

Informations systems for people with special needs in Prague Botanic Garden

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Abstract: Prague Botanic Garden as a scientific, cultural and educational institution aims to ensure that modern botany knowledge is available to the general public, including children, seniors, and visitors with special needs. It devotes special attention to all these categories of visitors and since 1996 to visually impaired people in particular. We believe that the opening of our garden to visually impaired people is very important, since it enables all these categories of visitors to move freely around the garden with minimal restrictions. We also consider it very important to adapt the garden to their needs without building separate specialized gardens. We feel that such separated places could reinforce unwanted isolation of people with special needs.

Keywords: exhibition, sensory perception, Dinasy technology, navigation system, barrier-free, information device, Braille print, plant

Introduction

Prague botanic garden holds exhibitions focusing on the perception of nature through all senses and offers a free collection of natural objects with information in black print and Braille. We have also a tactile plan of the southern part of our garden, which marks forty interesting plants and nature objects that carry printed information. These and also other interesting plants in the whole outside exposition (together eighty seven interesting plants and nature objects) are accompanied by sound and Braille print. You need only a special earpiece for listening these interesting information. There is also a professional guide service. The Prague botanic garden has a partly barrier-free approach. Visitors can also be provided with a wheelchair if needed. These can be found at the cash desk of the Fata Morgana greenhouse and at the cash desk South and North. Our

botanic garden has three barrier-free toilets (northern, southern part of the garden and in the greenhouse Fata Morgana).

The collection of natural objects for the blind people was awarded an excellent project award in „The 2003 Olga Havel Award“. DINASYS technology offers user-friendly unpretentious audio system. Special electronic is built into simple box and pole. All that must be done is to touch the terminal surface of the pole. Electronics can be also installed in other already existing information devices (e. g. just like in the Prague botanic garden), if conductive surface is provided. The messages are then received via modified earpiece upon touching the pole. The sound in Czech and English language can be also led to a conventional or directional loudspeaker. The system can be powered from electronic network or by means of battery. Russian and German visitors can borrow special MP3 technology at our cash desks of the outside expositions. They can listen to about eighty seven interesting plants or nature objects in their native language. Sound system can be used from 1st April till 31st October in our outside expositions.

Map and list of 87 interesting species in the Prague botanic garden

I. Southern part (Ornamental garden, pinetum, Flora of Mediterranean area and Turkey)

Abies pinsapo, *Actinidia arguta*, *Aralia elata*, *Arundo donax*, *Betula papyrifera*, *Broussonetia papyrifera*, *Calocedrus decurrens*, *Campsis radicans*, *Castanea sativa*, *Cedrus atlantica*, *Cercis siliquastrum*, Collection of frost-hard bamboo, *Cupressus sempervirens*, Dinosaurus' footprints, *Eucommia ulmoides*, Evergreen woods, *Gaultheria procumbens*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Larix kaempferi*, Limestone with cephalopods, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Medicinal herbs, Peat bog plants, Petrified log, *Picea abies Barryi*, *Picea omorica*, *Pinus aristata*, *Pinus jeffreyi*, *Platanus acerifolia*, *Salix alba*, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, *Schisandra chinensis*, *Taxus baccata*, Touchstones, *Viburnum burkwoodii*, *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*, *Vitis vinifera*

II. Central part (The slope exposition, forest biotopes of East Asia and North America, surrounding of the Fata Morgana greenhouse)

Aesculus hippocastanum, *Acer campestre*, *Acer platanoides*, *Apis mellifera*, brash, *Cornus mas*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Eucalyptus* sp., *Hemiptelea davidii*, *Larix decidua*, *Maclura pomifera*, *Mespilus germanica*, *Quercus petraea*, *Quercus robur*, *Pinus sylvestris*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Zanthoxylum* sp.

