

AUTUMN 2022

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 (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

Welcome to the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden (MLBG) for one of its most glorious seasons. As you make your way down to the main drive to the right, you will pass the notice boards with a backdrop of ***Berberis thunbergii***, or **Barbary**, which has begun its magnificent display of autumnal colours. One of the features of the MLBG is its collections of deciduous plants with a wide range of stunning autumn foliage. The deciduous growing season in the MLBG has been strongly influenced by La Niña conditions, although not with the extremes in rainfall which have caused flooding in the eastern states, nor the heatwaves experienced in the southwest of Western Australia. Nevertheless, the conditions this season have driven delays of two weeks in horticulture throughout the Adelaide Hills and many plants are showing unusual responses to the generally cool summer.

While walking down the road, look over the hedge on your left where *Magnolia* 'Red Tulip' has some bright red flowers at the very top, evidence of this strange weather. Normally, most magnolias flower on bare wood, prior to leaf development, but this selection is clearly confused by the weather in the last 3-4 months. In contrast, the bright purple flowers of ***Tibouchina*** or ***lassiandra*** are at their best during autumn. While these shrubs do not like frost, they grow happily up here in the MLBG and can also be found in the Gully featuring South American specimens, from where they originate. Also, in this bed you will find **azaleas** coming into flower, bright pink ***Lilium* sp.**, and ***Hydrangea*** commencing colouring for autumn. Just ahead are several **lily-of-the-valley** trees, ***Clethra arborea***. The flowers resemble lily-of-the-valley but are not related. They are native to the island of Madeira. The flowers are formed in panicles and usually flower in early to mid-summer, and are yet another example of delay in normal phenological behaviour which has featured this season. Care is needed with this plant as it contains neurotoxins which are harmful to humans.

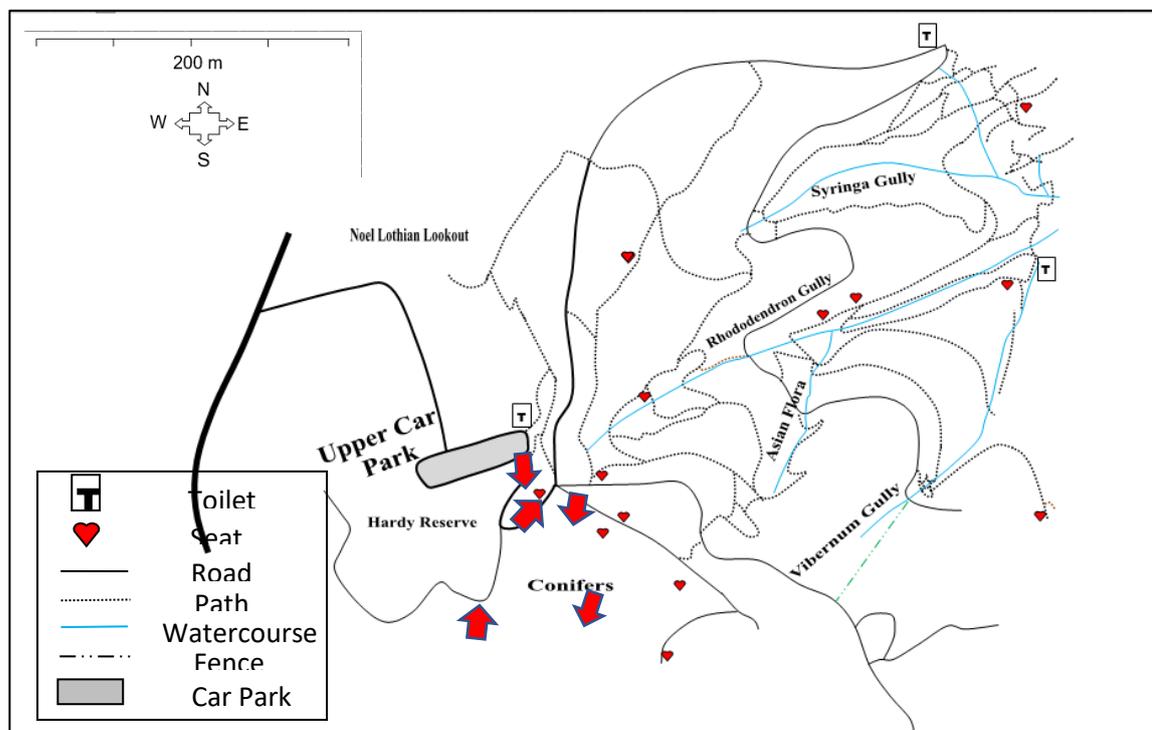
Directly behind the magnolia, the feathery foliage of **silk tree**, ***Albizia julibrissin*** is covered in yellow flowers. It wasn't until we had walked to the other side of this garden bed that we realised that the flowers are in fact made up of several tiny cup-like structures from which extend pink stamens up to 5cm long. These are fused at the base, forming the "silk" from which the tree derives its common name. From Iran and throughout Asia, its name commemorates Filippo degli Albizzi, an Italian naturalist. As a member of the pea family, Fabaceae, its fruits are beanlike and abundant. Unlike other albizias which also grow rapidly and establish readily in disturbed wet environments, this species is not known to be invasive.

