

## Manor Gardens Exmouth

Welcome to Exmouth's Manor Gardens. The Gardens are now well over 100 years old, first being dedicated to the use of the public on September 7th 1896. Since then they have changed considerably but still remain one of the most attractive features in the centre of the town.

### The History of Manor Gardens

As the name suggests, 'Manor Gardens' was originally part of an old Manor House. The Manor House was home to the Ducarel family during the 1700s and then subsequently passed to a Mr Charles Prettejohn. It was a large building set into the hill and featured extensive cellars, some of which are still in existence today, under Chapel Hill. Apparently, one of the butlers from the house was well known for disappearing in the evening and going via the tunnels to the pub at the foot of The Beacon!



The Manor House, late 18th century



The same view today

In 1893, the Local Board (the local authority of the time) sought to lease the gardens from the Rolle Estate for public use. The Manor House was in poor condition and was demolished in 1894. The same year, the garden was leased to the Local Board for a rent of £50 per year (worth approximately £3,500 today). This was a generous arrangement when you consider that the Rolle Estate also donated £50 per year to the Local Board to help with the upkeep of the gardens!

The grounds were made larger in 1905 when they took over the kitchen garden of the Imperial Hotel. In 1907 a Deed of Conveyance finally gave the entire area over to the local council, a condition being that no housing should ever be built there.

The Gardens are surrounded by iron railings but these were only reinstalled in the mid 1990s. The original railings were taken down and used to make armaments during World War Two. There is no doubt that their replacements have helped restore the original appearance of the Gardens. The cellars of the old house also played their part during the war when they were used as an air raid shelter!



### *Magnolia grandiflora* cv. 'EXMOUTH'

Exmouth has given its name to one of the most popular varieties of Magnolia. It was first brought to Britain in the early 18th century by Sir John Colleton, the former Governor of South Carolina who planted the tree in the front garden of his house, Elm Cottage (near what is now Exmouth Library). Examples are still to be found outside Exmouth Library on Exeter Road.

There is currently one young specimen present in Manor Gardens although others have been planted in the past. This photograph from 1947 shows the ceremonial planting of a Magnolia graniflora cv. 'EXMOUTH' opposite the Beacon.



### Entertainment in the Manor Gardens

Ever since they were opened, Manor Gardens have been a centre for local entertainment.

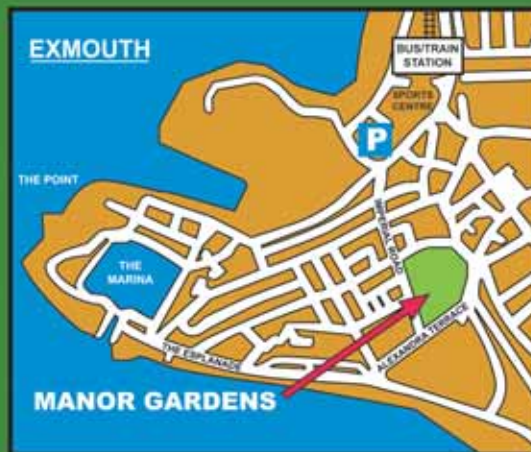
In the summer of 1896, a band played every day and some of the UK's top performers gave 'illuminated promenade concerts with charming and brilliant effects' in the evening.

The picture above shows the original bandstand in about 1910. This was an era of elegance in Exmouth. Popular musicians would have played to an audience of immaculately dressed Edwardian ladies and gentlemen, for whom, the concert was a highlight of the social week.

Today, there is a new hi-tech bandstand in Manor Gardens. Now known as the 'Exmouth Performance Stage', a blend of traditional and modern music, theatre and performance art entertains garden visitors during the summer months.



### How to find Manor Gardens?



If you are part of a band or theatre group and would like to use the Exmouth Performance Stage, contact Exmouth Town Council on 01395 276167.

Alternatively, if you are in the gardens during office hours, pop into the Town Hall and enquire at the reception desk.

