

Favorite Places

MORTON ARBORETUM

Lisle, IL
On Highway 53 at Interstate 88



One of my favorite outdoor spaces is Morton Arboretum. This large woodland, originally owned by the Morton salt people, sits on the western edge of Chicagoland.

Bring the Teens Too: Morton Arboretum's main attractions are for children and adults, but teens can have an enjoyable time too. Every year I would take the College First youths on a field trip to Morton. They enjoyed the tour and of course the tasty lunch at one of the many restaurants nearby.



They have the best Children's Garden in America. In this 5 acre playground small and big kids can have great time splashing in the fountains, walking through the maze, or crawling through the big acorn. The rest of Morton is like a huge adult playground with noble trees and some of the best vistas in the Midwest.



GETAWAY FOR A DAY

The grounds are divided by regions of the world, habitats, and plant families. There are hiking trails of varying lengths that wind through forest and field. Drive through at least once to get a good look before picking a spot to hike or lounge. The east side is the most popular with the visitor's center and the children's garden, but the west side has some nice ponds and a piece of prairie that is worth the visit. Morton's stands of conifers are the largest in Chicagoland. Those of us from Appalachia or the North Woods can get a feel for home in the plots of pines and spruces.



Bottom woods covered with Virginia bluebells

SPRING BLOOMING TREES AND WILDFLOWERS ABOUND

Besides fantastic specimens and well-designed ornamental plantings, Morton also has hundreds of acres of native woodland. Oaks and hickories grow on the uplands, while maples and cottonwoods are found in the moist bottomlands. This provides rich habitat for a variety of wildflowers. Trout lilies, spring beauty, blood root, rue anemone, false run anemone, blue cohosh, toothwort, prairie trillium, trinity lily, and Solomon's plume are easily spotted from the trails. But the Virginia bluebells take top prize. The massive swathe of *Mertensia* in the low woods is the best wildflower display I have seen. Breathtakingly blue!



The collection of rose family trees and shrubs is fantastic and extensive, including: crabapples, cherries, apricots, plums, hawthorns, pears, spireas, ninebarks, cotoneasters, quinces, and kerrias. The rose family anchors the spring flowering, but they are joined by redbuds, magnolias, viburnums, forsythias, and others. Larches and spruces add a touch of purple with their fresh cones, and the deciduous trees provide a fresh spring green backdrop for it all.

