

From Tulips To Butterflies To Mums, There Is Always Color At Hershey Gardens

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HERSHEY (Lancaster Co.) — To most people, the town of Hershey is synonymous with chocolate. However thousands of visitors to Hershey Gardens, 23-acre display of flowers, trees, shrubs, and themed areas, have found that chocolate is not the only attraction that makes the town sweet.

Administered by the M.S. Hershey Foundation, a nonprofit education organization, the gardens were constructed upon Milton S. Hershey's instructions for a 3½-acre rose garden. The garden opened to the public in June 1937 and drew so many visitors that Hershey decided to increase the garden and expand the varieties of flowers displayed.

The garden quickly grew to 23 acres and by 1955 more than 42,000 roses were present, followed by a collection of maples, peonies, hollies, and evergreen plants, besides six theme gardens, walkways, and a seasonal flower garden.

In 1996 a restoration projected returned the rose garden to its original appearance. Today the rose garden includes 7,000 roses. Roses, in fact, bloom on the grounds from June through October.

Other construction included a Butterfly House in 1998 that was created from the framework of an original greenhouse. The mesh

enclosure boasts 300 butterflies of 25 North American species.

Thirty thousand tulips give way to a cool-color annual display that is offset by a hot-color summer annual arrangement. The diversity of heights and textures of the annual bed give it appeal, said Susan Klein, public relations coordinator.

The summer annual display contains 12,000 plants that are bolstered by 500 chrysanthemums for the fall season.

"The nice thing about the garden is that there is a succession of blooms so visitors can keep coming back," said Klein.

In addition, a Japanese garden, arboretum, rock garden, herb garden, and perennial garden round out the displays that walkways take visitors through.

To have adequate time to "stop, explore, sit down and enjoy" the gardens, "it takes about two hours to really get the full effect" of the garden, she said.

The season begins in late March through the end of October. Although the summer is, understandably, the busiest season, "membership and local visitors make it a steady stream," said Klein.

With the onset of spring, "we're thrilled to be open," said Klein. In March the part-time gardening staff returns, along with nearly 200 volunteers. Seven employees, including administra-



Approximately 30,000 tulips color the landscape of the gardens in the spring.

tion and full-time gardeners, work full-time at the Gardens.

The Butterfly House has lent itself to the educational programs that are presented there.

While younger children may

act out the butterfly life cycle and watch a caterpillar, other elementary students explore the difference between a moth and a butterfly. All students get to tour the building and experience the hundreds of butterflies.

Now going into its fifth season, the Butterfly House will open June 8 and close mid-October.

Volunteers, dubbed "flight attendants," guide visitors through the host of nectar plants and butterflies.

"It's very magical," said Klein. "As the season progresses it be-

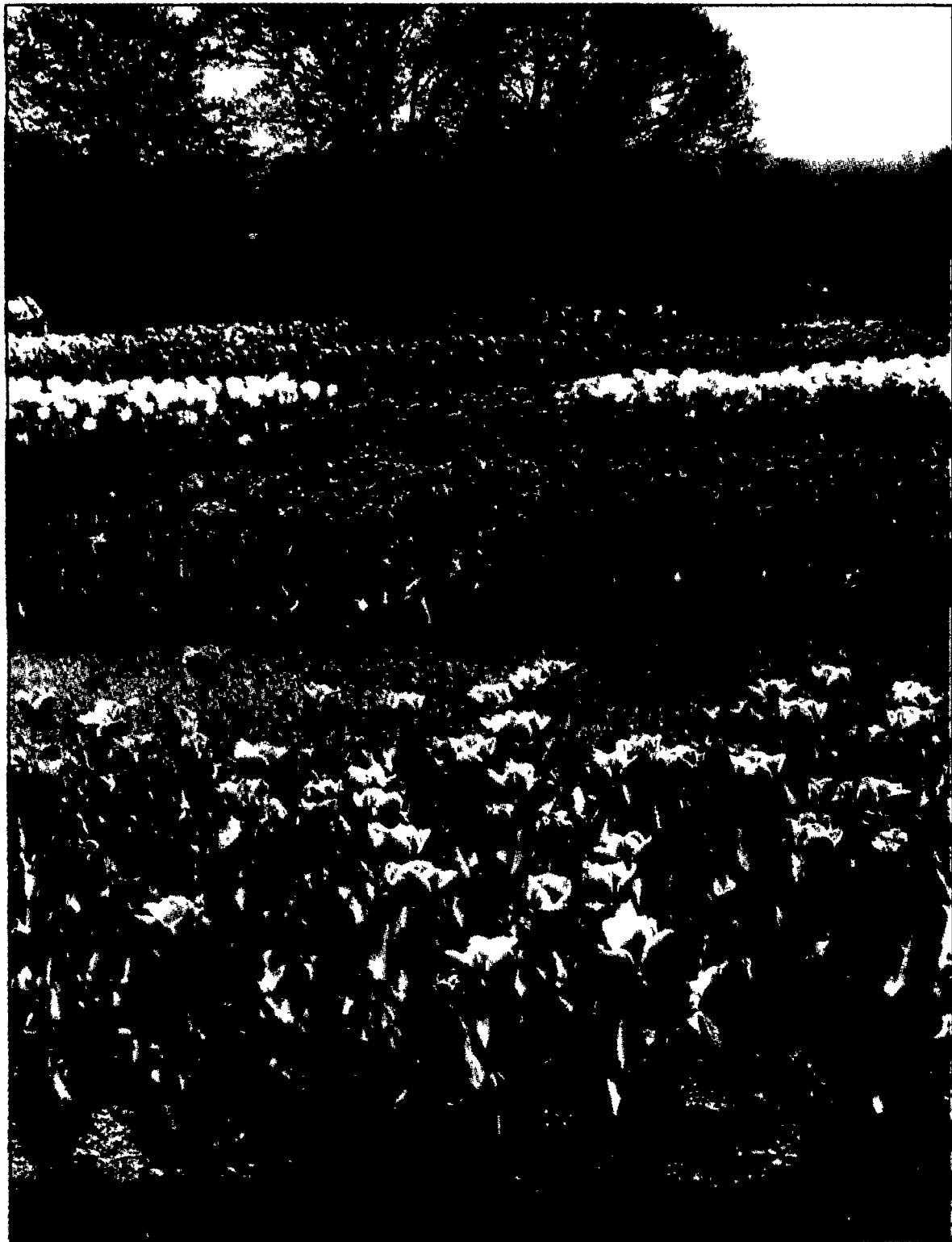
comes very lush."

The butterflies propagate in the house, so visitors can see where they lay the eggs, watch how they feed, and observe how they move through the caterpillar to the butterfly stages.

Since the foundation has an "education mission," said Klein, the house provides a forum for learning for not only students but also for all ages of visitors.

Because of the success of the Butterfly House in bringing

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Tulips of the "fan garden" surround a trellised sitting area.



This garden re-creates a garden established by Milton Hershey's wife. A few of the plants were from her original garden.



Many areas in the garden such as this one are popular for weddings.