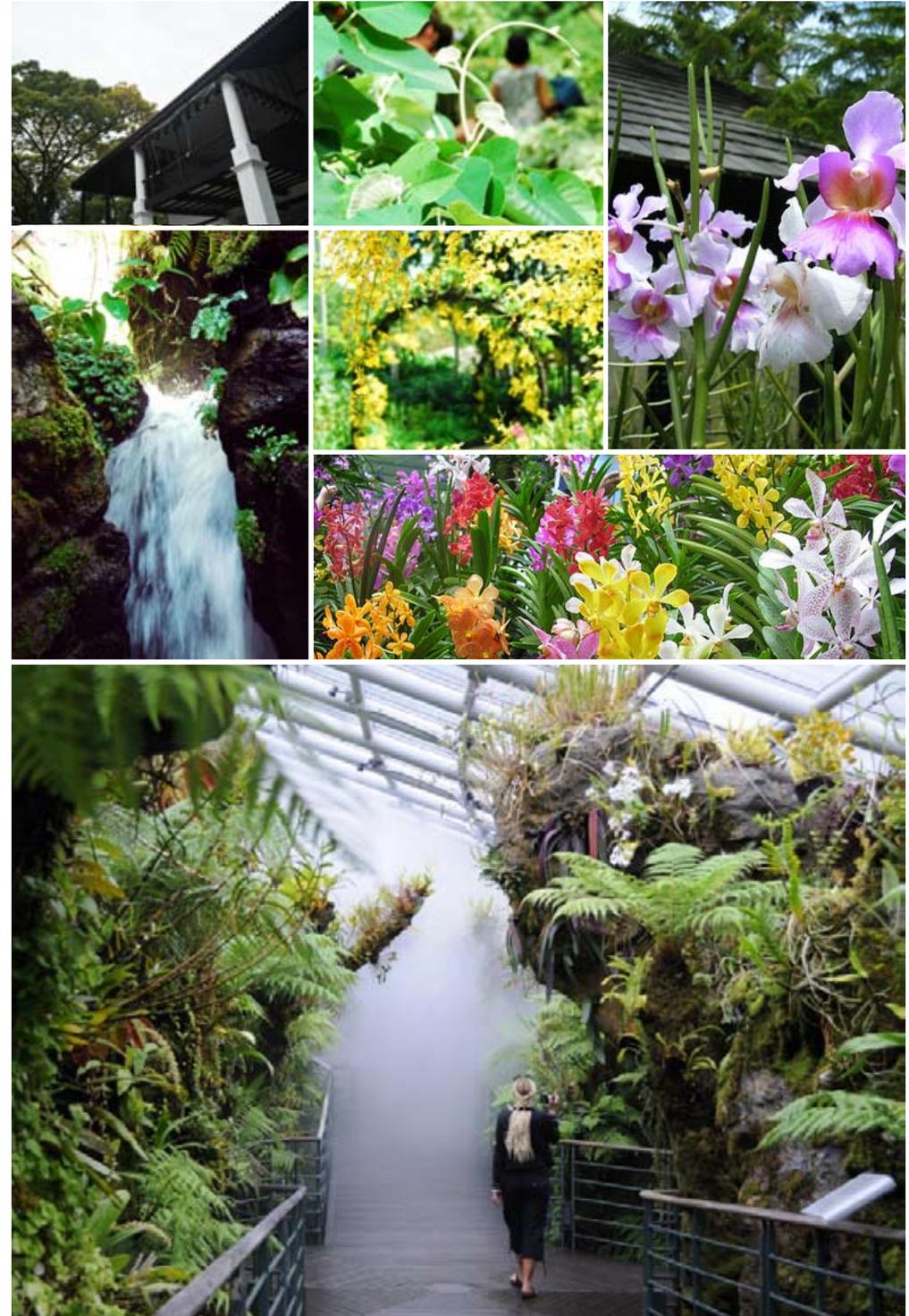
As you walk on this trail, immerse yourself in this 3-hectare display garden of bedazzling blooms and intricate landscape. At the same time, find out more about this splendid group of plants, their unique significance and their historical association with Singapore Botanic Gardens.