Enquiries and comments to:  
STREETSCENE  
01395 517528  
email: [streetscene@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:streetscene@eastdevon.gov.uk)



# Manor Gardens

## EXMOUTH

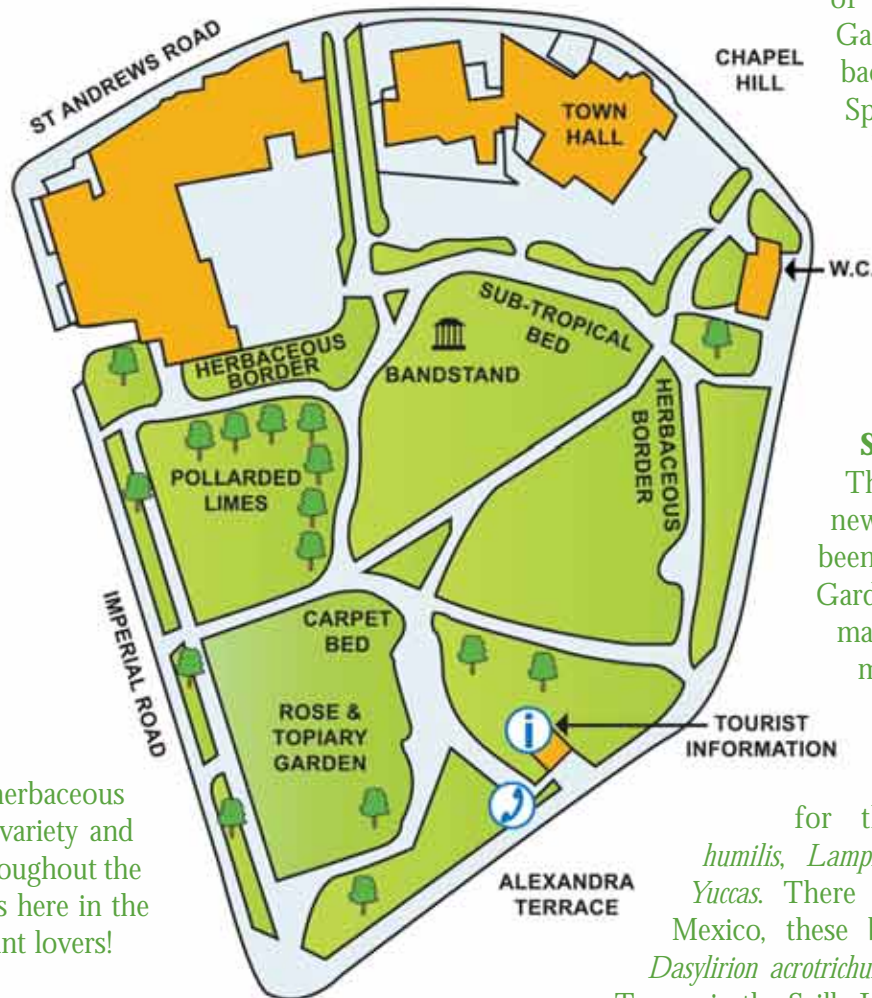
### The Plants

The Gardens have been split into a number of different areas, each one reflecting a different character or style. The map below shows the layout of the Gardens.

#### Trees

The gardens have always been dominated by mature trees, the old pictures of the gardens being defined by the presence of large specimens, many of them Elms. Sadly, Dutch Elm Disease killed many of the trees in the 1960s and changed the landscape. This however, gave the opportunity to plant many new trees and there is still a diverse range of trees present in the Gardens, many of which date back to the early 20th Century. Species present include Copper Beech, Holm Oak, Turkey Oak, Monterey Cypress, Horse Chestnut, Yew, Purple Sycamore and many more. Note also the pollarded Limes which border the north-west lawn.

#### PLAN OF MANOR GARDENS



#### Sub-Tropical Bed

The sub-tropical bed is a new feature which has been added to the Manor Gardens. The mild climate here in Exmouth means that desert plants from Mexico and Africa can be successfully grown. Look for the *Agaves*, *Chamaerops humilis*, *Lamphanthus spectabile* and mixed *Yuccas*. There are two special plants from Mexico, these being *Beschorneria yuccoides* and *Dasyliirion acrotrichum* (also seen in the gardens on Tresco, in the Scilly Isles).

#### Herbaceous Borders

There are a number of herbaceous borders which add great variety and diversity to the Gardens throughout the year. Again mild conditions here in the south West are ideal for plant lovers!

#### Carpet Bed

The carpet bed has been a feature of Manor Gardens since the 1960s. The pictures are created a range of different bedding plants, the foliage of each one helping form the picture which always has a local link or theme. The bed is painstakingly laid out and planted up over 3 days using 9,000 plants

#### Rose and Topiary Garden

The rose and topiary garden is not an original feature but it is in keeping with the style of a Victorian formal landscape. This example has been created using Box which is kept carefully clipped to give the precise appearance you see now. The small hedges surround bedding plants which give an attractive splash of colour throughout the summer and winter.

Turkey Oak

Eucalyptus

Chestnut

Maidenhair Tree

