

AUTUMN 2021

MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors keep COVID-19 safe we have decided that, rather than supply a paper copy of the walk, there is a downloadable version on 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 showing the area and paths in the Autumn walk

Autumn is a wonderful time of the year to visit the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden, with milder weather and a spectacular display of autumn colour. This occurs as the deciduous trees harvest the last of their energy by degrading the green chlorophyll in their leaves, revealing the vibrant underlying colours of the pigments within.

As you leave the car park by the main road, on the right a **tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*** will gradually turn golden yellow as the winter approaches. This tree is a member of the Magnolia family and is native to north-eastern United States. It is the State tree for Indiana, Kentucky and Texas. The wood is very versatile being used for furniture through to house cladding timber. The fruits on the outer branches can contain up to 60 winged seeds. Just before the turn in the road, on the right, another *Liriodendron*, ***Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureo-marginatum'** this time with variegated leaves of green with a golden margin, as indicated by the specific epithet 'Aureo-marginatum'.

In between these two special trees, is a wonderful collection of *Salvia* spp. in bloom, much loved by the native honeyeaters. Interspersed with is these a bright, aromatic, herbaceous perennial native to North America, **giant hyssop, *Agastache* 'Sweet Lili'**, a member of the mint family Lamiaceae.

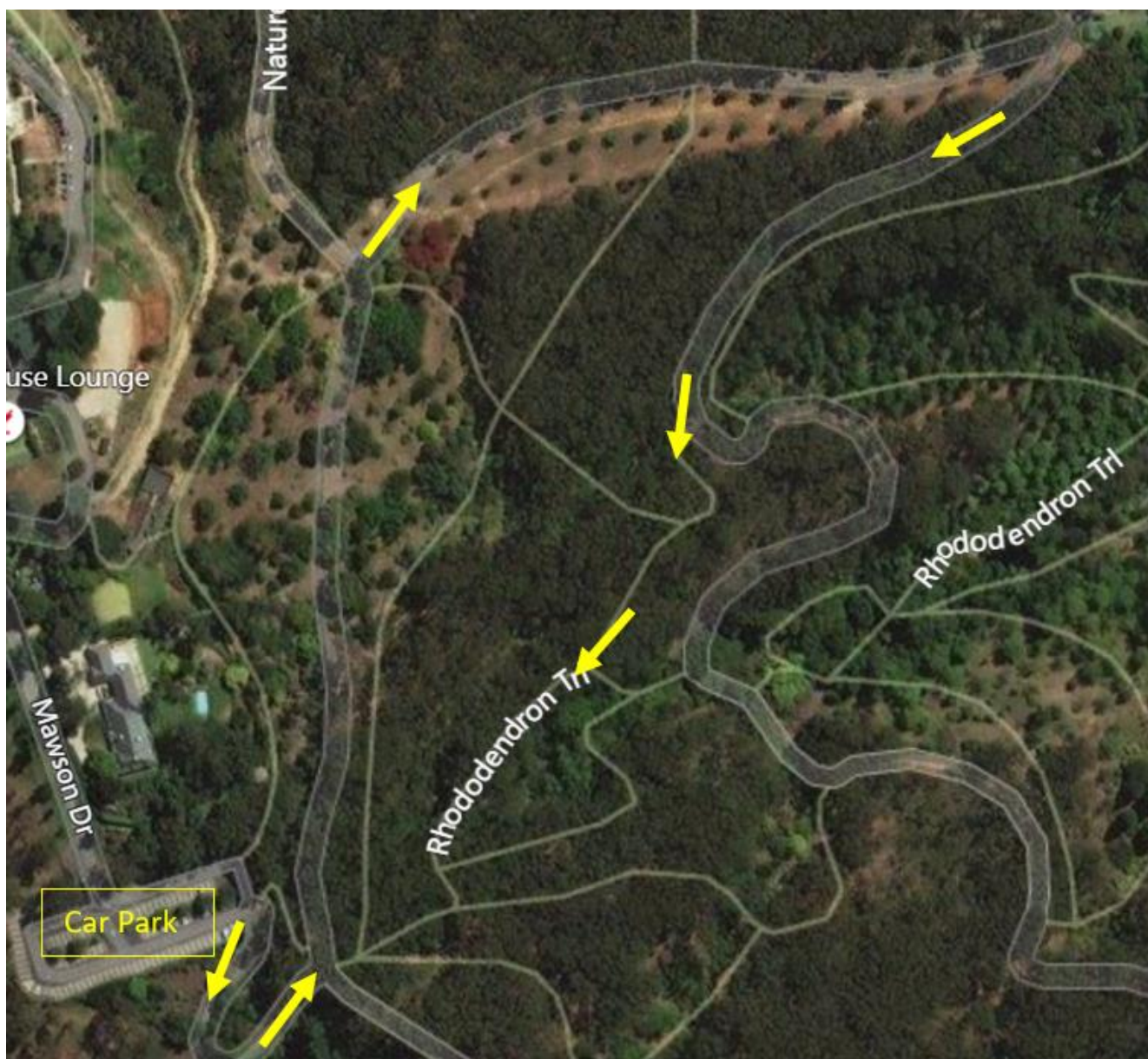
Continue around the bend, staying on the bitumen road, enjoying the view over the Dwarf Conifer Collection to the right, and passing the top of Rhododendron Gully. On the hill face below the road, endemic stringybark, *Eucalyptus obliqua*, form a high canopy for some of the northern hemisphere plants. Along the roadside, *Viburnum*, a genus of more than 150 species from north America, will bear many berries through the winter which will be food for the native birds. The flowers may be borne horizontally, or in spherical or domed clusters, and range from white through to pink. In prehistory, the long, straight shoots of some viburnums were used for arrow-shafts, as those found with Ötzi the Iceman. The fruit of some species (e.g. *V. lentago*) are edible and can be eaten either raw or for making jam, while other species (e.g. *V. opulus*) are mildly toxic and can cause vomiting if eaten in quantity. The bark of some species is used in herbal medicine, as an antispasmodic and to treat asthma.

