MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

2026 October walk from the Lower Car Park

We provide a copy of this walk on the Noticeboard at the Garden which may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website (https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks)

This walk explores the rose collection at the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens (MLBG). Fossil evidence indicates that the rose is 35 million years old. Roses belong to the family Rosaceae which includes about 2,400 species in 95 genera. The largest genus by far is *Prunus* which includes plums, cherries, peaches, apricots, almonds and apples (one of the most widely cultivated fruit trees).

To begin this walk, make your way past the display garden path heading down towards the dam, On your right is a planting of ***Schoenia filifolia*** with cheerful yellow flowers like daisies (*Asteraceae*). This is an annual, often multi-stemmed, and native to SW Western Australia and well worth considering for Adelaide gardens. Ahead is a bedding display of ***Helleborus*** also known as **Christmas rose** despite not being closely related to roses. Further on, and above the wall at right is another daisy type, ***Rhodanthe chlorocephala*** or **pink and white everlasting**. Nearby is a ***Corylus avellana*** **'Contorta'** which is a selection of **hazel** with intriguingly contorted branches.

Whilst crossing the dam wall, enjoy the prostrate ***Cotoneaster horizontalis*** on the left, another member of the Rosaceae family. The first of its tiny white flowers are developing which will produce bright red berries in autumn which hold throughout winter until now. Native to the temperate regions of Asia, Europe and North Africa, and in the mountains of south-western China and the Himalayas, they are related to hawthorn ***Crataegus***, firethorns ***Pyracantha***, rowans ***Sorbus*** and ***Photinia*** all members of Rosaceae.

At the end of the dam, take the stairs uphill following to the lower path where you will be walking through an interesting collection of ***Malus*** and ***Pyrus*** species. The **apple**, ***Malus domestica***, is now thought to be a complex and ancient hybrid, originating in central Asia and cultivated since the Neolithic age. Cider was certainly made by the Romans. **Pears** derived from ***Pyrus communis*** are grown primarily for their fruit however, pearwood, called fruitwood in the furniture trade, is very stable and is used for turning, for mathematical and musical instruments, and for bread boards.

Cross the bitumen road and continue under the **pinoaks**, ***Quercus palustris***. Note the shape of the branches; the upper being erect, the middle horizontal and the lower pendulous. This helps shed snow cover in deep winter and provides an intriguing tunnel over the path. Continue on, crossing a small wooden bridge. On the left is a collection of flowering ***Prunus*** donated by Okayama Prefecture, Japan, in November 1988.

At the top of the rise is the beginning of the Species Rose Collection, established in the 1980s. Species roses are wild roses from which modern roses have been bred. In 2010 this collection was refurbished after a generous donation in memory of Mr Clive Armour, the Managing Director of ATCO Power from 1998 to 2008. Mr Armour was Chair of the Board of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium from 1994 to 2000. Many of the individual beds have had to be protected with fencing as kangaroos and feral deer frequent the area and are increasing in number. You will notice that some beds have not been fenced as the roses within have a wicked arsenal of prickles. (Note…prickles are outgrowths of the bark and are more easily removed than true thorns which grow from the wood of the stem). Taller fencing has been installed around some of the crab apples which feral deer have been finding to be particularly delicious. A recent and welcome addition is signage on many of the beds giving further insight into the rose and the way in which it has been developed and distributed around the world.

The oldest representation of a rose was found in a fresco in the palace of Minos, Crete, and dates to about 1450BC. The world's oldest living rose is believed to be over 1,000 years old. The **dog rose**, ***Rosa canina***, grows on the wall of the Cathedral of Hildesheim in Germany, and its presence is documented since 815AD. The rosebush symbolizes the prosperity of the city of Hildesheim, and it is believed that as long as it flourishes the city will not decline. In 1945 allied bombers destroyed the cathedral, yet the rose's roots remained intact beneath the rubble, and it was soon growing again.

Up the road on the right-hand side you will see the **redwing Omei rose**, ***Rosa sericea*** **forma** ***pteracantha*** from Western China. It has delicate fern-like foliage and winged prickles which are red at first fading to

grey. Unusually for a rose it has only four petals. Nearby is ***Rosa multiflora* 'Watsoniana'**, a cultivar with finely cut variegated leaves. Still further up the road, **Himalayan musk rose, *Rosa brunonii***, promises a spectacular display as the season progresses. In the autumn it will bear many small hips.

