

PLANT AND TREE GUIDE

These are some of the common plants and trees you will see at Villa Finale.



Boxwood



Sago Palm



Pittosporum



Japanese Yew



Giant Liriope



Mondo Grass



Anaqua



Live Oak



Red Oak



Mountain Laurel

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Self-Guided Tour



Villa Finale
401 King William
San Antonio, TX 78204
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www.VillaFinale.org

Villa Finale encompasses 1.5 acres along San Antonio's River Walk in the King William National Historic District. Back when the house was built in 1876, all of the King William properties along the river sloped naturally into the water; many even had bathing houses. In the 1980s, the River Walk was extended into the neighborhood thus ending the era of downtown riverfront properties. Use this guide to become familiar with Villa Finale's grounds, its landscape design and history.



Mathis family home in Rockport, Texas ca. 1880s.

Villa Finale's landscape is an extension of the careful aesthetics found inside the house. After completing the home's restoration (1967-1969), Walter Mathis turned to designing the landscaping using his artistic eye and appreciation of historic gardens. Inspired by his family's home in Rockport, other historic properties in Texas, as well as the home's architecture, Mathis created his garden with a careful selection of plantings, rhythmic spacing and furnishings. By the time of Mathis's death in 2005, much of the original landscape design had been overshadowed by volunteer trees and overgrowth. Now a National Trust Site, the grounds were restored in 2012 to the look Mathis had intended and designed: an Italianate paradise.



Formal garden, 1970.

Inspired by simple "circle in square" patterns of early 19th century Southern gardens, this area of the property is the landscape's showcase. The stone wall with its classical friezes depicting the Triumph of the Arts and the welcoming private seating nooks create a treasured intimacy. The upper portion of the Formal Garden was completed by 1970, and the lower portion by 1985 to compensate for some of the loss of privacy after the River Walk was extended into the neighborhood. In order to restore the Formal Garden to Mathis's idea of a lush green paradise, Villa Finale replaced unhealthy boxwoods for uniformity; those removed were transferred to other parts of the property.

Mondo grass that once bordered and softened brick edging was replanted as well as pittosporum that creates a green wall of transition between the upper and lower portions of the garden. Following Walter Mathis's lead of "artistic and historic," the National Trust restored Villa Finale's landscape to its creator's vision.



Gazebo, ca. 1980.

Walter Mathis's original landscape design included privacy elements such as an alternating pattern of yews and magnolias at the property's perimeter and English Ivy on the side fences. The yews and magnolias eventually encroached on one another's growth, not allowing for healthy development of either type of tree specimen, and the heat-sensitive ivy all but died over time.



As part of Villa Finale's landscape restoration project, many of the perimeter trees were replanted with appropriate spacing to allow for normal growth and the replanting of the ivy to return green privacy components intended by Mathis. A major element of the project was the installation of a micro drip watering system that uses less water and allows for direct irrigation to plant roots. Along with on-site composting, the micro drip system supports green initiatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

