



Wilhelma for Botany Fans

Station Nr. 1: The Glasshouses

In the historical glasshouses, which are all built in a row, the visitor is presented with all the wonders of the realm of plants in a condensed space. Grouped together according to their different climatic needs, cactuses, bromeliads, orchids and many other tropical and subtropical plants are there to cause astonishment and delight. Perhaps they may remind some people of holidays. This botanical paradise really starts you dreaming. The highlight in spring is the azalea blossom in March/April. Thousands of blooms then cover the bushes, some of which are up to 160 years old.

Their place is taken over in the summer by the fuchsias. From May to September, standards, bushes and hanging baskets of fuchsias of over 200 species and varieties fill the room to delight the eye. In winter the camellias give their big show: from December to February/March the plants, some of which are over 160 years old, develop a wonderful display of flowers in all hues from white via pale pink to dark red.

Station Nr. 2: The Moorish Garden

The heart of the historical Wilhelma! King Wilhelm I of Württemberg had his own Swabian Alhambra built here in days long past. The garden is at its loveliest in April, the main blossoming time of the magnolias in the largest magnolia grove in Europe north of the Alps. White, pink and red blossoms contrast with the deep green of the yew trees, offering the visitor an unforgettable display of colours. Depending on the weather, though, the blossoms may only be short-lived. After this the old trees stand in full leaf in front of their historical backdrop.

In the centre of the Moorish Garden is the Water Lily Pond. This is heated and, with a water temperature of 28 – 30°C, is a perfect home for tropical water lilies. The dominant ones are the

largest water lilies of the world, *Victoria amazonica* and *Victoria cruziana*, named after the British Queen Victoria, who reigned over a hundred years ago. On their giant leaves they can carry weights of up to 70 kg.

At the edge of the pond Indian lotuses bloom. Between the leaves of the water lilies little fish dart – Wilhelma's koi babies (Japanese decorative carp) grow up here. Even in winter, when the magnolias are bare, this place has its own special charm, when the Moorish buildings are capped with snow and the winter sun sends golden glints to enchant the historical scenery. The Water Lily Pond, however, is empty – the tropical water lilies cannot stay outside during the winter.

Station Nr. 3: The Moorish Villa with the Glasshouses

The first section is dedicated to cactuses: in particular the large pillar cactuses, the prickly pears and the most primordial cactuses, the pereskias. In the adjacent House for Tropical Crop Plants, papayas grow, as do jackfruits, cinnamon, carambolas, sweet potatoes, cotton, cacao trees, vanilla, coffee, pepper and lots of other plants. With most plants it is quite difficult to discern what edible or luxury crop will be produced from them.

The central part is a home not only to various plants but also to tropical birds and the Department for Nocturnal Animals. Adjoining this is the warm house, full of tropical ferns. In the second Cupola House you will find giant tree ferns and other conifers from the southern hemisphere.

Station Nr. 4: Trees of Wilhelma

Despite great damage suffered during the Second World War, Wilhelma still has a copious collection of beautiful old trees. The first trees were planted in the gardens, then still in royal possession and not open to the public, in the years between 1845 and 1865. The giant redwood trees (sequoias), above the Enclosure for Bears and Mountain Animals, are impressive witnesses to those times. There are altogether over 1,600 trees of around 150 species, kinds and varieties at Wilhelma.

Station Nr. 5: The Sub Tropics Terraces

Behind the Moorish Villa the park slopes upwards. The so-called Sub Tropics Terraces belong to the loveliest parts of Wilhelma: in this protected spot, flooded with sunlight, some 400 plants from south European countries thrive the whole year over, a further 400 more delicate varieties and part of our collection of carnivorous plants live outside here only during the summer months.

In addition to the colourful and exotic realm of plants a bird world, just as colourful, squawks in the aviaries. The parrots above all, amidst tropical plants and Moorish buildings, give you a sensation of being far, far away from home.

Station Nr. 6: The Amazon House

A great amount of technical effort is needed to get a small mountain rainforest to grow in the Amazon House. 2,000 plants, such as the mahogany and the floss-silk tree, palms, araceae, bromeliads, orchids, mangroves, tropical crop plants such as cassava, the cacao tree, bananas and many others, all bring about the illusion that you really are in the Amazon. Now and then one of the trees begins to flower, the passionflowers almost always show spots of bright colour in the

greenery, fruits can be seen on the crop plants all year round.

Just as in real nature, the "Stuttgart tropical forest" does not reveal all of its secrets at first sight. In order to discover the animals among the lush vegetation, you must often look very carefully. Many birds fly freely in the building and are often only to be located by their call. A huge glass pane allows you to view the caimans, turtles and fish underwater in the Amazon River.

Station Nr. 7: The gardens

As a finishing touch after the Amazon, what could be nicer than a little stroll through the lower park? The chestnut avenue or the lime tree avenue both offer shady places, the Long Lake with the Damascene Hall allows you to recognize the axis of the old park's original design. Decide for yourself what offers the biggest array of colours: spring and summer blossoms in the flowerbeds, the autumn colouring of the leaves or the wintry, snowy park? And don't forget, before leaving the park, to take a look at the two ginkgo trees near the flamingos – they belong to the most beautiful of Wilhelma's trees.