BOSTON'S BEST WINTER GARDENS

Missing some green during the winter months? Boston's got you covered with a canopy of leafy retreats sure to satisfy your flora fix. BY SAMANTHA DIMAURO

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum courtyard

The Museum of Science's Butterfly Garden

The **Winter Garden** at **The Shops at Prudential Center** (*refer to listing, page 25*) in Back Bay is in full bloom this time of year. Beds are tucked with seasonal displays of exotic greenery and a year-round line-up of laurels and palms, and the massive skylight overhead fills the hall with plenty of sunlight. It's a welcome rest stop on a snowy walk around Back Bay, and you can indulge in a shopping spree while you're at it. For the botanists among us, you'll find a complete seasonal planting guide at Customer Service.

The **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**'s (*refer to listing, page 17*) interior European courtyard will leave you breathless. Ornate, abundant and brilliantly colored, it reflects Isabella's passion for horticulture and garden design, combining plants, sculpture and architecture to become an astonishing work of art in itself. Three floors of galleries surround the courtyard and invite a fresh view from almost every room.

Peel off your gloves and take a walk through a field of butterflies at the **Butterfly Garden**, a warm conservatory and refreshing oasis overlooking the Charles River at the **Museum of Science** (*refer to listing, page 18*). Learn about your new fluttering friends and the exotic environment they thrive in through interactive displays and activities, and sneak a peek at the "Emergence Box," where hanging chrysalids are biding their time to bloom into adult butterflies.

Can't make it to Costa Rica this winter? Visit the indoor **Tropical Forest** at the **Franklin Park Zoo** (*refer to listing, page 46*) and be transported to the center of the rainforest. Surrounded by three acres of lush vegetation with exotic birds flying overhead, you'll meet species from all over the globe, including ocelots, lemurs and crocodiles. And don't forget to say hello to the family of eight western lowland gorillas.