

# Holidays at Longwood Gardens



Longwood Gardens, one of America's quintessential landscapes, is a place of ever-changing seasonal beauty, handcrafted feats of horticultural wonder, and an awe-inspiring collection of the most beautiful plants from around the globe. From our humble beginnings as a Quaker farmstead and arboretum, to Pierre S. du Pont's forward-thinking stewardship, to today's collection of renowned landscape designers, horticulturists, and architects, our great garden of the world evolves and emerges again and again.

You can explore nearly 200 acres of lush, formal gardens, open meadows, and winding paths to breathtaking Brandywine Valley vistas. Together, mesmerizing displays, feats of engineering, and science-based research and conservation work harmoniously toward the overarching goal to unite and inspire our guests in appreciation of beauty—as only Longwood can.

From sunny indoor climes with forever-blooming flowers to winding paths through shaded woodlands, we invite you to choose your own adventure when you visit the Gardens—with the promise that whichever path you take, there is endless beauty to be discovered.

Our six districts represent distinct regions of our nearly 200 acres and are meant to help our guests direct their visit to our Gardens. Each district is unique, from the formal layout and highly manicured plantings of the Main Fountain Garden District to the sweeping vistas across natural lands in the Meadow & Forest District, you will be sure to find something new every time you visit.

The Conservatory District—the jewel of Longwood Gardens—features a series of intimate, breathtaking rooms that harmonize the beauty of 19th-century classical architecture to horticultural displays both formal and contemporary. Wander through wondrous spaces under acres of glass, taking in the sweeping views of lush foliage and a kaleidoscope of color. Witness the beauty of otherworldly plant species, some of which have been with us since the Conservatory's 1921 debut. Allow yourself plenty of time to linger, explore, and marvel at the expertise involved in the creation of our dazzling displays.

We'll begin our journey in the East Conservatory. Grand views and tranquil rooms of astounding horticultural design await your visit under a half-acre of glass. Experience an unparalleled sensory journey through lush plantings, soaring architecture, and tranquil water features, including waterfalls, pools, and fountains. Immerse yourself in the gorgeous colors and textures which adorn the intimate spaces of this exquisite indoor display garden. It's in the East Conservatory where innovation meets tradition and contemporary horticulture is featured. Reflecting the grandeur of the adjoining Orangery and Exhibition Hall, the East Conservatory features an immense, airy ridge and furrow roof designed by the late British landscape architect Sir Peter Shephard (1913-2002). Distinctive garden rooms, reflecting Moorish, French, and Modernist design influences, transform 29,000 square feet of space into an elegant experience of discovery. Leafy Mediterranean and subtropical-climate flora grow abundantly, and seasonal rotations of new, colorful horticultural displays ensure you'll always find a new reason to be inspired.



A multi-year restoration to this dynamic space debuted in 2006. Sir Peter Shephard (1913-2002) led the team with impressive structural improvements, while the garden design and environmental systems were spearheaded and executed by our Longwood teams. Nearly every single aspect except for the structure's side walls was new, including an immense, airy, ridge-and-furrow roof to reflect the style of the nearby Orangery and Exhibition Hall. Efforts were made to reduce energy consumption, including state-of-the-art electrical systems and a snow-melt system in the roof. A central flowing stream and 16-foot wide waterfall added sound and motion to the garden. Designed to be a multi-functional space, the East Conservatory is able to accommodate the performing arts, social, and educational events that Longwood is known for. Details of every scale were considered, from the handcrafted bronze and mica lanterns that illuminate the interior to the dazzling bronze windows from Japan. Artisan-crafted trellises line the walkways and inlaid stone floors echo the shapes and textures seen in the Court of Bamboo and Court of Palms.



Our next stop is the indoor Green Wall. At Longwood, even our restrooms are spectacular. When it became clear that we needed to increase the number of guest facilities, we knew it was an opportunity to create another award-winning display. When nature calls, don't miss this fern-laden glen of lush, vertical vegetation planted along 4,000 square feet. Bear's-, rabbit's-, kangaroo's-, hare's- and squirrel's-foot ferns grow alongside different varieties of maidenhair, philodendron, spleenwort, and spider plants. At the end of the hallway, a circular reflecting pool awaits your gaze.

