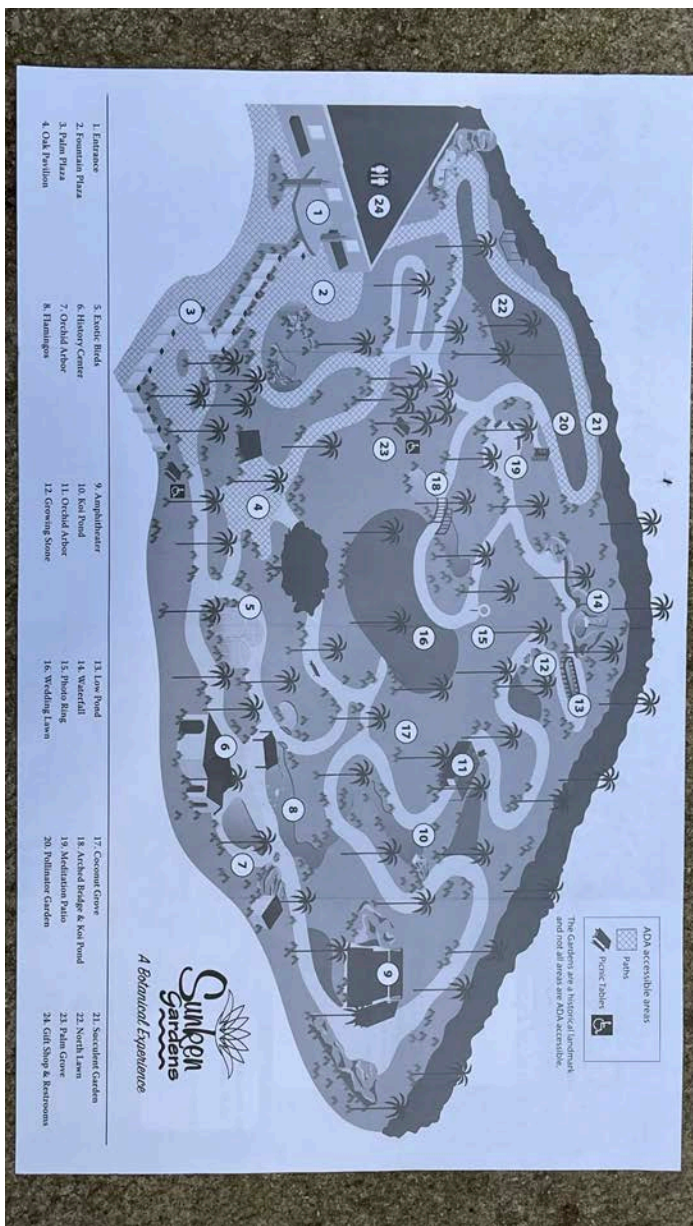


240324 BRA Sunken Gardens St Petersburg Florida Hidden Gem



It's hard to imagine today with the mega attractions, we all know that something like sunken gardens would've been a national destination at a point not too long ago. I grew up in Michigan and every winter in the deep cold of January we would see commercials about sunken gardens in St. Petersburg Florida.

