Kentucky may be famous for its horses and bourbon, but the Bluegrass Region is also home to some of the most enchanting gardens and inspiring architecture in the world. Acclaimed Garden Designer Jon Carloftis invites you to explore the carefully cultivated gardens blooming throughout the historically preserved architecture of downtown Lexington, using this brochure as your guide.

Please note that this is a self-guided tour and some stops may be private homes and not open for public viewing.
Garden & Architecture District Map

- Parks
- Ashland District
- Monument District
- Northside District
- Gratz Park District

* Map is not to scale
GRATZ PARK DISTRICT

Stroll back in time along the exquisitely preserved streets of the Gratz Park District, home to some of Lexington’s finest examples of early architecture and peppered with the carefully maintained gardens of its residents. This historic district is comprised of 16 buildings, including the Hunt Morgan House, the Bodley-Bullock House, the Canegie Library and several private homes. Here you’ll find examples of Gothic, Greek Revival, Federal and neoclassical architecture.

Insider Tips:
- Gratz Park’s Fountain of Youth, a Greek Revival memorial, was donated by Lexington author James Lane Allen as a gift to the children of Lexington.
- The Bodley-Bullock House served as Union officer headquarters during the Civil War.
- Distilled, a restaurant and bourbon bar located inside the Gratz Park Inn, offers an eclectic menu of bourbon-infused dishes and cocktails.
ASHLAND DISTRICT

Statesman Henry Clay’s beloved Ashland estate is preserved on 17 acres of wooded grounds and surrounded by scenic residential streets. An Italianate style mansion sits at the center of the estate, and the English parterre garden — free to visitors — is a favorite spot of local artists and photographers. Walk down the adjacent tree-lined streets, such as Catalpa Road and South Ashland Avenue, to view lovely residential gardens, century-old trees, and examples of American Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival architecture. Mansion and “Trees of Ashland” tours are offered year-round. Visit henryclay.org for ticketing information.

Insider Tips:
◆ The wings of the Federal style house were designed by Benjamin Latrobe, the architect of the U.S. Capitol.
◆ Landscape architect Henry Fletcher Kenney designed the garden following its opening to the public in 1950. It continues to be maintained by members of the Lexington Garden Club.
◆ Have lunch at the Ginkgo Tree Cafe, a casual eatery on the grounds of the Ashland Estate that serves crepes, salads and specialty sandwiches.
◆ In Autumn, the front lawn of the Ashland Estate and the nearby Catalpa Road are blanketed in yellow Ginkgo leaves from the historic trees that date back to 1890.
◆ Though many plants are dormant during winter months, the bones of Henry Clay’s garden are a quietly beautiful sight to see all on their own.
The architecturally diverse Woodward Heights Historic District contains examples of Victorian, Greek Revival, Colonial and neoclassical architecture. The Lexington Cemetery, the burial site of many notable Kentuckians, is nationally known as one of America’s most beautiful cemeteries and arboreta. The cemetery’s entrance features a Romanesque gatehouse, and the grounds encompass an arboretum and a wide variety of plants, shrubs, trees and flowers. Plan to visit the Botherum; a restored Greek Revival cottage nestled among exquisite gardens, originally built by prolific Kentucky architect, John McMurtry.

**Insider Tips:**
- The historic Botherum home, restored by Jon Carloftis and Dale Fisher, is the largest residential property in downtown Lexington and was recently featured in Southern Living magazine.
- The mammoth Ginkgo tree in the front yard of the Botherum was given to the original owner, Madison C. Johnson, by statesman Henry Clay.
- The Lexington Cemetery has over 200 species of trees on 170 acres of land, including dogwoods, color crab apples, ornamental magnolias and pink weeping cherries.
NORTHSIDE DISTRICT
Tucked away on tree-lined, garden-peppered cul-de-sacs just minutes from bustling downtown are Hampton Court, Fayette Park and Elsmere Park. These charming areas contain stately homes and condominiums of Richardsonian Romanesque, Georgian, neo-Greek Revival and Prairie style architecture. Nearby you’ll find Food Chain, a non-profit dedicated to gardening and producing sustainable food indoors. Head down Jefferson Street to the Apiary, a sophisticated entertainment venue that grows fresh herbs and seasonal vegetables in their garden fortress.

Insider Tips:
- Tours of the Food Chain facilities are held most Saturdays at 1 pm at the historic Bread Box building. Buy tickets ahead of time at saturdayfoodchaintours.eventbrite.com.
- The Apiary was featured in Garden & Gun magazine as Lexington’s “chic new entertaining space.”
- Stroll down Jefferson Street to discover a variety of local dining and brewery options.

Garden
Walk: Fayette Park, Elsmere Park, Hampton Ct.
Tour: Food Chain (859) 428-8380
OTHER GARDEN STOPS
Explore even more beautiful garden sites around Lexington. Many of these attractions offer guided tours, or you can simply meander through them on your own.