III. Northern part (Arboretum, North American prairie, North American semi-desert, Wetland, Irises, Peonia meadow, Shade loving perennials and evergreen woods)

Arbutus menziesii, *Asimina triloba*, *Carya glabra*, *Celtis reticulata*, *Cupressus arizonica*, *Cephalotaxus drupacea*, *Diospyros virginiana*, *Ephedra* sp., gravels and sands, *Fagus sylvatica*, grasses, *Hamamelis* sp., *Hydrangea* sp., *Juniperus virginiana*, *Juglans mandshurica*, Longhorn beetle oak, *Magnolia* sp., *Matteuccia struthiopteris*, *Opuntia phaeacantha*, *Picea breweriana*, *Pieris japonica*, Prairie, Peat bog, *Paeonia* sp., *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Pinus sabiniana*, *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, *Tilia cordata*, *Torreya californica*, *Yucca filamentosa*

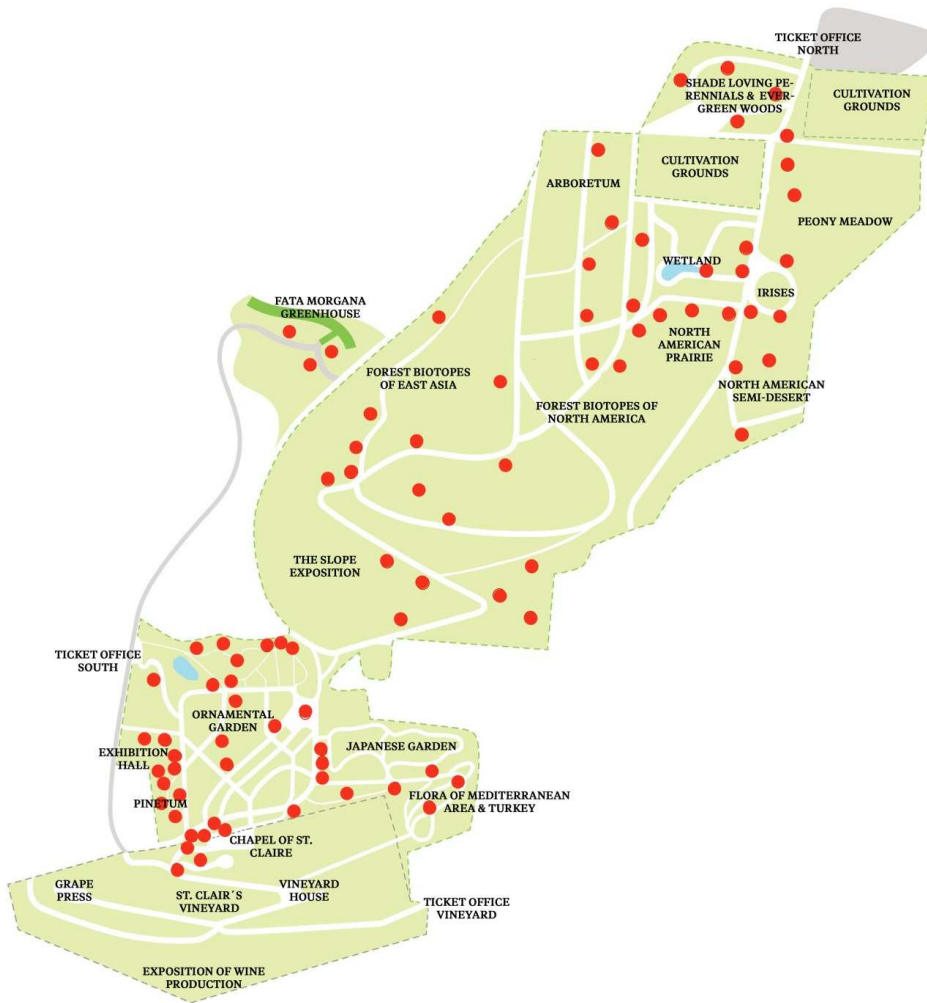


Fig. 1. Map of 87 interesting species in the Prague botanic garden

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