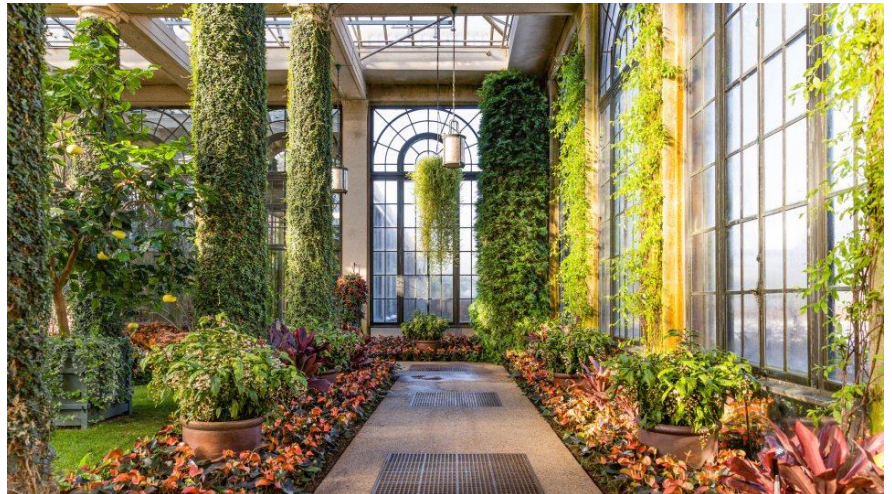
In conjunction with the design and construction of the East Conservatory Plaza and adjoining landform, British landscape architect Kim Wilkie envisioned yet another groundbreaking design: a lush indoor Green Wall, completed in 2010. Grown in Florida, each and every plant was numbered and assembled like a puzzle—in order to achieve the mosaic-like design that Mr. Wilkie had envisioned.

Abundant specimens one would typically see in a woodland setting spill from every inch of the passageway, flourishing in the bright, light-filled setting. Over the years we've adjusted the plant material in response to growth success rates, finding that ferns are the most adaptive to the climate changes experienced throughout the seasons in this particular setting. A

computer program handles the zoned irrigation system, ensuring that the plants are watered in relation to where they are situated on the panels (those closest to the ceiling require more water). In addition, weekly pruning and meticulous fertilization helps keep the plants healthy. Though you can't see them, we employ the help of tiny beneficial insects (our unsung heroes) to protect the plants against common indoor pests. They are but one part of the complex habitat that thrives in the light-filled hallways of what might be the most beautiful bathrooms in the world.

We'll continue across the East Conservatory to the Ballroom. It was originally constructed in 1929 to house Longwood's pipe organ and renovated in 2005. The Ballroom is unique for its elaborate finishes including a parquet floor, fabric-paneled walls, and ceiling comprising 1,104 panes of rose-colored etched glass. Designed by local architect E. William Martin and constructed in 1929, the Ballroom was built for entertaining and, perhaps more notably, to house an impressive Aeolian organ purchased in the same year by Pierre S. du Pont. Hidden behind silk-damask-covered walls, the Longwood Organ, designed by Belgian organist Firmin Swinnen (1885-1972), is thought to be the largest Aeolian organ ever installed in a residential setting, featuring over 10,000 pipes. Mr. Swinnen served as the resident organist from 1923 until 1956, performing organ recitals at Longwood most Sunday afternoons. Sitting upon elaborate parquet floors fashioned from surplus World War 1 gunstock blocks and beneath the splendor of two colossal, custom-made crystal and brass chandeliers, guests were treated to the instrument's extraordinary timbre *and* world-class bespoke design. Today, you can go behind the walls to explore the Organ Museum and view the instrument's grandeur. In 2005, the Ballroom underwent an extensive restoration, including the intricate refurbishing of the two 600-pound chandeliers—requiring the dismantling (and reassembling) of hundreds of crystals. Contemporary uses of this space include concerts, organ performances, and symposia. On occasion, when formal dinners are held here, Pierre and Alice's legendary mahogany table appears—designed specifically for the Ballroom, with a seating capacity of 60.

As we depart the ballroom, we'll move into the Historic Main Conservatory, a place of perpetual bloom and elegant beauty. In this ever-changing space, familiar specimens flourish in uncommon ways alongside mature trees and massive hanging baskets of intricately grown flowers. You'll stroll past green lawns and a sunken marble pool, marveling at the lush, artful displays that celebrate abundance and grandeur. Here, we continue the legacy of our founder Pierre S. du Pont's (1870-1954) passion for creating—and sharing—spectacular and unimagined beauty. Since opening to the public in 1921,



the Historic Main Conservatory has contributed to thousands of unforgettable visits for our guests. Neo-classical architecture, lavish attention to detail, and world-class plant collections come together to highlight what Longwood is known for: spectacle, in all its forms. While the Historic Main Conservatory's Orangery and Exhibition Hall indoor displays shine, the exterior of this majestic building stands out like a sparkling jewel in the landscape, lending views to the various vantage points throughout the grounds.