**Opening hours:**  
8.30am – 7pm (Last ticket sales at 6pm)

**Estimated walking time:**  
30 - 45 min

**Admission fees:**  
\$5 for adults  
\$1 for students  
\$1 for senior citizens (60 years and above)  
Free for children below 12 years



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## How to get to Singapore Botanic Gardens

### By Foot:

Entrance to the Gardens is easy through its major entrances: Tanglin Gate, Nassim Gate and Cluny Park Gate.

### By Car:

Car parking facilities are available at the Botany Centre, Visitor Centre, Bukit Timah Core, Jacob Ballas Children's Garden and along Tyersall Avenue.

### By Bus:

*Via Holland Road*  
SBS Transit 7, 105, 123, 174  
SMRT 75, 77, 106

*Via Bukit Timah Road*  
SBS Transit 48, 66, 151, 153, 154, 156, 170, 186  
SMRT 67, 171

## How to get to National Orchid Garden

At the Gardens' major entrances, look out for mapboards and directional signs to National Orchid Garden. The walk takes about 10 minutes from Nassim Gate and 15 minutes from Tanglin Gate and Cluny Park Gate.



## Highlights:

- Spectacular display of more than 600 species and hybrid orchids
- Prized collection of VIP orchids named after celebrities and foreign dignitaries
- Simulated tropical highland forest featuring orchids normally only found in the tropical highland areas, carnivorous plants and cool-growing plant species



Golden Shower



Tiger Orchid



Gingerbread Tree



Burkill Hall



VIP Orchid Garden



Vanda Miss Joaquim



Tan Hoon Siang Mist House



Yuen-Peng McNeice Bromeliad Collection



Elephant Creeper



Cool House



Nibung Palm

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## What you can see on this trail

→ 1

### Golden Shower or Dancing Lady Orchid (*Oncidium Goldiana*)

Striking displays of *Oncidium Goldiana*, more popularly known as the Golden Shower or Dancing Lady orchids, greet you at the National Orchid Garden. Laid in masses and elaborately arranged on arches, these orchids on display are always a delight and serve as popular photo opportunities for visitors.

*Oncidium Goldiana* is the first *Oncidium* hybrid produced by Singapore Botanic Gardens' orchid breeding programme in 1939. Its popularity remains till today as it is free flowering, lasting and beautiful both as a cut-flower crop and as an ornamental plant. Its common name - Golden Shower - refers to the numerous blooms in striking yellow, looking like a shower of gold when presented in masses. Dancing Lady refers to the floral parts of the individual flowers that resemble a lady in a gorgeous ballroom dress dancing.

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### Tiger Orchid (*Grammatophyllum speciosum*)

This plot showcases the *Grammatophyllum speciosum* or what is commonly known as the Tiger Orchid, the world's largest orchid plant. It occurs as an epiphyte (plant that grows on other plants or trees for support but is self-sustaining) and occasionally a lithophyte (plant that grows on rocks). When mature, it forms a spectacular

specimen nestled in a massive root mass with numerous pseudostems that can reach lengths of 2.5m. Flowering is largely seasonal and a mature specimen is capable of putting out more than 10 sprays of inflorescence at the same time. Each inflorescence measures up to a height of 2m bearing more than 30 flowers, each about 10cm wide. Its common name, Tiger Orchid, refers to its flowers that are vividly coloured and marked like the coat of a tiger.

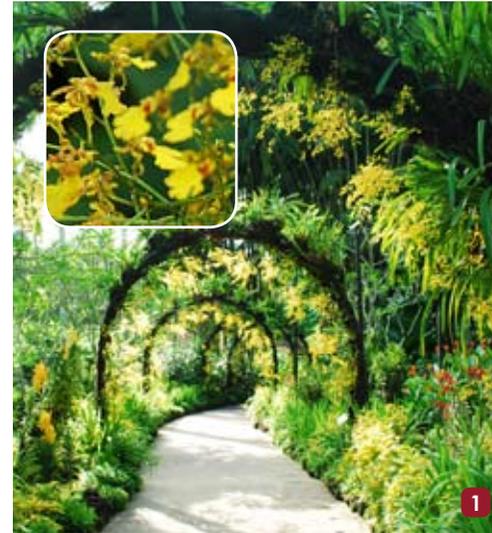
→ 3

### Gingerbread Tree (*Hyphaene thebaica*)

This is an unusual palm species that has a dichotomous or branching habit that rises from its main stem. This is a very rare occurrence for members of the Palm family (Arecaceae), as most would either have a single solitary stem or multiple stems that rise from the base.

