St1904 Botany \_Idaho Botanical Garden Tour

(Music)

Joan CArtan-Hansen, Host: HI I’M JOAN CARTAN-HANSEN AND WELCOME TO SCIENCE TREK AND WELCOME TO THE Idaho botanical garden. If you are interested in botany this is a great place to learn about plants. So joining me on today’s tour is hanna and caleb. I appreciate you guys coming! And Elizabeth dickey who is the educational director here at the Idaho Botanical Gardens. So let’s go take a tour!

The Idaho botanical garden is one of the oldest botanical gardens in the state. It covers 15 acres and has 14 different garden types. We picked out three to explore.

Elizabeth Dickey: We are coming up into our contemporary English garden. And This is a European hazelnut tree. If you’ve ever wondered how hazelnuts grow you can see right here that they have their little fruits with the hazelnuts on the inside.

(music)

Dickey: So now we are coming into the herb garden. And herbs are useful plants. They are used for food, for medicines, to make dyes. And They are very useful plants. About half our world’s medicines come from different types of plants.

Hanna: so what do you need to grow the herbs around here.

Dickey: You’re lucky that herbs are exceedingly easy to grow. They like to have a full day of sun. so if you have a spot that has six hours or more of sunlight they do really well. So they like our hot sunny summers. And then also they have to have a soil that drains pretty well, if you get too much water around the roots then they are going to rot. So what you do is you test your soil you dig a hole, add some water, and if within an hour the water disappears you know you have the perfect spot.

We have lemon balm, lemon balm has been used, it has a wonderful scent you can put it into lemonade, and for pound cake. But It also has calming properties, so people would make tea out of it, to help them relax perhaps on a hot summer’s day.

We have salad burnet, in the old days people used to gather the leaves and dry them and then ground them up into a powder and if you had a cut, you were bleeding, you could pack it in there and it would stop the bleeding, so it’s a plant you could use for food as well for medicine.

And then we also have a lot of lavender. You’ve probably had lavender perfume or lotions, but also in the old days they found out that mosquitos hate the smell of lavender. So a lot of People love it, mosquitos think it smells really bad. so people used to rub lavender oil on their skin To keep the mosquitos stay away.

Caleb: do you still use lavender in bug sprays?

Dickey: Now I’m sure there are bug sprays that has a lavender scent to them. I think that we have invented more chemicals that do a better job in keeping the insects away so it might be just add a nice fragrance for the people but we don’t use it so much as something to make the mosquitos stay away.

(Music)

Dickey: So here we are at some of my all-time most favorite plants, these are the carnivorous plants. What They all have in common is that they live in very boggy, wet ground. Because they can’t get what they need with the roots out of the soil they have to eat insects In order to get the proteins and some of the other things that they need to survive. So here we have three different types of plants. on that far end we have the venus fly traps. They have three little hairs and if a fly touches one of those hairs nothing happens but if they touch two or three that tells the plant there really is an insect there.

And then These taller ones are called pitcher plants. And they have sort of a nectar in there that smells good and some colors that call in the insects and they go down the tube and the tubes are either slippery or they have little hairs poking down so if a bug falls in they can’t get back up.

And then we also have the sun dews. And They are called sun dews because they have little droplets of liquid that shine in the sun and they catch itty bitty tiny little bugs like mosquitos and gnats.

Cartan-hanseN: the overall garden includes within it a meditation garden, a rose garden and a vegetable garden.

Dickey: And the purpose of our garden is to show people different ways of growing vegetables and then also to help people know where their food comes from. Because you know Like Idaho’s state vegetable is a potato but a lot of people have no idea what a potato looks like while it’s growing. so let’s go take a look at that. So This is our potato plant. And a lot of people when they think about potatoes they call them a root vegetable but it turns out the potato is not a root at all. it’s really an underground stem. So the leaves and the roots come out of the potato. so it’s a special storage device for the potato. so if you have an underground stem that holds food for the plant it’s a tuber. So if you are going to have mashed potatoes for dinner you’re having mashed tubers.

So here we have cabbage. You can see how it grows before it gets into the supermarket, they take all the extra leaves out and you’re just left with the head. The cabbage family is kind of cool. Because what farmers have done is take one species of plant and made it into many different types, sort of like how dogs have been developed into these different types of breeds that look very different, cabbages have been breed into all these different plants that don’t look similar at all but they’re actually the exact same thing.

Cartan-hansen: You know I’m sorry we have run out of time and we’ve barely seen everything there is to see here at the Idaho botanical garden so we really encourage you to come and visit for yourself.

And be sure to check the science trek website to learn more about botany and all the other scientific topics we have there. You’ll find it at idahoptv.org/sciencetrek.

My thanks to Hannah and Caleb for joining us on the tour and thank you for joining us! We’ll see you next time on Science Trek.

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Narrator: Presentation of Science Trek on Idaho Public Television is made possible through the generous support of the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation, committed to fulfilling the Moore and Bettis Family legacy of building the great state of Idaho; by the Idaho National Laboratory, mentoring talent and finding solutions for energy and security challenges; by the Friends of Idaho Public Television; and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.