The Exhibition Hall is the centerpiece of the Conservatory. It was designed for entertaining and exhibitions, featuring a sunken marble floor that is often flooded with a few inches of water for a dramatic, reflective effect. For certain seasonal displays and special events, the floor can be drained. Thanks to this space's humid environment, the Australian tree fern (*Cyathea cooperi*) thrives here, along with the elegant bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea glabra* 'Penang') that is trained on the pillars and walls—the original planting from the 1920s.

The symmetrical, linear design of the walkways and columns anchor this grand space, providing multiple vistas of the highly choreographed symphony of form, color, and texture. Hundreds of performing artists, from Meyer Davis' dance band to the Metropolitan Opera sopranos, from John Philip Sousa to South African vocal groups, have graced the stage. The Exhibition Hall is also the site of specialty flower shows and fabulous Christmas displays that guests remember for years afterward.

The impressive Music Room, designed by J. Walter Cope, was opened in 1923 for private entertaining with a cozier, more intimate feel than the ballroom. Featuring walnut and silk-damask-paneled walls, teak flooring, a grand fireplace, and an elaborate molded and painted-plaster ceiling, guests were able to enjoy not only the company of friends and family, but opulent vistas into the Main Conservatory. In 1926, Alice contacted Mr. Savely Sorine, a well-known Parisian portrait artist who came to Longwood that very year to paint watercolor portraits of both her and Pierre. Mrs. du Pont had admired such ancestral portraits while visiting France in 1925, remarking on those in Château D'Harcourt: "portraits set in the walnut paneling most lovely" and "portraits of wives very charming." The du Ponts hung their portraits in the Music Room, where their likenesses remain to this day.

As we depart the Music Room back into the Exhibition Hall, we'll move towards the Orangery. It is one of Longwood's most iconic and stately spaces that was inspired by Pierre's desire to grow citrus fruit out of season. During a return trip from Hawai'i with his wife, Alice du Pont, in the winter of 1920, they stopped in Santa Barbara, California. There he purchased an impressive collection of mature specimens intended for his grand glasshouse at home, including tangerines, grapefruits, Valencia oranges, and navel oranges. All were originally planted in a grid-like pattern between the columns, which were adorned with creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*)—a plant that still grows there today.

Today, the Historic Main Conservatory features a kaleidoscope of flowers, bulbs, foliage, and clipped turf that exude color and fragrance—and change constantly through each of Longwood's seasons. There are several permanent residents of the Orangery, including bird-of-paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*), the pink Cherokee rose (*Rosa 'Anemone'*) and several species of *Podocarpus*. It's the seasonal plants that truly steal the show! Poinsettias are an icon of the winter season and ours have a special story. Karl will tell you more. The custom-made Palladian windows and bronze lanterns surround the space, showcasing Peirre's design aesthetic on large and small scale.

Elegant and unique, the Acacia Passage is vividly remembered by our guests for years afterward. In February and March, puffs of sunny yellow emerge from the branches. When coupled with the fragrant leaves, the very welcome burst of optimistic color adds a pop to winter's muted tones. While you're here, take note of the elegant, understated design of the narrow space, which provides a symmetrical contrast to the organic shapes of the dangling branches. The cinnamon wattle (*Acacia leprosa*), a species that is native to Australia, is actually a member of the bean family and is named for the subtle, spicy scent that is emitted from its leaves. With the exception of a 1988



renovation, *Acacia leprosa* has always been grown in this narrow, high-ceilinged room. We've trained about a dozen of these very special plants to arch over the walkway, which allows the pendulous branches to surround our guests in a fringed blanket of green. Complementary plantings change seasonally, adding punctuations of color and texture to this verdant tunnel. On occasion, impressive, oversized hanging baskets are suspended above, creating the sense of total immersion in the world of plants.

