



GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Sonoma's Cornerstone Festival of Gardens is a refreshing escape from reality

To find something new and different today is not easy—books re-create the same story line, TV shows re-create the same plot lines, and movie makers re-create films via sequels. But tucked away off Highway 121 between Napa and Sonoma counties, there's a little spot where people let their most fanciful dreams take root—and it's something like you've never seen.

While the inspiration behind Cornerstone Festival of Gardens is not exactly original (the idea comes from a garden festival in France), Cornerstone is the first gallery-style garden of its kind in the United States. And whether you have a green thumb or not, you're bound to be captivated by the nine acres of artistic and often thought-provoking installations by top-name landscape architects and garden designers. Around every corner is another imaginative garden: a living tree covered by Claude Cormier with 70,000 sky-blue Christmas balls; a striated stone path through a serenity garden designed by Yoji Sasaki leading to a meditation box that provides a quiet spot for contemplation; a maze of weathered, creaking doors by Tom Leader evoking rural California. "Visitors here can just wander in and out of these different worlds," says founder Chris Hoagie. "It's not like seeing art on a wall. It's about being part of it—hearing the sounds and feeling the wind and smelling the scents.

"The gardens are intended to inspire people to think more broadly about what a garden is," he adds. "One can be more artistic than just putting down grass and hedges. There are lots of possibilities." — KO