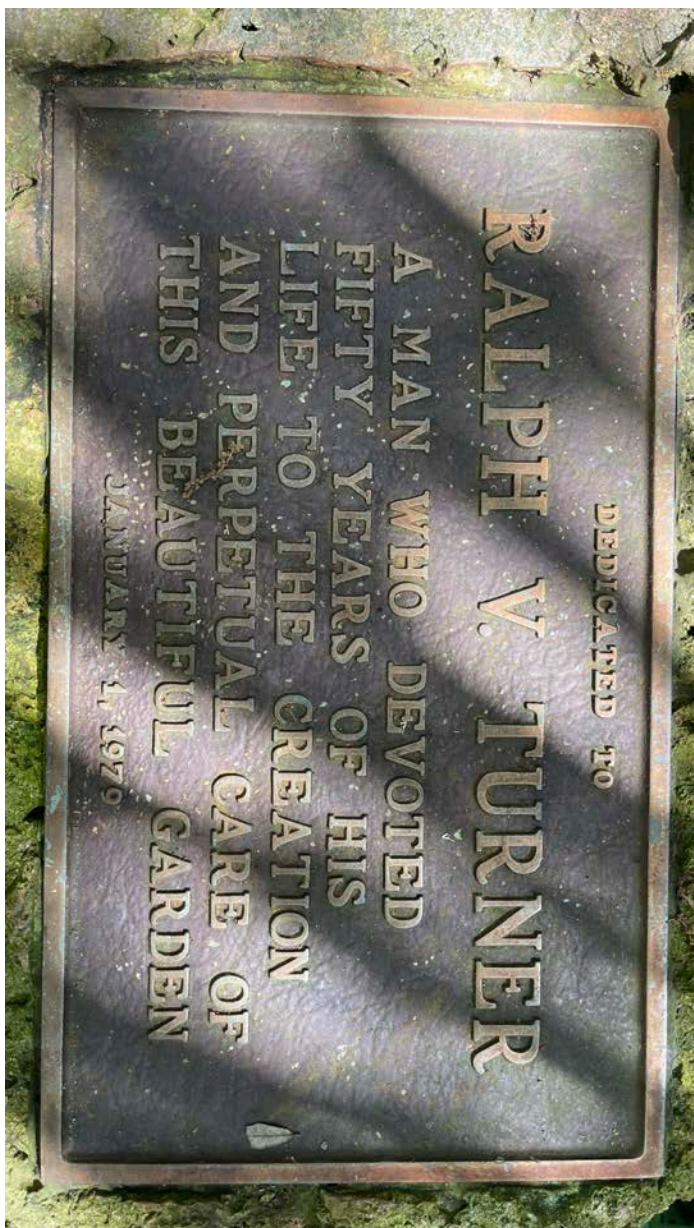


Sunken gardens was built inside of a pond which occupied a sinkhole. It was drained by an entrepreneur back in the day when you could do such things. He decided that the rich soil was good for planting, and started to import many exotic, fruits, palms, and flowering plants.



You don't really notice it but you walk 15 feet below the street level and that is the base of what used to be the pond. Inside of it now is a wonderful garden well worth

your time which occupies one entire city block.



Ralph Turner was his name. There is a plaque dedicated to him in 1979. He was the visionary that created this attraction. The city purchased the attraction once it fell into disrepair and with public funding helped restore it.



The attraction today was a plant festival. But there was always a good reason to visit

the park. As you can see, the interest was very high.



As you walk around the park, the winding path takes you by many streams and the pond. As you can imagine they all drain down to the low point mentioned above. It provides for lots of opportunities to make beautiful waterfalls.



The plant festival was very small. In fact, for such a famous attraction, it was underwhelming. I wonder why? If I were anyone selling plants, I would've jumped at the opportunity to have showcase them here. Who knows but the park regardless was well worth the visit.





Take your time and wander the winding paths. They will take you to different landscapes, which are all beautifully done and expertly maintained.



The pictures here really do not do this location justice. It really is a serene place of escape in the middle of urban sprawl. One city block of tropical Paradise.



The flamingo is iconic for Florida, and has always been the symbol of sunken Gardens. It is historic as far as anything can be in the United States being so young. But it's a beautiful place to visit.



There are really too many places to stop for photographs. If you can bring a book do so; there are plenty of benches to sit. If you can't relax here then I don't think it's possible for you.



Inside the park is the original entrance to Turner sunken Gardens. At one point not too long ago in the 70s, it had the largest gift shop in the United States. Yes, you read that right.

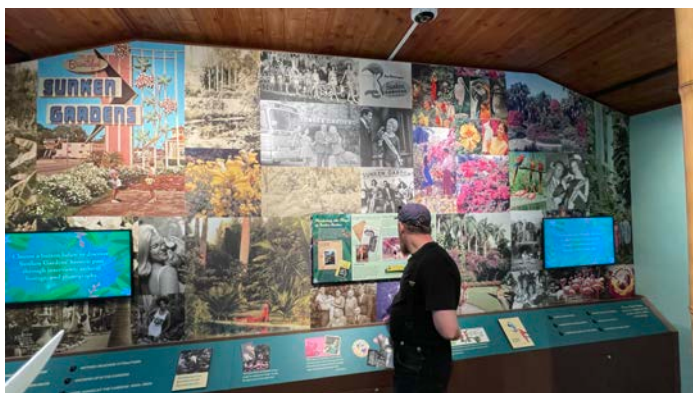


The old gift shop is a wonderful, compact, informative museum. It really does take you back in time and show you how this park developed. Much of this history I remember now being age 69 as most of it I saw growing up.

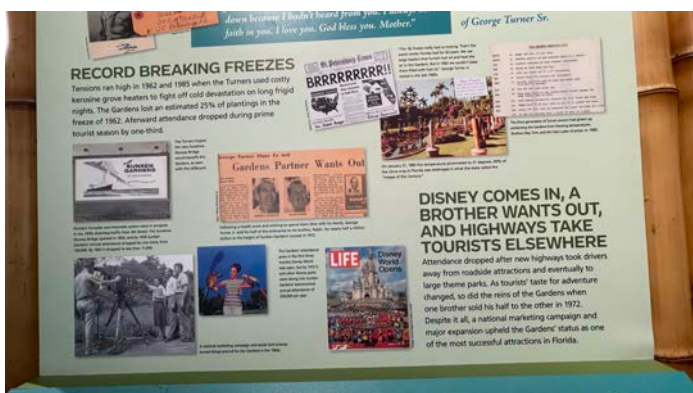


The original Turner family at the entrance of their small gift shop. You can see them here as side-by-side waiting for visitors. Mr Turner once said that people would just come to look at his plants, so if that's all they want to do he was going to charge them. Brilliant.





This particular display struck my interest. See below on the right, where it says Disney comes in. That was the end of many national attractions like Sunken Gardens in the United States. The United States had many of these small family owned regional/national vacation destinations. but with the onset of mega attractions, like Disney World, Universal and others, the small family operations simply could not compete and have one by one nearly all vanished. Progress.



So we spent the day wandering around the park. We tried to name the many plants, and then were corrected by the placards which are available for each. We saw whatever animals we could, and noticed that this park used to contain enclosures which have long been abandoned. But the plants are wonderful, the flowers prolific, and the water attractions serene and calming. Please visit; you won't regret it. Come for an hour and stay for an afternoon.



Keep smiling!