

Westerstede Blooms As The Capital Of Rhododendrons

Westerstede has become quite famous for its rhododendrons. In 1928, Dietrich G. Hobbie introduced the flower seeds here, and they obviously felt right at home, practically taking over the town!

For the greatest profusion of blossoms, head over to the Rhododendron Forest Park. From late April through mid-June, it is awash with bursts of color, a veritable rainbow of blooms.

In case you think the local residents do not take their stature as Rhododendron Capital seriously, think again. In odd-numbered years, a town meeting is held in May/June and a special jury selects a new Rhododendron Queen and her entourage of Rhododendron Princesses.

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The Queen reigns for two years, serving in a ceremonial capacity, attending official events, and being the town's ambassador. TV and radio appearances are also required. It is quite an honor, accompanied by considerable responsibility.

If your visit doesn't coincide with the peak season, not to worry. The Queen presides over local exhibits, tourism fairs and grand opening events. It's her job to welcome guests, so don't be surprised if you see her.

In fact, you can even arrange through the tourist board to have the Queen attend a function, such as a birthday or anniversary party. She will arrive in her flowing red gown and sparkling tiara, wearing the sash that signifies her office. What a treat!

It will not surprise you to learn that Westerstede is a major attraction along the 205-kilometer auto

and bike passage known as the *Blüten-Route des Nordens* (Flower Route of the North). It runs from [Papenburg](#) to [Bad Zwischenahn](#), featuring a variety of flowers, plants, parks and greenhouses along the way.

Surely there are other reasons to visit Westerstede. Recreational opportunities abound, from camping and cycling to water sports in the vicinity. The town has a lively concert and theater scene. And a fascinating Threshing Festival accompanied by folk music is held each September.

But if anyone asks, tell them you came to see the beautiful flowers and their Queen. The locals will nod with understanding, comment on your fine taste, and show you their finest hospitality. After all, in Westerstede rhododendrons rule!