

Project Profile

Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center

Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is closer to nature than you can imagine. The facility, which includes 250 acres of preserved wetlands and prairielands in Orange, Texas, just outside of Austin, is not only an oasis for wildlife but also an example of green building. Shangri La was completed in February 2008 and received the first LEED-NC Platinum certification in Texas.

The center includes 12 buildings on lush acreage that boasts more than 300 species of plants and a variety of birds. The garden facilities include an orientation center, lab and exhibit buildings, outdoor classrooms and boat dock to accommodate its visitors. The mission of Shangri La is to mentor children of all ages to be kind to their world.



The project designers worked to include products and building practices that kept that mission in mind. BioBased Insulation® was chosen to be part of Shangri La, because the spray foam insulation supported the vision of the facility and helped bring the “green” aspects of the garden inside. As one of the most earth-friendly projects in the world, Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center offers a glimpse of how people can live in harmony with nature. The combination of gardens and nature at Shangri La presents a serene oasis for retreat and renewal, as well as the opportunity to explore, discover and learn.

Shangri La’s grounds and structures utilize many green design strategies. The overall buildings’ architecture and the efficiency of its equipment and lighting reduce energy cost by 70%. The proper orientation of the buildings for passive solar heating and cooling, optimized overhangs, soybean-based spray foam insulation in the walls and ceilings, and window placement all contribute to the energy savings. In addition, the facilities have a closed-loop, geothermal heating and cooling system which pumps water from an 800-foot-deep well, allowing Shangri La to take advantage of the consistent temperatures deep within the earth.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) and its Committee on the Environment (COTE) have selected Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center as one of the world’s top 10 projects exhibiting sustainable architecture and green design solutions.