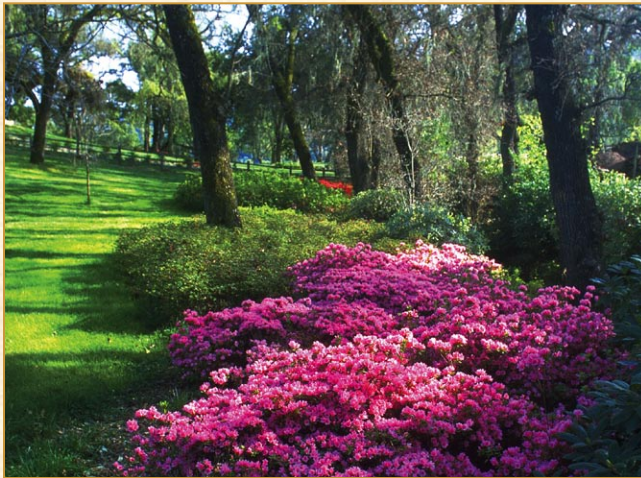




THE NAPA VALLEY WINE ESTATE
ESTABLISHED 1885

THE GARDENS

designed like a three-act play, building drama with each sequence



The Far Niente winery is surrounded by 13 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, thought by many to be among the most stunning landscapes in the Napa Valley. Described as “southern” in style, with an emphasis on texture and foliage, the highlight of the Far Niente gardens is the more than 8,000 southern azaleas that bloom every spring, carpeting the estate in brilliant hues of bright red and deep pink. They are the largest single planting of this particular variety of azalea in California, and possibly throughout all of the west coast. At the height of bloom, colorful patches of azaleas are visible from nearly a mile away on Highway 29.

Gil Nickel and his wife, Beth, who revived Far Niente in the late 1970s began developing the gardens in 1982, after completing a three-year restoration of the historic winery building. Designing and implementing the gardens was a natural for Gil, who with his brother, John, successfully ran the family’s Greenleaf Nursery in Oklahoma, growing the business to become the second largest privately held commercial nursery in the United States today.

The gardens were designed like a three-act play, building the drama with each sequence. Acacia Drive, which is

the road leading to the winery gates, sets the scene. The gently curved allee, bordered on either side with more than 100 Autumn Gold ginkgo trees, offers serene views of the Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards of western Oakville.

Acacia Drive ends at the Woodland Garden, which begins near the winery gates. Groves of towering redwoods, acacias, dogwoods and century-old cork oak trees create an enclosed canopy around the gates and along the front driveway. After passing through the gates, the drama builds along the shaded road.

Stately and resplendent, the historic stone winery emerges like a mirage at the end of the drive through the Woodland Garden, reaching the crescendo of the play. Lined with olive trees along the front drive and cloaked in colorful Virginia Creeper, the winery stands unguarded, its beauty appreciable from every angle.

The gardens surrounding the winery offer many intricate details. Hand-shaped and fitted flagstone stairs and pathways traverse the winery grounds, and quaint stone bridges cross over the ponds, adding dimension to the estate. A retaining wall that supports the olive trees in front of the winery was



built more than a century ago by Chinese laborers. Today, delicate ferns and fragrant alyssum grow from the nooks between the stones. The gardens are also home to a number of specimen trees, including Japanese maple, Japanese snowbell, lion’s head maple, Chinese fringe and saucer magnolia.