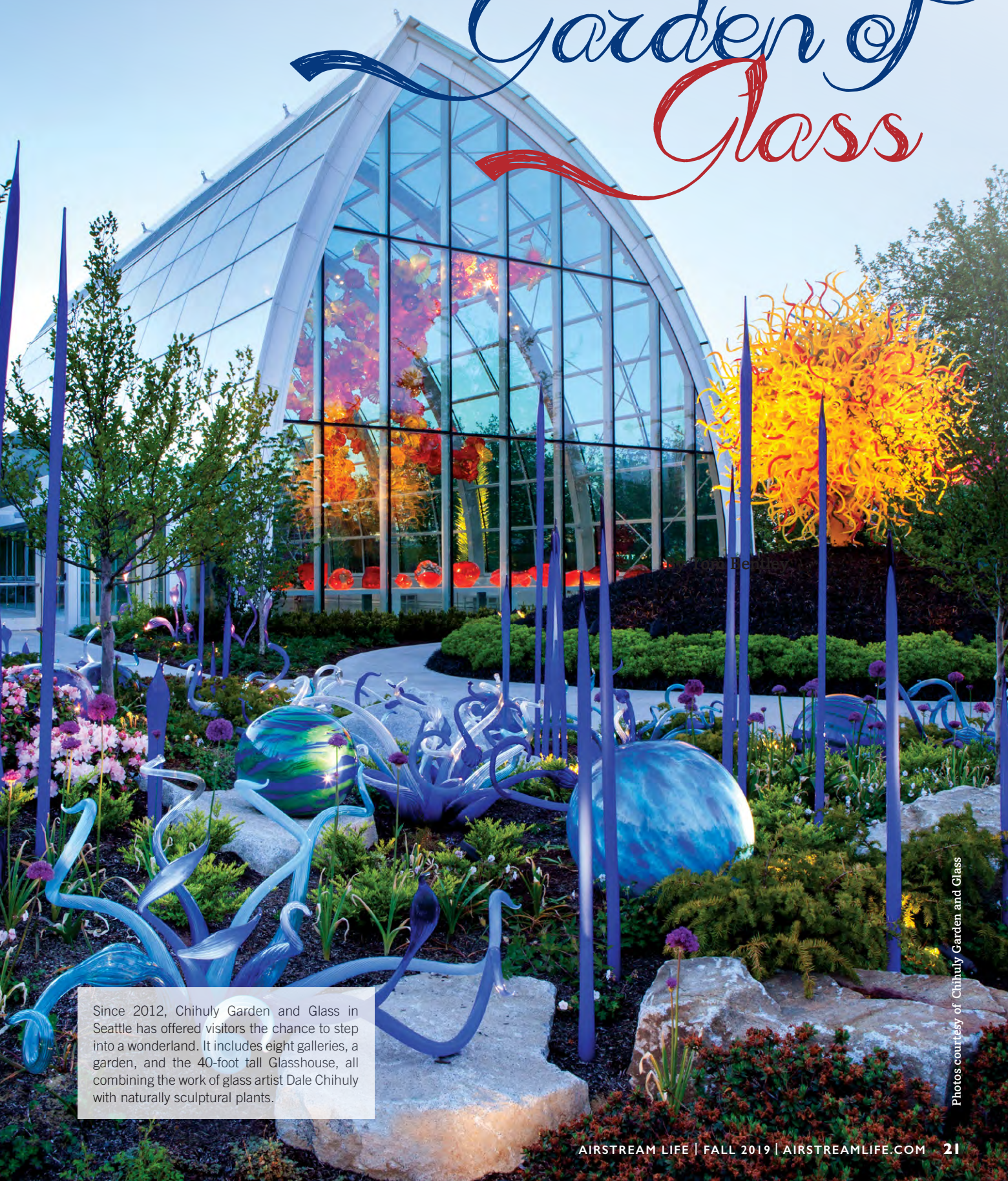


Adding Aluminum to a

# Garden of Glass



Since 2012, Chihuly Garden and Glass in Seattle has offered visitors the chance to step into a wonderland. It includes eight galleries, a garden, and the 40-foot tall Glasshouse, all combining the work of glass artist Dale Chihuly with naturally sculptural plants.

