

LOMBARD PARK DISTRICT

TOP 15 SITES *in Lilacia Park*

- 1. National Register of Historic Places, Lilacia Park Arch & Gold Medal Award | north of #101**

It is impossible to separate Lombard from its lilacs and most notably, Lilacia Park. This statement holds true as Lilacia Park was officially named to the National Register of Historic Places on May 9, 2019. The park holds the town's famed collection of lilac bushes, which fully bloom in early May. Visitors from around the world enter into this enchanting spectacle of trees, shrubs and plants through the Lilacia Park Arch, located at the northeast end of the park, beside the National Register of Historic Places plaque and NPRA Gold Medal Award brick. The Arch was built in-house by the Lombard Park District's sign shop beginning in 1989 and took around a year to complete. It was installed by staff in 1990. Notice the National Gold Medal Award commemorative brick, which sets the stone for the park district's aspirations to be demonstrative of excellence in long-range planning, resources and innovation to deliver park and recreation services.
- 2. Lilacia Park Entrance near Helen Plum Library | Bottom of the Plaza**

This is another one of the main entrances to Lilacia Park, a property originally belonging to Col. William Plum and his wife Helen Plum, which the library is named after. Plum bequeathed the property to the town. His lilac garden was to be turned into the first public park in Lombard and his home into a public library. The new Lombard Park District board then hired Jens Jensen, a notable landscape designer and conservationist, to design Lilacia Park. Native to Denmark, Jensen came to the U.S. when he was 24 years old and is credited for designing many of Chicago's larger parks including Humboldt Park, Garfield Conservatory and Columbus Park. Jensen and his wife Anne Marie would live in Lombard for two years overseeing the creation of the park from the Plum estate.
- 3. Original Plum House Location | Bed D**

The Plum house originally stood near Bed D, where the Helen Plum Library sundeck stands today. When the house was torn down, over 200 lilac bushes were lost, including the William R. Plum lilac. Presently, Rochester, New York features the largest public collection of lilacs in the country and Lilacia Park has the second largest diversified collection available to the public. Modernly, Lilacia Park is not only a focal point during Lombard Lilac Time; it is a four-season park, maintained by the Lombard Park District featuring numerous special events and activities including Lombard Park District's Annual Plant Sale, Mutt Strut 5K & 1-Mile, Jingle Bell Jubilee, Holiday Lights, weddings and more.
- 4. Impressive Trees found on the Lilacia Park Map | #111, #23 & #90**

There are some very impressive trees located in Lilacia Park. #111 the Ginkgo, native to China, is believed to be the oldest tree originally planted in the park by Col. Plum himself. In addition to the Ginkgo is #23 and #90, the Schwedleri Norway Maple. This tree is a type of Norway Maple that Col. Plum brought back from the Black Forest of Germany as a seedling to be planted. While the park no longer holds the original Schwedleri Norway Maples planted by Col. Plum, these two younger trees pay homage to his original estate.
- 5. President Lincoln Lilac | Bed F, J & P**

The President Lincoln Lilac is from Col. Plum's original collection. It is a pyramidal cluster of single flowers in blue. It was said to be Col. Plum's favorite lilac. He is also reported to have said about the bush, "Just like Lincoln, not much to look at, but true blue." In his lifetime, William R. Plum was a telegrapher, lawyer and author. He came to live in Lombard in 1869 after serving in the Civil War. During the war, he served as a civilian operating the telegraph for the army's use. He was stationed in Kentucky and would send messages to President Lincoln in Washington. The army trusted him to hold one of the 9 Military Cipher Keys. The honorary title of Colonel was bestowed on him for his dedication to the memory of Union soldiers.
- 6. Oak Meadow's Native Oak Trees | Bed K & M**

Lilacia Park contains 7 of the 10 oak species native to Illinois. Oak Meadow proudly holds 5 of these native oaks including #82 and #83, the Bur Oak, #84, the Scarlet Oak, #85, the Red Oak, #87, the White Oak, and #88, the Swamp White Oak. Beyond Oak Meadow within Lilacia Park is #100, the Shingle Oak, and #57, #62 and #63, the Pin Oak, which has been widely planted throughout Illinois for many years.
- 7. Syringa reticulata | Bed E near the Stage Deck**

Syringa reticulata is a Plum family favorite Japanese tree lilac that was planted in the park dating back to 1936. The ornamental lilac is a late-bloomer, meaning it will bloom in late May or June.

8. Weeping White Mulberries | #53 & #54

Admire, but do not climb #53 and #54, the whimsical Weeping White Mulberry trees that are tucked in this corner of the park. These trees are native to Eastern China and were introduced to colonial America for silkworm culture. The trees were planted by Col. Plum and are best recognized for their unique character and the fact that one of their limbs is being held up by a wooden stump!