While walking along the road you will be passing through a diverse collection of oak species. Take the steep road downhill with the SA Bank Nature Trail on your left. The burn marks on the trunks of many of the trees remind us of the fragility of our native environment. The last major fire was in 1983 when approximately 60% of this garden was burnt in the devastating Ash Wednesday fires, although prescribed burns to control the undergrowth have been carried out since. On either side of the road, the bare trunks of **Chinese cedar trees, *Cedrela sinensis*** stand out. In a garden setting, i.e., with good soil and regular watering, the new pink growth in spring is sought after. In China, these new pink leaves are eaten as a vegetable.

At the bottom of the hill, before turning to the right, there is a spectacular view with glimpses of the Piccadilly Valley and Uraidla. Once a major vegetable growing area, now vines are gradually taking over from the market gardens. The area is favoured for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir production for both fine sparkling and still white wines. An easy, flat walk along the bitumen will pass **American sweet gum, *Liquidambar*** on the left which are a feature of the autumn colours in the garden. Of particular interest is one specimen showing winged flanges on the branches. The bark attaches itself to the branches in plates edgewise instead of laterally, and a piece of the leafless branch with the aid of a little imagination readily takes on a reptilian form; leading to it sometimes being called alligator-wood.

Continuing around the road look down over the *Rhododendron* plantings revelling in the shelter provided by **silver birch, *Betula pendula***. The attractive silver-white trunks are a feature when the trees have dropped their leaves. Many of these were planted in the early days of the garden to provide quick shade for the Collections. Several small paths head uphill from this road, all leading to the Upper Car Park. The last of these passes over a small bridge with lovely views through the stringybarks down to the lower reaches of the garden. At the top near the seat, an unusual maple, ***Acer palmatum* var. *heptalobum* 'Osakazuki'** has red winged seeds (double samaras) which contrast with the green leaves in summer, but merge with the autumn colours as they develop with the cooler conditions. As you reach the road, on your right is a **katsura, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*** which is one of the largest hardwoods in Asia. The trees have a burnt toffee smell emanating from the heart-shaped leaves in the autumn. Now listed as endangered in China, it can be found in its native habitat of the northern forests of Japan and can grow to 45 metres in height. The scientific genus name *Cercidiphyllum* refers to the close resemblance of the leaves to those of *Cercis* (redbuds); these two unrelated genera can however be distinguished easily as redbud leaves are alternate, not opposite.

RH, HM 2-21



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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