After meticulous restoration and an innovative transformation, our new Orchid House serves as the first realization of *Longwood Reimagined: A New Garden Experience* ... and we are thrilled to share the preservation and expansion of this beloved, century-old space with you. Transformed into an open, gallery-like space—boasting a new glass roof to restored interior and exterior concrete—our Orchid House provides an immersive orchid-viewing experience like never before. Hundreds of orchids lovingly displayed in custom frame trellises and our restored bronze case dazzle and delight, showcasing the beauty and diversity of our renowned orchid collection. With our curated orchids hand-selected five times

per week for rotating display, there's always something new—and something breathtakingly beautiful—to see. Our restored Orchid House also sheds light on our dedication to save endangered orchid species both near and far. Through our Orchid Conservation Program, we have developed the technology to grow large seedling populations of native orchids for the purpose of restoring native orchid populations, in our backyard and far beyond.

Orchids have long held a prominent place at Longwood, as they were a passion of our founder Pierre S. du Pont and his wife, Alice, who were both charter members of the American Orchid Society. Started in the early 1920s, our orchid collection first consisted of plants the du Ponts purchased extensively from American growers, as well as imported from growers in India, Thailand, and the Caribbean to England, France, and Belgium, and has grown throughout the years as many orchid enthusiasts have added to the original collection.

What started with the passion of two people, and was then skillfully cared for and enhanced by our expert orchid growers over the last hundred years, has grown into our current orchid collection of 5,000 plants representing 2,000 different taxa.

In the singular space of the Silver Garden, designed by famed landscape architect Isabelle Greene, you might feel that you've wandered into a faraway land. A meandering pathway of slate mimics a dry streambed, snaking through rocky outcroppings and en-masse plantings of spiky, textural plants. Rope-like tendrils of downy spines cascade from above, while barbed foliage fans out in the background, creating a dense, otherworldly fabric of platinum, cool green, and soft blue. When the conservatory opened in 1921, the greenhouse



we now call the Silver Garden was split into three small sections used to grow fruit trees. In the late 1950s, it was redesigned to feature tropical species from the Americas, Asia, and Africa, and renamed the Geographic House. Over the years, as the tropical plants matured, they began to occlude the bright light favored by the *Acacia leprosa* in the adjacent Acacia Passage. We undertook this dilemma with the same thoughtful, research-based approach that continues today: by exploring alternatives that would not only save our beloved cinnamon wattle trees but also provide our guests with a never-before-seen landscape experience. We commissioned renowned landscape architect and California native Isabelle Greene to create the Silver Garden, a modernist display of plants native to Mediterranean and desert climates. With its contemporary design direction, this garden was groundbreaking for us, as well as a visual departure from the formal approach seen throughout the Conservatory complex. After much discussion, we embraced the opportunity to innovate and evolve with Greene. With its angles, slopes, and curves, it conveyed a realistic desert landscape experience that contrasted with the flower-filled Orangery and Acacia Passage. When it opened to the public in 1989, the Silver Garden was overwhelmingly embraced by our guests.

As we make our way back across the colorful Orangery our next stop is the Garden Path & Children's Garden. You can take a walk down the (literal) Garden Path to experience a tapestry of color, texture, form, and fragrance. Inspired by Pierre's "Spring Walk" and the colors of a cottage garden, the space was used to spotlight an exuberant display of spring-blooming flowers, trees, and shrubs. Dismantled in 1969 when construction began for the original East Conservatory, the Garden Path reopened in 1986, and was renovated again in 2005. Today, this space features artful plant combinations, a brick path laid with mill stones, fences, trellises, and accents of intricate lanterns. In addition, we use this space to introduce new plants to the Conservatory, monitoring their health and performance under glass before introducing them to our larger indoor displays. In a space that is a mirror image to the Silver Garden, the indoor children's garden is a lush, whimsical space where kids of all ages can shake out their sillies in a sensory-friendly atmosphere. Get lost in a jungle of draping vines and secret stairways. Watch others splash in our one-of-a-kind fountains featuring spitting fish and drooling

dragons. Rest easy and listen for the bell as you take a breather in this welcoming, imaginative realm where everyone finds a reason to grin. Here in this 4,000-square-foot space specially designed for our pint-sized playmates, children can stretch out and explore the elements of nature at their own pace. Rosemary, scented geranium, oregano, and other fragrant herbs line the ramp, piquing their senses as they bounce along to the rhythms of cascading waterfalls and child-sized fountains featuring a menagerie of creatures. A bamboo maze and a dripping cave provide an element of discovery and surprise. Hidden bugs are waiting to be spotted in the architecture, set to the backdrop of colorful mosaic tiles. Many of our guests have been bringing their children here for years, and adults who came here when they were young still fondly recall how much fun it was to explore this wonderland. After all, what better place to grow up than in a garden?