University of Kentucky Arboretum
500 Alumni Drive
UK’s Arboretum contains over 1,000 different trees & shrubs, as well as herb, rose, water and butterfly gardens.
(859) 257-6955
arboretum.ca.uky.edu

Michler’s Florist & Kentucky Native Café
417 East Maxwell Street
Gardening enthusiasts can browse a selection of organically-raised plants at this beloved fifth-generation greenhouse. Stop for lunch in the adjoining Kentucky Native Café, a café & beer garden nestled inside the bones of an old greenhouse.
(859) 254-0383
michlers.com

Waveland State Historic Site
225 Waveland Museum Lane
Considered one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in Kentucky, this historic site contains plants and herbs appropriate to the antebellum period.
(859) 272-3611
parks.ky.gov/parks/historicsites/waveland

Keeneland Race Course
4201 Versailles Road
Lexington’s historic Thoroughbred race course, a National Historic Landmark, contains internationally inspired, historic architecture and beautifully maintained grounds. The stunning sycamore trees that line the paddock, while at peak color in fall, are a sight to see year-round.
(859) 254-3412
keeneland.com

Thoroughbred Park
East Main Street at Midland Avenue
This 2.5-acre space on the cusp of downtown is home to 13 life-sized Thoroughbred horse sculptures and 42 plaques honoring historic figures in the racing industry.
(859) 233-7299
triangleparklexington.org
MEET JON & DALE

When award-winning garden designer Jon Carloftis and longtime life and business partner Dale Fisher bought the historic Botherum home in 2012, it had been untouched for 15 years and was overrun with weeds and raccoons. Wanting to restore the home to its original glory without turning it into a museum, Jon and Dale sought to respect the character and integrity of the site while incorporating their own personalized, contemporary touches. Together, Jon with his imaginative, wild style and Dale with a manicured, practical vision, the duo successfully turned an abandoned nineteenth-century site into a historic Lexington treasure. To learn more about Jon and Dale and to see more examples of Jon’s award-winning garden designs, check out Jon’s book, Beautiful Gardens of Kentucky.
OTHER TOURS

There are many other ways to experience Lexington’s rich history and breathtaking beauty. Check out any of the below trails and tours to further explore Lexington’s history, heritage and splendor.

HISTORIC TOURS

**Historic Homes, Walking and Cycling Tours**

History lovers can purchase tickets granting access to Ashland, The Henry Clay Estate, the Mary Todd Lincoln House, the Hunt-Morgan House and Waveland State Historic Site. Historic downtown cycling tours are also available, which can be done on your own with a guided map. Prefer to tour on foot? View Henry Clay’s Law Office, Cheapside Park, the pre-Civil War homes of Gratz Park and more on the Historic Downtown Walking tour, held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

**Heritage Tours**

Explore Pioneer pathways, scenic traditions and tales from history by taking part in a Heritage Tour. Visit notable slavery milestones on the African American Heritage Tour, stroll through quaint towns on the Small-Town Treasures tour, discover the life of Honest Abe on the Lincoln Heritage Tour or travel through beautiful backcountry roads on the Blue Highways Tour. Learn more at visitlex.com/idea-guide/heritage-tours

HORSE COUNTRY TOURS

**Driving Tours & Horse Farm Tours**

Head out in any direction from the center of downtown and soon you’ll be surrounded by rolling Bluegrass hills and world-class horse farms. Explore these areas on your own with a Bluegrass Country Driving Tour map, or schedule a narrated excursion through private horse farms and other horse-related points of interest with the help of a friendly local guide. Learn more at visitlex.com/idea-guide/horse-farm-tours

**The Kentucky Horse Park**

The world-famous 1,200-acre Kentucky Horse Park is home to everything a horse lover could want — barns, pasturceland, museums, demonstrations, art exhibits, shopping and more. The International Museum of the Horse on the grounds explores the 55-million year history of the horse, and is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute. Learn more at kyhorsepark.com

**Keeneland Race Course**

Experience the history, architecture and carefully maintained grounds of Lexington’s famous Thoroughbred race course. Request a guided tour or print out a self-guided walking map to explore the grounds on your own. Learn more at keeneland.com/discover/keeneland-tours

BOURBON TOURS

Lexington has nine working bourbon distilleries within 35 miles of downtown. This is your chance to tour the facilities where the real work of crafting fine bourbon happens. Enjoy oaky aromas and witness the time-honored traditions involved in crafting America’s only native spirit. Learn more at visitlex.com/bourbon

The Bluegrass Trust for Historic Preservation seeks to protect, revitalize and promote special historic places in the Lexington community, and is the region’s oldest non-profit preservation organization. The city of Lexington is grateful for their ongoing efforts to preserve the history of our town for future generations. Learn more about the organization and download walking tour brochures at bluegrasstrust.org

**Mobile App for Walkers**

Discover additional information about historic downtown Lexington architecture by downloading the LexArch Tour — The Inquisitive Walker’s Guide to Lexington’s Downtown Architecture mobile app for Android and iOS.

For more information about any of the above tours, contact the Visitors Center at (800) 845-3959.
THANK YOU

We hope this guide has been useful in navigating the beautiful gardens and architectural highlights around Lexington. We would love to see and hear about your experiences! Take pictures along your journey and post them on social media with the #sharethelex hashtag to share your adventures with the world.