Photos courtesy of Chihuly Garden and Glass



*The interior was gutted and a special furnace added, as well as a “glory hole,” which glassblowers use to adjust the heat of glass being worked.*

**BELOW:** This 1967 Overlander is likely the only Airstream in the world housing a glass workshop. The choice to use an Airstream was inspired by Dale Chihuly's love for trailers. **OPPOSITE:** Sophie Spies, a Seattle-area artist who works at the Community Hot Shop, blows into the end of the pipe to inflate a glass piece.

***Want to turn some heads?*** Put an intricately shaped, brightly colored glass object in a room and then splash it with light. This is magic: People will look; people will like.

Want to turn thousands of heads? Design near-cathedrals of fanciful, soaring, intricate, dazzling, mysterious collections of glass in myriad shapes, colors, and sizes, and show them in exhibits from Japan to the Netherlands, Jerusalem to London, Florida to Las Vegas.

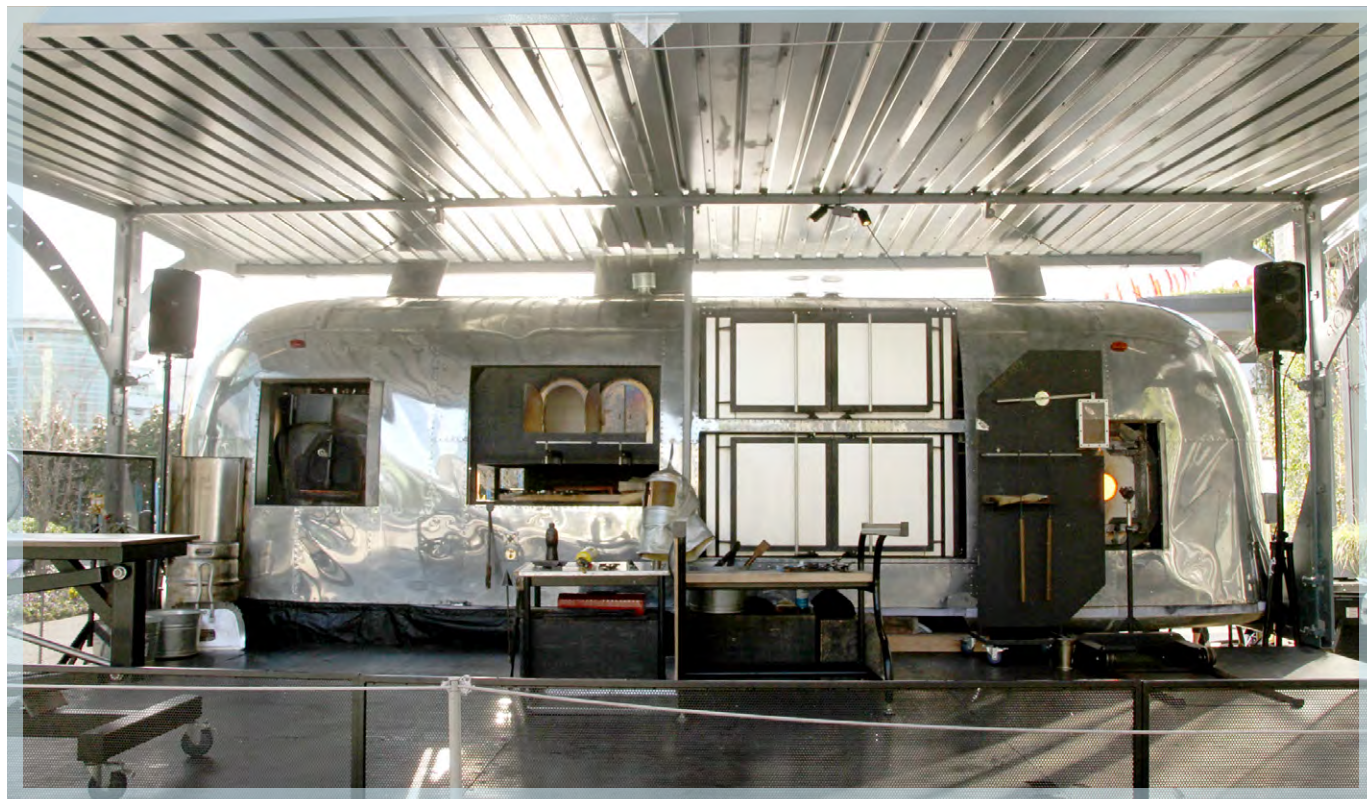
Dale Chihuly's work as a glassblower, glass designer, glass innovator, and—probably most prominently—glass artist is world renowned. But before Chihuly's name was synonymous with glass art, he was a young person making his way in the field. Now he's paying it forward.

