

## LEISURE

### Chase Gardens Tour their showrooms

by Kelli J. Ray

Mixed sunshine makes its way through palm trees and passion vines, touching the cascading water with light. Hibiscus hangs heavily over orchids and African violets, and winding paths invite exploration.

paradise may seem out of your range—but it's not. Free tours are available every day of the week, and you don't have to mortgage your home to get there. In fact, it's right in your own backyard.

At first glance, visiting this tropical

Although many are unaware of its

existence, Chase Gardens has been in the area for decades. Frank Chase started the family-owned business in 1889, as one of the first in the area to grow market-quality vegetables indoors. The business was passed from father to son, and later, from father to son again, growing into a thriving industry specializing in roses, orchids, and stephanotis.

Now, Bruce and Kathrine Chase, with the help of 111 employees, oversee the 99 greenhouses that make up the gardens. Keeping the business in the family "was mostly a matter of family loyalty," says Kathrine Chase, "although that isn't the case with our son, Skip, who's always been very interested in horticulture. We tried to discourage him, because we didn't feel it was necessarily good." But he refused to be persuaded otherwise, and went on to study floriculture at Ohio State. He currently works in the family industry alongside his father.

Roses take up 90 percent of the greenhouse space. "The industry is being heavily impacted by imports, but roses don't keep as long as some of the other imports," says Bruce Chase, so the demand for locally-grown roses is high.

Two of the greenhouses serve as retail showrooms, sporting everything from spiderplants to spanish moss. Visitors are invited to explore the gravel paths, lined with fountains and foliage, either individually or as groups. The gardens are located at Centennial Blvd. and Kinslow. Schedule a tour by calling 345-3283.



Enjoy a walk through a tropical paradise—right here in Eugene. Photos by David Stein.



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