The *Hyphaene thebaica* is a very rare palm in Singapore. It is native to the Nile Valley and can also be found scattered in the regions of Middle East to Egypt. Its common name, Gingerbread Tree, is derived from the fruit's taste and texture, which is similar to the taste of gingerbread.

This interesting palm is of rich cultural and economic use in Egypt. Ancient Egyptians regarded it as a sacred plant and its seeds were often used as burial offerings for Pharaohs. Its fruits and unripe kernels are edible, and the thin dried brown fruit peel is used for making molasses, cakes, and sweetmeats. Herbal tea can also be made from it,



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while the shoots of germinated seeds are eaten as a vegetable.

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### Burkill Hall

Built in 1866, Burkill Hall is a fine example of an early colonial house in Singapore. Sir Henry Nicholas Ridley, renowned botanist, orchidologist and the first Director of Singapore Botanic Gardens from 1888 to 1911, resided in this house. He was later succeeded by Isaac Henry Burkill in 1912 when he became Director of the Gardens. Burkill Hall is named to commemorate him and his son, Humphrey Burkill, who later

also held the position of Director of Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Burkill Hall has been carefully restored to preserve its original colonial ambience. It is now a main architectural feature residing at the highest point and amongst the elaborate landscape in the National Orchid Garden. It is also a popular venue for weddings, functions and events.

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### VIP Orchid Garden

The VIP Orchid Garden was thoughtfully sited and carefully styled as an English backyard garden of Burkill Hall. Displayed here are the outstanding orchid hybrids of the Gardens' orchid programme that was initiated by Professor Eric Holttum (the Gardens' third director) in 1928. As Singapore orchids gained fame, it became obvious that they should be used as agents to promote goodwill and foster closer ties between nations. From 1957 the Singapore Government began to honour State Visitors and other VIPs by naming selected orchid hybrids after them. This prized collection of "VIP Orchids" has become an important attraction of the National Orchid Garden.

To date, the Gardens has named over 120 VIP orchids. The first VIP orchid was *Aranthera Anne Black* in 1956, after Lady Black, wife of a former Governor of Singapore, Sir Robert Black. Other examples of VIP orchids on display include *Dendrobium Margaret Thatcher*, *Renantanda Akihito*, *Dendrobium Masako Kotaishi Hidenka*, *Dendrobium Elizabeth*, *Paravanda Nelson Mandela*, *Mokara Laura Bush* and *Renantanda Kofi Anan*.

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### *Vanda Miss Joaquim* (National Flower of Singapore)

This orchid, a hybrid between *Vanda hookeriana* and *Vanda teres*, is hardy and free flowering. It is Singapore's first orchid hybrid and was named by Mr H. N. Ridley, the first director of the Singapore

Botanic Gardens in 1893. Ridley named the plant after Agnes Joaquim in whose garden the hybrid originated. In 1981, it was selected to be the National Flower of Singapore for its beauty, resilience and year-round blooming quality.

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### Tan Hoon Siang Mist House

The Tan Hoon Siang Mist House was named in honour of Tan Hoon Siang, a successful pioneer and descendant of Tan Tock Seng, who was a philanthropist and the founder of Tan Tock Seng Hospital in Singapore. It showcases an extensive collection of rare, unique and award-winning orchid cultivars from the Gardens.

A prominent display is the Fragrant Orchids corner. *Vanda Mimi Palmer* is a fine example of the few fragrant orchid hybrids in existence; it emits a very sweet and chocolate-like fragrance that is particularly strong in the morning.

