



SUNNYLANDS
CENTER & GARDENS

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CONTACT: Ken Chavez 760-202-2266
kchavez@sunnylands.org

Sunnylands opens its desert art garden for morning walks and self-guided tours

Coronavirus restrictions prohibit access to indoor spaces

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. – Sunnylands Center & Gardens is opening its 9-acre art garden to the public as a venue for peaceful walks and the exploration of desert plants, starting Wednesday, Sept. 16.

The gardens and their 1.5 miles of walking trails will be available free of charge from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. The public will not have access to Sunnylands' interior spaces, including the Center and the historic Annenberg home, until further notice. Tours of the estate and public programming, such as Yoga and Tai Chi on the Great Lawn, are currently on hold.

The reopening of the gardens marks the first time that the public will have access to Sunnylands since California officials issued stay-at-home orders in response to the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March. While restrictions for some businesses eased around Memorial Day, Sunnylands remained closed, adhering to its routine of using the summer months to prepare for a new season beginning in mid-September.

This year, Sunnylands is planning a gradual reopening of its facilities, starting with the gardens only. Currently, Riverside County has not met the state criteria that would allow museums to open their interior spaces. Sunnylands is revamping its operations and

retrofitting the Center to allow for social distancing when indoor visits and house tours resume.

Sunnylands is requiring guests to wear face masks that cover the nose and mouth and to maintain a 6-foot distance from people not in their party while in the gardens. Sunnylands will monitor attendance to make sure the gardens do not become overcrowded. Outdoor hand-sanitizing stations will be available, as well as very limited access to the Center for use of the restrooms.

Key Facts

- Sunnylands reopens its gardens on Sept. 16.
- Admission is free from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Wednesday thru Sunday.
- Guests must wear masks and social distance at all times.
- No access to indoor spaces, except for restrooms.
- Tours and public programs are on hold.

“The purpose of opening the gardens is to provide the public with a safe, outdoor option for walking, meditating, and enjoying the beauty of this place,” said Janice Lyle, director of Sunnylands Center & Gardens. “Our 7:30 a.m. opening time is an hour earlier than usual to encourage visits during the cooler morning hours.”

Opened to the public eight years ago, the gardens at Sunnylands were inspired by Walter and Leonore Annenberg’s masterpieces of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, which now hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The 53,000 plants were chosen not only for their ability to thrive in a desert environment but, when planted in groups and rows, to invoke images of brushstrokes on a painting.

The public is invited to stroll the walking paths, relax on shaded benches, or use their cell phones to take any of five [self-guided audio tours \(found on the Sunnylands website\)](#). This season, inspirational signs will be placed throughout the gardens to help visitors explore their surroundings and consider the visual and audio relationships that they encounter there.

The public should be aware that, at this time, there is no access to the Sunnylands gift shop or café. However, some select gift shop items, including Sunnylands Olive Oil, will soon be available for purchase online at www.sunnylandsshop.org. Purchases may be shipped or picked up outside the Center during operating hours.

Guests are encouraged to bring drinking water on their visit, to wear sun block, and to dress for warm weather.

Sunnylands Center & Gardens is located at 37977 Bob Hope Drive in Rancho Mirage.

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Note To Editors

Images of the gardens may be downloaded from the links below. Please credit The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands.

- [High resolution. Suitable for print publications](#)
- [Low resolution. Suitable for web](#)

The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, which operates The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands and Sunnylands Center & Gardens, is a nonprofit operating entity. The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands hosts high-level retreats that address serious issues facing the nation and the world, including the 2013 meeting between President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China. Sunnylands also offers programs through Sunnylands Center & Gardens to educate the public about the history of Sunnylands, its architecture, art collections, cultural significance, and sustainable practices.