

SPRING 2021 WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID19 safe we have decided that, rather than supply a paper copy of the walk, there is a downloadable version from our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>) or a copy in the Noticeboard at the Garden that may be photographed to take with you.

The map at the end of this walk is an enlarged section of the general map of the garden and shows the location of this month's plants.

After a cold and wet winter, it is wonderful to have a colourful spring. The good rains have filled the dams and reservoirs which is a great start for the season. The spring bulbs and blossoms have been prolific and particularly pleasing.

Although some **camellias** have finished flowering there are still many putting on a grand display. Commence walking behind the notice board and then down to the upper road. Towards the bottom of the path are the beds of winter and spring blooming **Camellia** species with their dark green foliage and myriad range of flowers, shapes and colours. Most of the camellias and azaleas originated from the Adelaide Botanic Garden's collection. These specimens were grown in the Simpson Shade house to survive the long, hot Adelaide summers, which are too harsh for these cool climate species. The beds also feature **Narcissus (jonquils and daffodils)**, **bluebells**, **Hellebore (winter rose)**, **cyclamen** and **violets** which all thrive in the cool Mount Lofty conditions. Further along the road and on your left is **Camellia japonica 'Hukuhan Kujaku'** or **peacock camellia** which has a pendulous or weeping habit with narrow leaves and attractive red bell shaped flowers .

Nearby **Prunus x subhirtella 'Pendula Rosea'**, a deciduous tree with long graceful cascading branches is displaying a profusion of flowers. Note the smooth-satiny textured bark with numerous horizontal markings called lenticels. A lenticel is a porous tissue in stems and roots of woody flowering plants which allows a pathway for the direct exchange of gasses between the internal tissues and atmosphere through an otherwise impermeable bark. They are a notable feature of members of the rose family, Rosaceae.

Take the path on your right and carefully descend the uneven surface that has been created by recent winter rains. Keep veering right and on the slope to your right is **Pinus yunnanensis, Yunnan pine** found in the mountainous southwest of China. Growing up to 30m it can be susceptible to wind damage and in fire prone areas it may only be shrub-like. The crown is conical and flattens with age while its long glistening needles shorten with age. In its native habitat it supports the imperial moth larvae. The trunk can be a source of resin and the roots for fungi. The wood is popular for construction, furniture and wood pulp.

Continue along the path and on your right note the unusual leathery leaf texture of **Rhododendron spinuliferum** an evergreen shrub. The delicate oval or lanceolate (spear-shaped) leaves have cuneate (wedge-shaped) bases and pointed tips. The red tubular flowers have tapered ends and are unusual for this genus.

As you wind your way to the end of the path, on your right are several handsome ornamental **Cercidiphyllum japonicum, katsura tree** native to China and Japan. Growing up to 15m tall, it has heart-shaped leaves of reddish-purple when they first emerge, turning green as they mature and become yellow to scarlet before they fall. The **katsura tree** makes an excellent landscape specimen, relatively free from insects and disease. Its timber is valued in Japan.

At this junction take the path to your left leading down towards Rhododendron Gully. On both sides of the path are **Mahonia lomariifolia** plants native to the region between Yunnan, Sichuan, northern Burma and east to Taiwan. An erect evergreen shrub, it may be single or multi-stemmed with long holly-like leaves. The new growth is many hued and mostly reddish. Yellow flowers are borne in racemose upright

inflorescences at the tips of the branches, followed by powder-blue to dark-blue fruit that look like grapes and may be used to make jam.

Turn left at the next bend and on your left is a grove of *Phyllostachys pubescens*, **giant bamboo or moso** native to China and Taiwan. Moso is an ornamental running bamboo best grown in a grove or forest.

Ahead are several plants of *Cyathea* a genus of large tree ferns. The name *Cyathea* is derived from the Greek, kyacion, meaning 'little cup' and refers to the cup-shaped spore clusters on the undersides of the fronds. *Cyathea cooperi*, **Australian tree fern** is native to north east Australia. It does not produce offsets from the trunk basis or roots. The fern therefore spreads by its spores which are produced abundantly and dispersed by wind and water. *Dicksonia antarctica* or **soft tree fern** can grow to 10m. It has a thick trunk covered with brown aerial roots. The crown and top of the trunk are covered with fine dark brown, slightly ginger hairs. The emerging fronds are one of nature's pure delights, reminding us just how ancient these tree ferns are. The trunk of the tree fern is unusual in that it consists of a thin stem surrounded by thick fibrous roots, necessitating keeping the trunk and soil in which it grows moist.

On your left and bordering the path are many fragrant *Osmanthus delavayi*, a species of flowering plant in the olive family, Oleaceae. It is a hardy evergreen shrub native to Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan regions of southern China. In late winter and spring, it bears clusters of fragrant flowers. Some of the best known selected forms are 'Heaven Scent' and 'Pearly Gates'.

This next section takes you through native bush, with **bracken fern**, *Pteridium esculentum* intermixed with wildflowers such as *Caesia calliantha*, **blue grass lily**, *Tetradthea pilosa*, **pink bells** and *Pultenaea daphnoides*, **large-leaf bush pea** which may be found here.

Also on your left *Davidia involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana* is the best form of the **dove tree, handkerchief tree or ghost tree**. The white bracts surrounding the flowers suggest white doves nesting among the large green leaves. This medium size tree is native to parts of Sichuan and Yunnan, China and was discovered in 1869 by French missionary and naturalist, Armand David. He was impressed by its unique beauty and the first to describe, name and introduce it to the world.

Take the path to your left and on your left are numerous *Pieris japonica* or **Japanese andromeda**, members of the heather family, Ericaceae. These colourful evergreen shrubs are native to mountainous regions in eastern and south-eastern Asia, eastern North America and Cuba. Clusters of 'lily-of-the-valley-like' flowers are exceptional this year, reflecting the heavy winter rainfall. Many cultivars have been produced giving gardeners in cool climates a great range of choices such as the spectacular new red growth on *Pieris* 'Forest Flame'.

At the next junction turn sharp left and head towards a group of elegant *Betula albo-sinensis* var. *septentrionalis*, **Chinese red birch**. Grown for its peeling trunk, mature trees shed large sheets of pinkish-beige paper-like bark with a white-waxy bloom revealing smooth patches of chestnut brown.

Before continuing up hill to the car park on the marked track, take time to enjoy the vista looking through and over the treetops towards the Piccadilly Valley.

EB, TA 9/21