For those glass-curious youth lucky enough to live near Seattle, the Chihuly Garden and Glass exhibition near the Space Needle is wonder enough. But stroll the grounds and you might see a vintage Airstream beckoning.

That's where this glass thing literally heats up. That trailer is the exhibition's Community Hot Shop, and it's where students and the public see glass art in the making. The trailer is a '67 Overlander, and it's 26 feet of hot-glass goodness. The shop offers live glassblowing demonstrations as well as explanations of glass and its properties and the use and expression of glass in art. The exhibition partners with Seattle Public Schools, inviting all students in the district for field trips to the Hot Shop and a Science of Glass educational curriculum.

Purchased from a private seller, the Overlander went through a deep transformation to become a glass house. The interior was gutted and a special furnace added, as well as a “glory hole,” which glassblowers use to adjust the heat of glass being worked, a pipe-warmer, and an annealing (cooling) oven. The wheels were replaced and the chassis reinforced. That process took a year.

The Hot Shop is a popular place: “We offer this live glass demonstration to deepen guests' understanding of glass and its properties and provide a closer







**ABOVE, FROM LEFT:** Paul Cunningham, Hot Shop supervisor, places a piece of glass into the glory hole to stabilize the heat of the piece before adding more color to the glass. Next, he shapes the hot glass using a forming tool made of cherry wood to ensure a smooth, even shape, and then blows into the blowpipe to inflate the size of the glass piece.

look at the technique of glassblowing. Through these experiences, we hope guests leave feeling excited about the artists that live and work in the Pacific Northwest and encouraged to further explore our region's rich tradition in glass," says Amanda Whitver, PR Manager at Chihuly Garden and Glass.

That tradition uses a material that's so common in our everyday lives but holds mysteries as well. "There are several properties of glass that make it a wonderful material for art," says Whitver. "Glass, whether it's colored or not, reflects and transmits light so well—it can take on a completely different look when seeing it in lightness or darkness. It's also so malleable and only requires very basic things—breath, gravity, fire—to turn it into something beautiful."

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All the glassblowers who lead the Hot Shop sessions are local artists. Most of the pieces at Chihuly Garden and Glass are part of long-term exhibits, though there are occasional temporary exhibitions. "The Garden changes seasonally, though," says Whitver. "Our team hand-selects plants and flowers to provide a rich and colorful backdrop to the artwork, so there will always be something new to see in the Garden."

Chihuly still lives and works in Seattle and visits the Exhibition, but he doesn't participate in glassblowing demos. But he definitely had an influence in the Community Hot Shop being in a trailer. He has a collection of toy trailers and hired a craftsman to fabricate trailer birdhouses for his studio. "His love for trailers was what inspired us to retrofit an Airstream for the Community Hot Shop," says Whitver. "It has been very well received by our guests—it certainly puts a smile on people's faces, and they love learning more about the art of glassblowing."







Airstreams have always been known for their sensual, stylish appeal, so their combination with glassblowing is a good fit. "We envision using it as the Community Hot Shop for the foreseeable future," says Whitver. "As far as we know, it's the only Hot Shop in an Airstream, and that uniqueness is a draw to people. It's been a great addition to the guest experience at Chihuly Garden and Glass."

They may leave glassy-eyed, but we suspect all visitors to the exhibits and the Community Hot Shop will leave talking about glass marvels for a long time to come.