9. Tulip Beds | located throughout Lilacia Park

Tulips were an important part of Jensen's design for Lilacia Park. Jensen chose them because they bloom around the same time as lilacs. Some say the tulips serve as the opening act to a play with lilacs being the main feature. Be careful where you step! Today, Lilacia Park blooms 35,000 tulips annually. Following the annual bloom, tulips bulbs are cut throughout Lilacia Park by staff to ensure consistency in height, shape and color for the following year's bloom. This is also because most of the tulip varieties chosen for Lilacia Park are not of the naturalizing variety.

10. Butterflies, Butterfly Garden, Flagstone Paths & Limestone Benches | Bed N & southwest edge of Bed L

In 1929, Jens Jensen installed flagstone paths and limestone benches, converting the private garden into a public space. Today, many of the park's benches use this original limestone. Modernly, the Lombard Park District has replaced the park's original flagstone paths with brick pavers in order for it to be ADA-compliant, with the exception of a small path located in the Butterfly Garden. Jensen, a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, used a prairie-style landscape design in his parks, combining subtlety with beauty and conservation. He was very much against the elaborate false ornamentation of the Victorian-style garden and preferred to use native plants arranged in a natural way. The Butterfly Garden was donated and planted by the Lombard Garden Club to highlight this effort of Jensen's. Many of the park's trees, shrubs, plants and flowers (especially those found within the Butterfly Garden) attract a variety of butterflies all throughout the summer.

11. Council Circle | Bed R

Jensen's vision for Lilacia Park included many elements of nature. He sought to bring people together and one of the ways he accomplished this was through creating natural, circular enclosures for seating. Council Circle at Lilacia Park was constructed towards the north side of the park near Parkside Avenue and the Chicago and Northwestern tracks in Jensen's original design. From Council Circle, visitors enjoy a nice vantage point and view of the pond, which is also an original feature of the park.

12. Iron Deer | between Bed W & X

The iron deer was cast in 1888 at a foundry in Milwaukee, WI and is one of Lilacia Park's most beloved residents. It is now located on the west side of the park near the Greenhouse. It originally stood at the Andrews estate on Parkside Avenue and Main Street in Lombard. When the home was destroyed by a fire in 1926 and replaced by the DuPage Theater block, the deer was moved to Lilacia Park where it stands as a tradition for generations of Lombardians to pose in front of for photographs.

13. Pageants, Festivities & Performances | Stage Deck

*Following its construction in 1930, Lilacia Park quickly became the new community-wide excitement, complete with pageants, festivities, performances, parades and a royal court. The first performance in the park was a play called *The Mother of Dreams*. Elaborate pageants were held near the location of today's renovated stage deck, in front of the pond. Currently, the Lombard Junior Women's Club hosts the Lilac Princess Program to continue this Lilac Time tradition. The first Lilac Court consisted of five princesses and the first-named Lilac Queen was Adeline Fleege in 1930.*

14. Coach House & Tuliptree | Bed C & #56

The Coach House was originally built as a part of the Plum estate and was used to store a horse and carriage. Take some time to appreciate #56, a Tuliptree that stands next to the Coach House with flowers resembling tulips. It is also the largest of the native eastern trees. Although the Tuliptree is sometimes called a tulip poplar, it is not a true poplar.

15. Tadpoles, Hummingbirds & Other Wildlife Sightings | Bed E & Administrative Offices

Lilacia Park has been home to a wide variety of wildlife creatures in recent years due to an emphasis on creating a more natural habitat. The park does not use pesticides, which invites numerous species of insects and pollinators, providing a food source for park visitors including a variety of species of birds and amphibians. Tadpoles are commonly spotted in Lilacia Park's pond mid-April through May since the removal of chlorines and dyes in the water. Plants have also been added, improving the pond's water quality and providing more hiding places for tadpoles. These tadpoles will mature into adult frogs and toads who use branches and wood planks to exit the pond. Often times, park staff will find frogs far from the pond, hopping around in the Greenhouse's potting area due to shallow water reservoirs, plant varieties and the shade offered for cooling down and protection.

In late August, hummingbirds have frequented the sweet, tube-shaped plantings in the Hummingbird Garden located outside of the District's Administrative Offices. Small nests, no larger than the size of quarter have been spotted around the park and neighboring properties. Hummingbirds migrate south toward the end of the summer, and Lilacia Park has served as a stopping point along their route for the past several years. The Lombard Park District is hopeful for these visitors to return each year.

While dogs are not allowed in Lilacia Park, several fox dens have been spotted on park grounds in recent years.