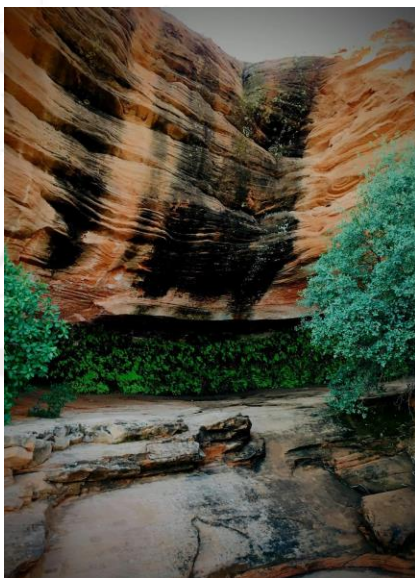


Natures' pendant for living – The hanging garden habitat

“Hanging Garden” the word reminds us of the ancient wonder of the historical city of Babylon or in recent times the famous garden with the same name in the city of Mumbai, India. But do you know that nature provides us with its' own hanging garden in a fabulous way? It's indeed a distinct habitat for a few of the rare endemic plants in the United States of America our very known U.S.A. Let us explore the Colorado Plateau in Utah and Colorado.



The Hanging Garden habitat grows on the canyon wall at the joining point between highly permeable sandstone and a less permeable layer. The upward cliffwall location of the habitat earns the very name “Hanging Garden” for them. You can see the garden as a seasonal green patch or as a green belt along the moist alcoves depending on the expanse of the water seepage area. Whatever water oozes out from the seepage, mostly are taken by the hanging garden plant community members. These gardens are a feast for the eyes in the otherwise stern, naked canyon wall and are items for tourist attractions



Ecologically these gardens are invaluable as they support a good number of endemic plants of the region i.e. plants exclusively found in that area and nowhere else. These plants are mostly herbaceous but have a pivotal role in microclimate and water flow quality maintenance. One can enjoy the purple flower of the alcove thistle or Rydbergs' thistle (*Cirsium rydbergii*) and, Cave primrose (*Primula specuicola*), can spot the crimson colored Monkeyflower (*Mimulus eastwoodiae*), lily like Alcove death camas (*Anticlea vaginatus*) and easily available Alcove columbine (*Aquilegia micrantha*) in these gardens. However, these

beautiful gardens have their challenges too. Positioning in the inaccessible area protects them against any direct human mediated disturbances but issues like climate change, aridity, and

drought seem to be unavoidable in the coming days which may affect the water resource, the lifeline of these gardens. Come, enjoy this natural wonder but also protect it from the natural disaster by keeping our destructive activities at check

*Image courtesy: <https://azwonders.com/2019/06/26/3-reasons-to-put-hanging-garden-trail-near-page-on-your-arizona-bucket-list/>
<https://springstewardshipinstitute.org/hanging-garden>*

Collector – Rajasri Ray