We'll take a break between the historic part of the conservatory before we delve into Longwood Reimagined! The first stop after our break will be the glorious West Conservatory. Striking in its beauty and ambitious in its design, the West Conservatory is a fully modern masterpiece, emerging from—and redefining—the centuries-long tradition of glass houses. The soaring, crystalline structure exults with arching beams enclosing a Mediterranean-inspired landscape that transports you to a sweeping, sun-kissed vista.

This garden oasis beckons you to stroll along airy pathways next to floating canals and lushly planted beds. Water is a central element—reflecting the sky, providing cool and serene visual breaks, and adding sound to the immersive experience. The glasshouse itself appears to be floating on the surface of a tranquil sheet of water. Flora from the warm, arid regions of the southern hemisphere and the vibrant, coastal landscapes of California thrive, each specimen a living testament to nature's artistry. The beauty of this space is unforgettable, season after season, underscoring the legacy of innovative engineering, pioneering design, and horticultural excellence for which Longwood is celebrated.



Blending the visionary and the historic, the West Conservatory represents 32,000 square feet of meticulously designed glass and steel. The peaked roof is modeled after our historic Lord & Burnham greenhouses, featuring asymmetrical peaks that recall the rolling hills of the surrounding Brandywine Valley. Arching steel columns and beams evoke the relaxed geometry of tree branches, creating a dialogue between cutting-edge, contemporary design and the natural lands surrounding Longwood. The interior garden design is based on three planted islands are set on a pool of water, animated by bridges, canals, and low

fountains, featuring surprising, colorful species from the landscapes of the Mediterranean, South Africa, Chile, Australia, and coastal California. The garden features more than sixty permanent species, including *Acacia*, bay laurels, cypress, *Leucospermum*, and *Leucadendron*. Every technical aspect of the conservatory breaks new ground and continues Pierre S. du Pont's commitment to engineering innovation. A state-of-the-art ventilation system utilizes earth ducts to capture and condition the incoming air, while computer-controlled windows, roof vents, and shades open and close in response to seasonal temperature fluctuations—creating a living, breathing structure in the process. Underground rainwater-collection tanks capture each drop from over one acre of rooftops, to be used for the water features in our displays. In addition, the 1,958 glass panels were engineered to keep our bird population safe, featuring reflective dots that ensure our avian friends still fly in friendly skies.

As we depart the West Conservatory, we'll venture over to the Cascade Garden. It's nestled within a modern, glittering glass house and is the sole North American design by the inimitable landscape architect, Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994). Upon entering this verdant sanctuary, a profusion of tropical plants bursts forth, densely filling the space from every direction. Every moment spent here is an invitation to pause, linger, and revel in the palpable vitality of this intimate garden experience. Inspired by an equatorial coastal rainforest, elemental simplicity reigns—plants, water, and stone come together to envelop the senses. Gentle humidity softens the air, while the rhythm of trickling water inspires a mood of contemplation and appreciation for Burle Marx's innovative, dynamic artistic vision.

The Cascade Garden is a rare work of landscape art that gathers all the iconic elements of a Burle Marx design, reflecting his love of the natural world and the beauty of Brazil's native flora and landscapes. This expertly crafted environment is home to dozens of species of plants, primarily from the bromeliad (*Bromeliaceae*) and aroid (*Araceae*) families, as well as other plants typically found in association with bromeliads in a tropical rainforest. Sweeps of single species create broad brushstrokes of vegetation, vines wind up and around vertical elements, and epiphytic plants cover the columns and walls, giving the impression of being in a dense, tropical rainforest. Waterfalls, an ever-present element of sound and movement, splash the nearby plants, forming tranquil pools within their bases. A curving path meanders through layers of green amid eye-level, intimate views of the sweeps of tropical plants. The immersive nature of this singular garden is intentional—and impossible to resist.

Our last stop on the guided portion is Longwood's Bonsai Courtyard. This is where tranquility prevails. Enhanced by a verdant carpinus hedge and cherry trees, the ambiance resembles that of an esteemed art gallery or a serene Japanese garden. Within this contemplative space, meticulous artistry and the beauty of nature converge, offering stories of patience and dedication with each miniature masterpiece.

Each season brings new discoveries, from the spring blooms of the courtyard's cherry trees to the spectacular blossoms of our prized azalea specimens.

