

# CHEEKWOOD ESTATE AND GARDENS

## NASHVILLE-

### A TREASURE NOT TO BE MISSED



Tennessee is a long thin state running east to west and interstate 40 runs the length from Knoxville to Memphis. Neatly situated in the center of the state is Nashville. Perhaps Americas greatest center of musical traditions from country to rock. The Grand Ole Opry is central to the music industry, hosting famous and raising stars many of whom came to Nashville to seek their fortunes.

Tucked away from all the music venues and recording studios is one of

Americas most beautiful and stately gardens. Situated in an elegant part of town on subtly rolling hills, Cheekwood embodies an emotive and aesthetic magnitude found in few new world gardens. It feels like a much older European garden. Grand at every turn, with specimen trees and large ornamental display gardens, Cheekwood is exceptionally beautiful and engaging. From the detailed train exhibit built among bald cypress trunks with perfect roughhewn miniature bridges to monumental sculpture, Cheekwood is a Garden for all ages.



The center piece is the Cheekwood mansion situated atop a prominent hill with sweeping views of the garden and distant hills. Built between 1929 and 1932, its a traditional Georgian mansion with 50 rooms spread among four floors. The exterior is made largely of limestone blocks cut from local quarries. The original house included stables and a multiple-car garage. In fact, the

family traveled to England specifically to study 18th-Century Georgian architecture and furnishings. Leslie and Mable Cheek's fortune was earned in several business ventures, most prominently in associating with Maxwell House Coffee.

The mansion is now the primary museum for Cheekwood's permanent and traveling exhibits. Room after room is perfectly arranged into specific, intimate galleries. Combined with the exceptional architecture, it's a nationally unique museum experience oozing curatorial excellence. Spring 2016 featured the remarkably diverse work on Steve Tobin. A Philadelphia based mathematician and artist, Tobin's work ranges in material and subject matter. With ceramics, wood, glass and even a Lantern House made from archival film slides, Tobin's work is mystical and mesmerizing all at once. Some ceramics are intentionally exploded to create something akin to a giant earth star mushroom with a deep, colorful glass center. Illumination often plays a central role on Tobin's glass work. Outside several of Tobin's monumental sculptures tower among the trees like giant spiders.

Departing the Mansion one is quickly reminded there's an entire Garden to explore. Huge hackberry trees dot the landscape displaying their unique knobby bark. Intimate creeks and



hollows beckon the casual walker. The Robertson Family Water Garden is a treat. The flowing creek descends several small waterfalls laced with yellow iris, purple wood sorrel and native creeping wild ginger. The creek leads to three ponds that shrink in size as they near a subtle wooded edge. In the distance a neatly tended lawn sways up a hillside, inviting further adventure.

Not far from the ponds is the Japanese-themed Shomu-en Mist Garden. This is the meditative highlight at Cheekwood. A meticulously built garden house gazes on to a seemingly perfect rocky landscape complete with several Asian conifers pruned to perfection. On one side a bamboo Alley leads to another section of the Mist Garden where naturalized, mossy steps ascend a hill and deposits you near the visitor center and Pineapple Room restaurant. Across from the visitor center is the fascinating Turner Seasons Garden, a must stop feature for any serious gardener. Beyond the core area around the mansion one can stroll the Sculpture Trail featuring fourteen internationally recognized artists.

Other Cheekwood highlights include the Martin Boxwood Garden appropriately situated near the Mansion. Nearby the Herb Study Garden and the lovely Burr Terrace Garden occupy a

sloping hillside interspersed with many large specimen trees. At the bottom of the slope the Howe Garden features beautiful stone masonry walls, entrance ways and a pond. Above the Howe Garden is the First Learning Center with more galleries and classrooms.

There's an air of southern grace at Cheekwood. One could imagine an ornate garden party or traditional Chatelain among the splendid landscape. Indeed, Cheekwood hosts events large and small including a holiday light show. Between art exhibits, classes, social events and tours there's something special going on all year.



Many gardens around the world feature monumental sculpture outside and in conservatoires. The magical glass work of Dale Chihuly is particularly popular in North American Gardens. Chihuly is prominently featured at the Missouri Botanical Garden and the Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburg, among others. But Cheekwood remains unique. The hilly site crowned by the mansion nestled among huge trees, beautiful perennial gardens and water features are inspiring. In addition, gallery space in the mansion is Smithsonian caliber. The combination of these features makes Cheekwood the top garden feature in Nashville and one of the most unique gardens in the nation. No drive through Nashville is complete without a visit to Cheekwood. Nashville is well known as the musical epicenter of American and it's also home to a spectacular public garden and art museum.

From the BGT Team, More info at- [www.cheekwood.org](http://www.cheekwood.org)