



---

Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center  
2111 W. Park Avenue  
Orange, TX 77630  
409-670-9113  
[www.starkculturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens](http://www.starkculturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens)



## Shangri La Botanical Garden & Nature Center

Breathe in the fresh air as you stroll on a wooden boardwalk that winds between towering cypress trees. Step inside a historic greenhouse and marvel at the colors of blooming orchids. Explore breathtaking gardens inspired by the fundamental elements of art. These are the experiences you'll have at the Shangri La Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. Nestled on 252 scenic acres in the heart of Orange, Texas, Shangri La is a first-rate botanical facility with numerous gardens and greenhouses, a stunning reflection pond lined with azaleas, and a variety of exhibits to see and interact with. If you love nature or are looking for a great place to take a date or the kids in Orange, find your way to the Shangri La Botanical Garden & Nature Center.

The nature center was founded in 1946 by H.J. Lutchter Stark, a prominent philanthropist and Orange native who was inspired by the magical retreat in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton. Stark personally oversaw the development of his paradise, starting with the initial construction in 1937. For the next 12 years, thousands of visitors would flock to the gardens in the spring to see the blooming azaleas and marvel at the wealth of flora and fauna.

Sadly, Stark was forced to close Shangri La in 1958 after a major snowstorm destroyed many of the garden's plants. Shangri La reopened in March 2008 with modern facilities and hundreds of plant species, the culmination of years of work by the Stark Foundation. Today's version carries on the Stark's mission of creating a space of unbelievable beauty while promoting the idea that people can live in harmony with nature.

Your adventure at Shangri La begins at the Exhibit Hall, where you can learn about the nature center's history, bask in the tranquility of the Meditation Pavilion, and observe a sample of the aquatic life that resides in Ruby Lake at The Critter Motel. Then watch a short film about Shangri La in the 75-seat Discovery Theater before heading out into one of the many gardens. Witness the worlds of art and nature converge in the Garden Rooms, five gardens that each incorporate an artistic element, such as lines, shapes, or colors. The Sculpture Gardens, on the other hand, feature steel sculptures designed to reflect the shapes of the plants around them.

This may already sound like a lot to see and do, but it barely scratches the surface of what Shangri La has to offer. Head to the Pond of the Blue Moon, a picturesque reflection pool, to see the azaleas bloom in the spring, or visit the Wetland Demonstration Garden to see how plants can improve water quality and, in turn, how people can have a positive impact on the environment. Meanwhile, the Here We Grow! Children's Garden's interactive exhibits provide plenty of hands-on fun for the young (and the young at heart).

Spend a few hours exploring Shangri La's gardens and exhibits and you'll probably work up quite the appetite. If you're hankering for some tasty food, you don't need to go any farther than the Star & Crescent Moon Café, where you can order from the menu sandwiches, quesadillas, pizzas, and a few healthy choices. There's also a gift shop, called the Garden Store, that sells a range of souvenirs and collectibles, including children's toys, gardening supplies, and more.

In addition to its attractions, Shangri La hosts numerous family-friendly events in the spring and the fall. Some of the more popular events include the Davis Rogers' Big Bugs Exhibition, Celebrate Orchids!, and the Scarecrow Festival, the largest of its kind in Texas.

Shangri La's gardens, captivating exhibits, and fun events makes it one of the top attractions in Orange. Walk the grounds, savor the scenery, and relish an experience the whole family can enjoy.

*The Shangri La Botanical Gardens & Nature Center is one of four Stark Cultural Venues in Orange. Visit the other three (W.H. Stark House, Stark Museum of Art, and the Lutch Theater for the Performing Arts) while you're in town.*