Another interesting orchid that is featured here is the *Vanilla planifolia*, one of the most well-known species amongst the vanilla orchids. Vanilla species occur mostly in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world, from tropical America to tropical Asia, New Guinea and West Africa. Are you aware that the *Vanilla* flavouring is actually derived from the seedpods of these orchids? They are commercially grown for their seedpods.



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### Yuen-Peng McNeice Bromeliad Collection

Through the generous sponsorship of Lady Yuen-Peng McNeice, this unique collection of bromeliads on display was acquired from Florida, United States in 1994. This collection consists of 23 genera, 320 species and about 520 taxa (cultivars, varieties and hybrids).

'Bromeliad' is the common name for the family Bromeliaceae. The pineapple, a well-known bromeliad, was discovered by Christopher

Columbus in 1493 on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe.

Except for one species (*Pitcarnia feliciana*) which is found in the Guinea region of West Africa, all bromeliads are distributed in tropical and warm regions of the Americas. Bromeliads grow at places of elevation ranging from sea level to over 4,000m. Some species can withstand temperatures near freezing level while others can survive on hot sands and blistering rocks in desert regions.

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### Elephant Creeper (*Argyreia nervosa*)

*Argyreia nervosa* is commonly known as the Elephant Creeper for its elephant ear-like leaf shape. It is a vigorous grower and is often prized for its aesthetic value. Native to the Indian subcontinent, it has been introduced to areas worldwide as an ornamental plant.

You can easily spot the Elephant Creeper along the boardwalk railing leading to the Cool House. Look out for its light-green velvety leaves and slivery white creeping stems. The inflorescence bears large solitary pink flowers that attract large Carpenter Bees which pollinate it.

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### Cool House

The Cool House simulates a montane tropical forest. Trees and rocks are draped with a profusion of orchid species, carnivorous plants and cool-growing plant species. Orchid species growing on the tree trunks and rocks are of Asian origins, while those flourishing on the majestic Tasmanian Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) are of American and African origins. Montane forests of the tropics have a cool climate and high rainfall throughout the year. Here, the simulation of cool air, drifting mist and rushing torrent provides a realistic representation of high elevation

sites in the tropics and will make for an unforgettable experience.

An orchid to look out for here is the *Bulbophyllum echinolabium*, the largest-flowering in its genus. Native to Sulawesi and Borneo, it has spectacular blooms that can measure up to 30cm long and that last for about 10 days, only to be succeeded by yet another flower. This amazing orchid is able to remain in bloom successively for up to two months. Apart from this orchid, see if you can spot several other interesting orchid species in the Cool House.

Besides orchids, another featured group of plants are the different carnivorous plants. Carnivorous plants employ different methods of attracting and trapping insects. Having bold colours, nectar-secreting glands, traps with trigger mechanisms and pitchers filled with dissolving enzymes are all part of survival techniques for these plants as they often grow in places where the soil is thin or poor in nutrients. Look out for the *Nepenthes* (commonly known as Pitcher Plant). It lures its prey into its pitcher using its colours and nectar-scent. The prey is unable to escape as the inner walls of the pitcher are slippery. Enzymes secreted by a special gland quickly digest the fallen insect and the nutrients are absorbed by the walls.



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### Nibung Palm (*Oncosperma tigillarum*)

The *Oncosperma tigillarum*, or Nibung Palm, forms majestic clumps with tall, slender stems that can grow up to a height of 25m, which are covered with thin, black spines. The Nibung Palm may appear menacing to some with its stems covered in spines, but it is in fact a very useful palm. The stems are hardy and rot-resistant, and are commonly used in the construction of houses, fishing stakes and *kelongs* (wooden structures built above the sea and used for commercial fishing). The thin, black spines

are used by tribal communities as blowpipe darts for hunting and the leaves as roof thatching material.

**We hope you have enjoyed your walk. To get up close and personal with more nature, embark on the Heritage Trees of Singapore Botanic Gardens walking trail. To obtain another DIY trail-guide on a walking trail in one of Singapore's parks, visit [www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides).**