

Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, Brazil

Located about an hour's drive south of Rio de Janeiro, is Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, the garden of the late Brazilian landscape architect.

Roberto Burle Marx has become internationally recognised as one of the most influential landscape architects of modern times. An artist and a plant lover, his works feature plants, paving and other structures used in bold and creative ways as on a giant palette.

Located on a hillside in Barra de Guaratiba, the former coffee plantation was purchased by Burle Marx in 1949 to house his expanding collection of plants. The property covers approximately 100 acres. Over 3500 species of plants grow through the garden and in the giant shade houses located at the bottom of the property.

The garden is particularly famous for its collections of aroids, bromeliads and heliconias. Burle Marx mounted many expeditions throughout Brazil to collect plants from remote areas. Many of these plants proved unknown to science and over 30 plants now bear his name. Many of the plants are now endangered or extinct in the wild and thus they form an invaluable collection.

The gardens flow around the many giant outcrops of granite which are a feature of the area. Near the house is a wall constructed from granite columns, blocks and friezes which were salvaged from the many historical buildings torn down in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s.

Following the death of Burle Marx in 1994, the property was donated to the Brazilian government in trust to become a National Historical Heritage site.

The property is open Tuesday through Sunday by appointment, with 2 daily tours at 9.30 am and 1.30 pm. You can take a taxi to the sítio or catch a bus from Rio or Copacabana which will drop you off nearby. To make an appointment to see the garden or for more information, ring (021) 2410 1412 or 2410 1171.