On the left-hand side of the road is a bed of China and Tea roses. The Chinese were growing and hybridizing roses as early as the 10th Century and probably long before that according to rose expert Peter Beales. The first of these introduced into the West was the pink flowering **"Old Blush China**" also called "Parson's Pink China" and "The Monthly Rose" indicating its regular blooming habit. Purchased from a nursery in Canton, it was first taken to Europe and later to England in 1781. It is still grown in gardens around the world and often found in old gardens as it thrives on neglect. It can be found here in the collection at the Mt Lofty Garden.

At the top of the bed **Harison's Yellow**, also known as the Oregon Trail Rose or the Yellow Rose of Texas, is a cultivar which originated as a chance hybrid in the early 19th century. It first bloomed at the suburban villa of George F Harison, attorney, who lived in New York City. It was first marketed in 1830. The many hips in autumn will be black. Also, on the left, the next bed contains several bushes of **Father Hugo's rose**, ***Rosa hugonis***. In spring it is spectacular because it flowers so profusely and in autumn it develops a heavy crop of dark mulberry-red, globular hips (the fruit of the rose). This rose was named for Father Hugo, Hugh Scallan, who was a Catholic missionary in China, and introduced it to England from China in the late 1880s.

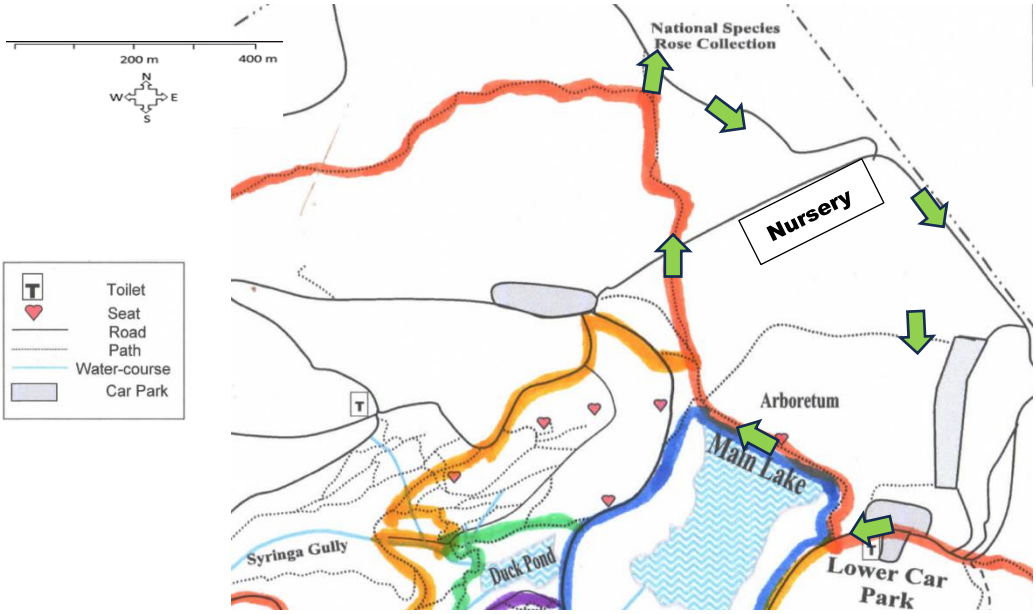
Later introductions from China in the early 19th Century were the Tea roses. They arrived in the ships of the East India Company which were primarily carrying tea and it is thought that their unusual spicy scent and their proximity to the tea cargo led to the name "Tea-scented roses". "Adam" is recorded as the first Western bred Tea rose.

Many roses of historical interest, known as "The Old European Roses", are also found in the collection – Gallicas, Damasks, Albas, Centifolias and Moss roses. This garden has much to offer throughout the growing season as many varieties – Rugosas, Portlands and Hybrid Musks – are repeat flowering. Later in autumn the variations in the form of hips are fascinating.

Continue up the rise where the MLBG nursery complex is sited. This nursery propagates specimens for all the Botanic Gardens of South Australia (i.e., Adelaide, Botanic Park, Mount Lofty and Wittunga). Follow the road down the hill then across the arboretum, a pleasant, shady path back to the lower car park.

BF, SH, PL; JH and RH

We are a group of volunteer Guides who prepare these monthly walks, all members of the Friends of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. The Friends would greatly appreciate if you would e-mail letting us know if you find them useful, or if you have any suggestions for future self-guided walks at info@friendsbgadelaide.com



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides funded by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Inc. For information on the Friends and/or guided walks, please telephone 8222 9367or **www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au**