

Summer 2024/25



MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK

To help keep visitors keep COVID-19 safe we provide a copy on the Noticeboard at the Garden that may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides see Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Upper Car Park Walk.

Since the forecast for this summer is for hotter than usual conditions, we have prepared this walk for visitors wanting to escape the heat of the Adelaide Plains and with shady areas and gentle slopes in mind. We have chosen some of our favourite plants (many of them selections of variants from the original parents) and have tried to take visitors to areas that they may not have seen before.

To begin the walk, head down the road at the right of the bottom of the carpark. In the bed on that corner is a tall *Liriodendron tulipifera*, known as the tulip tree. This is a fast-growing hardwood tree, native to eastern North America and makes a magnificent lawn specimen. It flowers in late spring and the flowers are shaped like tulips. Note the distinctive leaves which have four lobes and are bright green colour, with smooth upper surfaces and downy undersides. Keep this specimen in mind as we point out two fascinating variants later in the walk.

Approximately 50 metres down the drive on your left is a planting of *Daphne x transatlantica*, a selection of *Daphne* named 'Eternal fragrance'. The name *Daphne* comes from the Greek and means 'Laurel'. This cultivar is proving popular and makes a perfect border specimen with great fragrance when flowering. On the opposite side of the road is a *Phyllocladus trichomanoides*, or tanekaha, a New Zealand conifer. Its leaves are tiny, scale like and in low numbers and are only green for a short period before turning brown as the bark thickens. To compensate the tree forms phylloclades, which are leaf-like short shoots which alternate and provide photosynthates for growth.

Just before turning left at the bottom of this road, and on the right, is a variegated tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureo-marginatum'. This selection was first recorded in France in 1873. The variegation gives a deep rich yellow margin to the leaves although this selection is not as vigorous as its original source. This may be due to the lower levels of green chlorophyll in its leaves, but it makes a striking contrast. The rich yellow of the variegation presages the magnificent colours which tulip trees show in autumn. After turning left an *Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver' provides a fascinating silver coloured selection of an oleaster, also known as silverberry. This deciduous shrub suckers heavily and its silver leaves and stems develop small, fragrant creamy-yellow flowers in summer.

Bear right at the corner and on the right of the Upper Gazebo, is an *Acer platanoides* 'Globosum' or Norway maple. The "parent" tree for this selection is described as invasive in Europe because of its rate of growth and level of seed production whereas this selection, with its tendency to a globular shape, is more compact and suited to landscaping. Further on, just past the sign for the Dwarf Conifer collection on the right is a specimen of *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea', also known as copper beech. These trees make a magnificent contribution to cool climate gardens and are very popular in the northern hemisphere. These trees develop their seeds in the form of beech nuts which mature in autumn. These seeds provide the basis for woven copper (and other) beech fences which are best seen in areas where World War I was fought in Belgium and north-eastern France. There, seedlings are planted alternately at 45° angles and the resultant growth woven and managed by hard pruning into living fences up to 2 metres high. Unfortunately, our climate is too dry (even in the Adelaide Hills) for this type of magnificent hedge to be achievable.

Viburnum dentatum, or southern arrowwood, is the next specimen worthy of interest and may be found a little further on the left. It is native to the east coast of the US and Canada. Indigenous people used the straighter shafts for making arrows. Its berries are distinctive blue drupes with a correspondingly vibrant red colour in its autumn foliage.

Turn right into the lawns at this point and stay on the high side (adjacent to the bush on your left) and head towards a grove of trees. In the medium distance are an assortment of *Rhododendron* spp. with the last of the flowering due for completion around Christmas time as the flowering season has been so late this year.

This grove is a planting of *Cryptomeria japonica*, or the Japanese red cedar or Sugi, the national tree of Japan. There is a grove of older specimens just above the Duck Pond, near the main lake. These conifers are superficially like *Sequoiadendron giganteum* or giant sequoia but have longer leaves and smaller cones. These specimens have many cones on them at present, presumably as the wet spring has favoured cone development.

Continue on with native bushland on the left and then right past a grove of *Betula* spp, or silver birches, above the rhododendrons. Ahead is a *Fraxinus velutina*, or velvet ash, native to southwestern USA. It is named for the velvety down that may be found on new shoots. This collection of rhododendrons is known as the Whibley collection, the largest collection (excluding cultivars) in an Australian Botanic Garden. In 1929 David Whibley, who was gardener at St Vigeans, the home of Sir Edward Stirling, was appointed by the local Council to develop the gardens along the main street of Stirling. David Whibley donated plants to the gardens, but he also enabled access to St Vigeans for rhododendron cultivar cuttings to be taken, as well as the garden at Wairoa property of Sir Thomas and Lady Gosse. This collection features very personal names given to them by David Whibley, originating from the names of both his friends, as well as dogs and cats. The Whibley hybrids were bred from select hybrids mainly produced by the Waterer Family in the UK during the 19th century. They tend to be tough and relatively drought resistant.

Just ahead on the right is a special example of *Cryptomeria japonica*, with five trunks and hanging boughs that look like they may layer with time. This specimen is evocative of the shapes achieved by these cedars in their native home. On the left is a wonderful vista through to Fleurieu Peninsula, with the Willunga Hills just visible in the distance. Head on through the oaks, with glimpses of the adjacent quarry on the left. This is currently inaccessible but is being developed as a specialist 'Texas' garden for the future.

Ahead, as a final treat for this walk, is the Noel Lothian collection of dwarf conifers. Noel was the Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden (1948 – 1980) and oversaw the initial development of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden. His friend, nurseryman David Thomson had a passion for dwarf conifers and donated them to the gardens for planting in 1974 (the same year that the Duckpond was developed). We are fortunate to have this slow growing collection which, being over 40 years old, has developed fully as magnificent botanical specimens.

Head up though the collection, keeping to the grassed areas. Ahead is a planting of four *Picea glauca* var. *albertiana* 'Conica'. The original parent is a white spruce, native to the northern temperate and boreal forests. The precise conical shape and the way that the "skirt" follows the contour of the ground makes these specimens a pleasure to observe. Further on the *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Spiralis' is another fascinating specimen. Its parent is known as a Japanese cypress or hinoki and is a slow growing tree. The selection of this specimen as a spiralling variant is fascinating. Further on is a selection of the Himalayan cedar, *Cedrus doedara* 'Warrakilla'. It is likely that Noel Lothian collected this from the Warrakilla homestead at Mylor, which began as the Wheatsheaf Inn in the 1840s.

Finally, to head back to the carpark make your way to the track which joins the main road up to the carpark. On the way, please enjoy yet another tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Fastigiatum' which was selected for its erect habit with clustered branches resulting in a narrow rather than spreading form. As for the 'Aureomarginatum' selection this form is also less vigorous than the original parent. HM, RH and DS