



Tulips brighten the landscape near the Xujiahui Cathedral in downtown Shanghai. — Photos / IC



Visitors take photos of a pot of hydrangea on Wukang Road in Xuhui District.

Petal power: How flowers give city life aesthetic expression

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Amid the concrete and bustle of a megacity, flowers — millions upon millions of them — remind us that an urban center is a place of human dimensions. Shanghai's aim to become a "garden city" demonstrates how flowers express the public heart and soul.

Flower power is especially evocative in springtime.

Everywhere are floral landmarks — from large botanical gardens to small roadside pots. Exquisite landscaped flowers in places such as the Huangpu River waterfront attract hordes of visitors, who take photos and post them on social media.

A pot of tulips near the famed Normandie Apartments in downtown Xuhui District has triggered a photography craze of its own, becoming

a must-see spot for visitors to the city.

A historical villa at the Sinan Mansions is bathed in a wall of flowers that has earned the site the nickname "the most romantic residence in Shanghai springtime."

People also line up for hours at the terrace of the Bund Finance Center mall to pose with a giant rose resembling the flower in the French novel "Le Petit Prince." From that vantage point, they can take photos with Lujiazui skyscrapers as a backdrop on the other side of the Huangpu River.

"I missed spring last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. How can I miss it again this year!" a netizen gushed on the lifestyle social media app Xiaohongshu.

Shanghai plans to transform itself into a "city of gardens" by 2025. It's a term coined by Britain's Ebenezer

Howard in 1898, wherein he described residential communities built around a mix of parks, factories and farms.

"Apart from visiting a large park a 30-minute drive away, residents should be able to enjoy plants and flowers within a 10-minute walk from home," said Deng Jianping, director of the Shanghai Greenery and Public Sanitation Bureau.

To achieve that goal, more than 10 million pots of flowers were placed on local streets to help create a festive ambiance during Spring Festival, and they are constantly being refreshed after the holiday.

Flowers and plants in a megacity like Shanghai represent the relationship between humans and nature, Liu Yuelai, a landscaping expert and professor at Tongji University, told Shanghai Daily.