



Application Overview – Sonoma Botanical Garden

Sonoma Botanical Garden (SBG) seeks a Site Use Permit to support the continued operation of its existing public garden, enhance visitor and traffic safety, and upgrade infrastructure to better serve the community. Proposed improvements include a dedicated left-turn lane from Highway 12, separation of pedestrian and vehicle circulation within the property, accessible pathways, new parking and restroom facilities, a visitor center complex, and the ability to host a limited number of private events that generate essential revenue in support of the Garden's mission.

Project Site & Context

Located at 12831 & 12841 Highway 12 in Glen Ellen, the 67-acre property encompasses hillside botanical collections, certified organic vineyard acreage, and protected native California habitat. Visitors currently access the site via an existing driveway and explore the Garden through a developed trail network. The proposed improvements will preserve natural areas while improving trails to increase access and interpretation opportunities.

Garden Background

Founded by philanthropist Jane Davenport Jansen in 1987 and incorporated in 1991, Sonoma Botanical Garden—originally known as Quarryhill was established on the site of a former sandstone quarry as a conservation-focused collection of wild-sourced Asian plants. Over several decades, and in collaboration with international partners, the Garden has developed one of the largest scientifically documented collections of wild-origin Asian flora in North America. The collection is a living laboratory actively used by researchers from UC Davis Arboretum, the Arnold Arboretum (Harvard), UC Berkeley, Cal Academy and many more.

In 2021, the Garden formally broadened its mission to include California native plants, recognizing ecological parallels and shared plant genera between East Asia and California. Demonstration gardens now feature water-wise and fire-resilient landscaping strategies. A large on-site solar array and a certified organic vineyard further reflect the Garden's leadership in sustainable land stewardship.

Mission & Role in the Community

The Garden's mission is to inspire appreciation for the beauty and ecological value of Asian and California native plants, and to promote their conservation. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charity, SBG serves as a vital

educational, scientific, and cultural resource. It offers a unique experience distinct from Sonoma Valley's wine-centric attractions and welcomes visitors from the region and around the world.

A renewed focus on family-friendly programs has welcomed a new generation to the Garden, offering meaningful, outdoor experiences that engage visitors of all ages. SBG collaborates with numerous local nonprofits and schools to offer enriching, family-centered experiences. The Garden extends free or reduced-rate admission to over two-thirds of its visitors, including participants in the nationwide *Museums for All* program which grants access to EBT cardholders. Despite employing just 16 individuals, SBG partners with about 100 local and regional vendors, making a substantial impact on the local economy. Additionally, more than 50 dedicated volunteers generously contribute their time and skills to support the Garden's mission.

Future Needs

This application supports the Garden's strategy to enhance its infrastructure and broaden programming, including the ability to host a limited number of private and ticketed events. These updates are critical to sustaining the Garden's conservation work, educational outreach, and public benefit amidst a changing economic and environmental landscape.