Learn more about Chihuly Garden and Glass at [www.chihulygardenandglass.com](http://www.chihulygardenandglass.com).

Temperature control is crucial when working with glass, so the renovated Airstream has areas not only for melting glass but also for keeping pieces warm for later use (such as when multiple pieces will be put together into one larger piece), for keeping tools warm so they don't shock hot glass, and for slowly cooling finished glass pieces.

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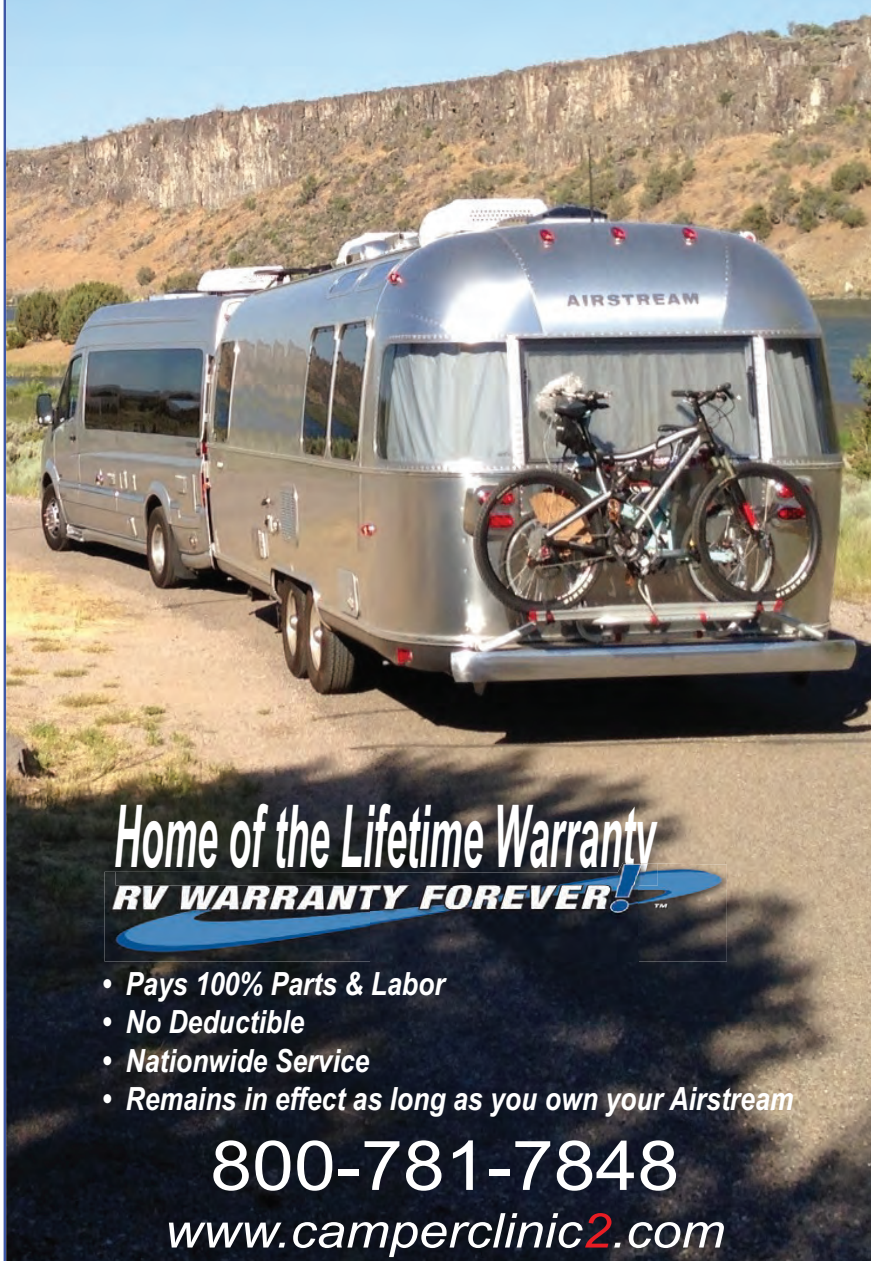
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