Make your way on to the gazebo and then follow the path to the right amongst the ***Liriope platyphylla*** (also known as ***Liriope muscari***) or ***lilyturf*** which is thriving in its shady surrounds. A **magnificent Sitka spruce**, ***Picea sitchensis*** lies ahead and is on its way to being the size that makes it the largest species of spruce. Its home range is in southern Alaska, Canada and northern California. The Sitka spruce is the fifth largest conifer after the North American giant sequoia and coast redwood, the New Zealand kauri and the North American western red cedar). This section of the garden, like the Woodland Garden adjacent to the Duck Pond, features hydrangeas and azaleas which are thriving as understory to the taller trees around them. ***Osmanthus heterophyllus*** 'Goshiki' also features in this section with its compact evergreen growth and variegated holly-like foliage. Goshiki is Japanese for five coloured and the foliage colours, together with the tiny fragrant white flowers, makes for an excellent specimen for cool shady gardens.

Continue out to the “Guardian” lawn, where one of Greg Johns sculptures in the “Guardian” series is featured. Greg Johns’ medium is to shape Corten steel, a steel alloy which forms a stable rust-like appearance and which does not require maintenance. There are several of these sculptures through the MLBG and the main gates to the lower car park are yet another example of Greg’s skills with this medium. Two specimens featuring in this area include *Gleditsia triacanthos* ‘Ruby Lace’ for its foliage and *Lagerstroemia indica* ‘Lipan’ or **crape myrtle**. The gleditsia’s spreading canopy and weeping foliage are enhanced by the colour of new ruby red growth which gradually turns bronze in summer and then yellow later in autumn. This example of a crape myrtle typifies its features including a profusion of flowers at its branch tips which bloom throughout summer and, in this season, continue well into autumn

Make your way across to the Dwarf Conifer collection. Mr David Thompson was a notable nurseryman at a popular nursery at Summertown in the Piccadilly Valley. Sophie Thompson, David’s daughter, took over the nursery but has now moved on to be a gardening identity. Mr Thompson donated his collection of over 900 specimens of miniature, dwarf and slow-growing conifers. These plants are mainly selected from stock which has shown unusual characteristics, carefully grafted on to compatible stocks to preserve the features of the selection. The unusual characteristics have many causes including damage by insects or other pests which result in the plants reverting to juvenile growth, known as “a witch’s broom”. Careful propagation of these “sports” results in distinctive plants with surprising diversity in size, shape, colour and form. There are hundreds of species of conifers, selections of which may be found here, from trees, shrubs of all shapes to prostrate or trailing ground covers. They are round, spreading, pyramidal, oval, conical, vasselike, columnar, open form, weeping, erect with almost parallel branches and slender or spire like. One of the specimens is *Abies koreana*, the **Korean fir**, native to the higher mountains of South Korea. It grows at altitudes of 1,000–1,900 metres in temperate rainforest with cool, humid summers, and heavy winter snowfall. The cultivar ‘Starker’s Dwarf’ has a conical shape which does not require pruning as its growth is slow at only 3-7 cm a year. Please explore this section which many visitors are not aware of, with its hidden nooks and crannies and forms to both surprise and please. To return home, make your way back up and to the north to the car park.

HM, RH and NF 2022



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides and funded by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Inc.

For information about the Friends and/or guided walks, please telephone 8222 9367
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