The lush humidity of the summer months pairs perfectly with the tropical specimens, while cooler nights and the onset of autumn bring the much-anticipated hues of the trident maples, ginkgos, and hornbeams. During the late fall and winter, we showcase our conifers, with their ancient, wizened forms. No matter the season, contemplating our world-class collection brings to light the interconnectedness of art, nature, and perseverance.



The emphasis of our 12,500-square-foot garden courtyard is our nationally recognized, meticulously curated, core collection of nearly 200 miniature trees. Within this quiet sanctuary, guests enjoy a rotating display of up to 50-60 specimens, including selections of great rarity and beauty donated by The Kennett Collection. Diverse in their origins and characteristics, our trees encompass sub-collections that span the globe, including tropical, deciduous, conifer, American, and Japanese specimens.

A minimalist backdrop—crushed stone, charred wood, and a muted color palette—creates a contemplative atmosphere and encourages guests to engage with each arboreal specimen. The bonsai are displayed with 360 degrees of visual access for closer study and appreciation, while wooden benches provide moments for reflection on the quiet artistry of twisted trunks, sweeping branches, and delicate foliage. Permanent horticultural elements, including a carpinus hedge, Yoshino cherries (*Prunus x yedoensis*) and underplantings of polypody ferns (*Polypodium*) softly harmonize with the seasonal display of living sculptures.

Our bonsai collection dates back to 1959, five years following the passing of Longwood's founder, Pierre S. du Pont. During this period of transition, renowned bonsai artist Yuji Yoshimura (1921–1997), who crafted one of the first bonsai books in English, visited the US and was invited to speak at Brooklyn Botanic Gardens and at Longwood. Yoshimura performed a demo and demand was clear—11 sections, each with seven students, quickly filled up. Thirty others had to be turned away. That's when it was decided Longwood would begin building a bonsai collection. We purchased 13 trees from Yoshimura, and of those original 13 bonsai, four remain today—Japanese zelkova, ginkgo, crape-myrtle, and Chinese elm. Since 1959, our bonsai collection has been managed by only six curators and its location has moved to accommodate and highlight the growing collection.



In 2022, we received a transformative gift from The Kennett Collection—the finest and largest private collection of bonsai and bonsai-related objects outside of Asia. The initial gift included 50 trees of outstanding quality that are especially remarkable for their lineage, including examples from many of Japan’s most famous nurseries, such as the *Chinsho-en* nursery run by the Nakanishi family in Takamatsu, as well as from world-renowned bonsai artists, including Kimura Masahiko, who is known as “The Magician”; Suzuki Shinji of Japan; and Suthin Sukosolvisit of Boston. The gift also included *Omono* or “very large” bonsai, measuring three to four feet in height and weighing a few hundred pounds each, as well as bonsai-related objects, notably the containers in which the bonsai are harmoniously trained.

For centuries, the art of bonsai and the secrets of its form remained in Japan. It wasn’t until the 1950s, after American military were stationed in Japan during WWII, that the artform began captivating Americans. As the

name implies, central to the essence of bonsai is the interplay between a tree and its vessel, or pot. Whether cultivated from seeds or shaped from shrubs and trees gathered from the wild or acquired from local nurseries, it is the container that contributes to the harmonious character of the bonsai composition. It should effortlessly complement and enhance the tree, but never detract from the tree’s inherent, wild-seeming beauty. Bonsai is a living art form that demands continual training and assessment to uphold tree shape, structure, and overall health. Mastering these essential skills requires dedication and years of study to acquire horticultural, artistic, and technical expertise. Skilled bonsai artists are adept at celebrating the passage of time, capable of treating and training even young specimens to present the appearance of much greater age.

As you ready yourself for the great outdoors, this is our most magical moment yet! This holiday season, you can experience the magic of *A Longwood Christmas* as you never have before—made even more spectacular with the opening of [Longwood Reimagined](#). Brand new spaces—from our sprawling new West Conservatory to imaginative new outdoor landscapes—decked out for the holidays give way to wondrous new ways to experience the season ... and incredible new memories to make. Revel in hundreds of thousands of lights ... marvel at astonishing feats of horticulture, ingenuity, and creativity ... and delight in beauty at every turn, all as we welcome you to our biggest—and most magical—*A Longwood Christmas* yet!

[www.LongwoodGardens.org](http://www.LongwoodGardens.org) to learn more.