You can’t walk anywhere in downtown Des Moines without finding gardens that range in size from seasonally changing containers to full-scale installations. Hardy shrub roses and easy-care, deer-resistant ornamental grasses dot the landscape, along with the latest annuals and perennials.

**Operation Downtown flower planters and planting beds**
More than 850 planters beautify the East Village, The Principal Riverwalk, East Locust Street, Court Avenue, and Western Gateway Park.

**World Food Prize Hall of Laureates Garden (1)**
Located on the west side of the building, a formal garden celebrates the accomplishments of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and native Iowan Norman Borlaug, as well as Iowa philanthropist John Ruan, Sr. <worldfoodprize.org>

**Hansen Triangle (2)**
A pocket garden along Grand Avenue features a bronze sculpture and fountain, Quantum Leaf by artist Sally Pettus. <bit.ly/X48cRU>

**Robert D. Ray Asian Garden (3)**
A red pavilion surrounded by lanterns, boulders, and water honors the former governor and the contributions Asian-Americans made to Iowa. Signs indicate features that represent specific character values, including responsibility, citizenship, fairness, respect, caring, and trustworthiness. <cccaiowa.org/files/riverfront.htm>

**Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden (4)**
With nearly 14 acres, this public garden embarks on a transformational journey in 2013. The first phase, with interior renovations and the building of a water-education garden, shade allée, and more, will be completed in 2014. The geodesic conservatory remains open except July and August 2013. <dmbotanicalgarden.com>

**Long Look Garden on the river side of City Hall (5)**
A stately garden cascades on a slope toward the river with terraced planter walls, formal landscaping, and a grand staircase. Four-season inspiration dots the container plantings. <bit.ly/WzbzQ7>

**West Capitol Terrace (6)**
A slope with ramps and steps leads to a Beaux Arts-style garden with five distinct sections. Find ideas for low-maintenance plantings that include ornamental grasses, catmint, rugosa roses, and sedums. <bit.ly/ZneHwZ>

**Side Trip: Better Homes and Gardens Test Garden**
(15th and Grand; 15 blocks west) Meredith Corporation’s publications test new plant varieties and stage photo shoots in this enclosed garden. Open to the public on Fridays from noon to 2 p.m. from May through September. <bit.ly/14DfYiZ>

**Route Scout**
Deb Wiley, Garden Writers Association member and Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden board of directors.

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