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Heritage Garden Planted at Sonoma's Buena Vista Winery



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Founded in 1857 by Hungarian aristocrat Agoston Haraszthy, [Buena Vista Winery](#) is the oldest commercial winery in California.

In 2011 the winery was purchased by Jean-Charles Boisset, a Frenchman who first visited Buena Vista with his family — owners of Burgundy's Boisset Family Estates — at the age of 11.

"I fell in love with Buena Vista," he said. "I always

remembered this beautiful place."

In 2011 Boisset, a passionate lover of history, purchased Buena Vista and immediately plunged into an extensive renovation of the property's original 1857 stone winery, a California Historic Landmark (also on the National Register of Historic Places).

He also undertook a complex, expensive renovation/earthquake-proofing of the 1864 stone champagne cellar, which had been off-limits for years due to dangerous structural damage.

Renovations completed, the winery has returned to serving as Buena Vista's tasting room and visitor's center, as it has for many years.

The champagne cellar is being transformed into a private club room for the Buena Vista Viticultural Society (intended as the winery's high-end members' club, it will begin operating soon).

One of the fun and interesting changes made to the winery grounds—especially for people who have a passion for "green topics" — is the new Heritage Garden, which highlights four time periods in Sonoma's horticultural history.

"It goes along with the history of Buena Vista," said Joe Papendick, who designed and planted the garden. Papendick is head gardener at Buena Vista and also at Raymond Vineyards, another Boisset-owned property.



"We wanted to highlight useful and edible plants that were here when Buena Vista started, so we have a native garden with berries and herbs — that gives a sense of place, and indicates what's so natural and rich in California. Then we move on to other periods and talk about plants that were brought in from elsewhere in the world."

Here's a look at the garden's time periods and some representative plants:

- **Native California** (pre-1800s): A few plants native to Sonoma cultivated by the native people (willow,



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huckleberry, Rosa California, Douglas iris, miner's lettuce, yerba Santa).

- **Spanish Missions/Mexican Ranchos** (1820s-1848): Plants native to the Americas that the missionaries and Mexican rancheros brought to Sonoma, including wheat, barley, corn, peppers, tomatoes, squash, peas, beans, artichokes, olives, figs, and pomegranate.
- **Gold Rush and Development of California as a State** (1848-1892): For the hungry gold miners, vegetable production was essential to fight off scurvy; it also proved to be an important economic force in California's development. Plants brought to California by European and American immigrants include lettuce, cabbage, peppers, broccoli, collards, onions, leeks, berries, citrus, apples, and rhubarb.
- **Luther Burbank and Unique Vegetables to Sonoma** (1893 and 1920s): Burbank considered California to be the ideal location for breeding and developing new plant varieties. Numerous other farmers have allowed their plants to adapt and develop characteristics unique to the state. Examples include Russet potato, California early & late garlic, the Crane melon, lettuces, kale, and tomatoes.

Papendick worked with seed companies and farmers to garner authentic varieties of plant seeds from early eras. For example, a broccoli variety growing in the gardens is from the 1930s, brought to Sonoma County by Italians; the cabbage was a type brought in by German and Hungarian immigrants.

The garden was recently planted, and many of its inhabitants are now going fallow for the winter. Others, however — broccoli, cabbage, kale — are at their best in winter, and will be showing off their beauty to visitors over the next few months.

Come spring, though, that garden will begin to come into its own, and by next summer it should be glorious.

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