

Fields of BEEN

The coastal garden havens in Miami offer scenic diversity and harmonious tranquility. BY PETER A. BALASKAS

WHEN ENVISIONING MIAMS, THE MIND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY conjures up images of sandy shores and aquamarine waters. It's a beautiful picture—although incomplete. In addition to its signature coastal vistas, the Miami area is also home to an entirely different kind of landscape. Secret gardens, hidden throughout the region,

offer a tranquil place for those who desire natural beauty and simple serenity to calm the soul.

These green spaces, some in the most unexpected places, allow visitors and residents alike to escape from their busy lives as they revel in the delicate splendor of these exquisite gardens. From the koi ponds at Bal Harbour Shops to the renowned Kampong just a short drive from Miami Beach, explore what each of these picturesque sanctuaries has to offer.

Bal Harbour Shops Koi Ponds and Water Gardens

Creatively designed by the Biscayne Group-under the

guidance of Randy Whitman, the son of Bal Harbour Shops' owner and developer Stanley Whitman-the Bal Harbour Koi Ponds and Water Gardens combine Eastern influences with the cosmopolitan surroundings of one of the most high-end shopping centers in the country. All three ponds are crafted in hard-edged, square-like geometric patterns and are home to turtles and Japanese koi fish whose warm colors vary from a hot white to cherry red.

Whitman points out that only one pond was originally installed in the courtyard, but its popularity resulted in creating two more ponds: one on the opposite side of Bal Harbour Shops and the other in the main plaza, which has a glass cover that allows visitors to walk on the surface and watch the koi beneath them.

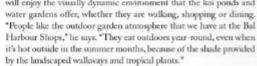
"I suggested turning these areas into a fish pond to create a warm

and pleasant feel, similar to what residential communities have," Whitman says. "We had no idea how popular the ponds would be, especially among families and children. People enjoy taking pictures of the turtles and fish."

Special "low-light" areas inside the mall are home to spiky bro-

meliad plants, dark Chinese evergreens, lady pulms and the phalaenopsis orchids known for lavender colors that set them apart from their green surroundings. Other tropical vegetation includes special aquatic plants like umbrella papyrus palms from Madagascar and violet Egyptian irises. Palm trees and water fountains of different sizes and shapes border the ponds and water gardens. Providing a full visual display, one of the water fountains is T-shaped and two-tiered, with waterspouts erupting from the upper level and cascading down





Miami Beach Botanical Garden

Only 7 miles south from Bal Harbour Shops, the Miami Beach Botanical Garden sits snugly between the Holocaust Memorial and the Miami Beach Convention Center. When walking through the entrance on the corner of 19th Street and Convention Center Drive, visitors will first breathe in the scent of the ylang-ylang tree,



at the Miami Beach Botanical Garden.

