

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

JULY 2022 WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID-19 safe we provide a copy on the Noticeboard at the Garden photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

Although the weather in July at Mount Lofty can be brisk, it is well worth walking in the Garden to enjoy the contrast to the spring and summer persona. To help warm up, this walk recommends a brisk walk to the bottom of South American Gully where we begin to describe specimens and winter vistas.

Just before South American Gully and on the left is a drift of ***Salvia corrugata***, also called ribbed sage. This is a perennial shrub native to Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador which grows at 3000 m altitude. It has dark blue flowers, almost year-round, and has distinctive deeply corrugated evergreen leaves which are dark green on top with light veining and pale tan-coloured fine hairs underneath, possibly to protect it from frost damage. It is thought to have been brought to horticulture in 2000 because of a collecting trip to Ecuador in 1988 via Ken Gillanders of Tasmania. All plants in cultivation today are from 6 seeds that germinated from that trip. It can reach 3 m in its native habitat, and usually up to 2 m in cultivation.

Just up the path, and on the right, are specimens of ***Fuchsia denticulata***, from which the fanfare fuchsia was believed to have been hybridised. The species is endemic to the cloud forests of the Andes, which have mild year-round temperatures and cool nights. Mature plants can sport branches weighed down with pink-, orange-, magenta- and lime-coloured flowers. The deep green, glossy foliage has not become deciduous in this sheltered site but may do if the cold of late June persists into July. This specimen has shrivelled flowers which may be the result of frost damage.

A little further on and on the right are specimens of ***Brugmansia sanguinea***, the red angels trumpet. This plant is native to the Andes and may be found from Chile to Colombia. Whilst it looks as if it has tropical origins, these plants manage cold conditions, as may be seen in this sheltered gully. All parts of the plant are poisonous, to discourage animals from grazing on it. The seeds have been found to contain hallucinogenic compounds and indigenous South Americans have medicinal uses for the plants. A little further on are specimens of ***Salvia confertiflora***, or red velvet sage, which is native to Brazil. The plants may grow up to 2 m in height and erect inflorescences may be up to 60 cm in height with knobby reddish-orange flowers. Note that "confertiflora" means "crowded with flowers". The foliage is attractive with velvety red-brown hairs on the petiole (stem) of the new leaves.

Continue up the hill and cross the bridge on the right. Turn right off the bridge and follow the track that borders between South American gully and the native bushland above. This track is one of many that follows the interface between the plantings of the botanic garden and the bushland which surrounds it. Although this is all regrowth of the local ***Eucalyptus obliqua***, the messmate stringybark, which was cut for timber in the late 1800s, it does contain many native shrubs, grasses and orchids.

One fascinating plant on your left, from southern Brazil and Uruguay, is ***Colletia paradoxa***, the anchor plant. The bizarre appearance of the foliage is a mass of flattened, grey-green, waxy, thorny "leaves" that are arranged in tiers opposite each other. These are spiny, triangular stems modified for photosynthesis (cladodes). The true leaves are small, flattened structures, found below these cladodes. They are deciduous and usually only visible on the young growth. The spines provide excellent protection against grazing animals. During winter, the plant features tiny, short-tubed, white flowers with a faint almond odour, however flowering was not evident when this walk was being prepared.

Continue following the path and, if it is not too misty, enjoy the vistas back to the Main Lake through the trees. In the distance, you may also see the remnant red-yellow leaves of ***Liquidambar styraciflua***, or

flowing sweet gum, adjacent to the Lake. On your left is a creeper that appears to be choking the native plants, ***Cassytha pubescens***, locally known as the snotty gobble or dodder-laurel. The plant has a string like appearance and is a native which is hemi-parasitic, gaining water and nutrients from plants that it climbs. However, snotty gobble does not kill native plants but rather uses them to gain access to light. Intriguingly, recent research has shown that it may be useful as a means of control of some of the major Hills weed species including gorse, blackberry and broom as these plants are not able to compete as well against its parasitic activity and end up being restricted and smothered by the creeper. Follow the grey gravel path and on your left is a drift of ***Lepidosperma carphoides***, the black rapier-sedge, which is a member of the family Cyperaceae. It is grass-like sedge 20-40cm high. It is an ideal primary larval host plant for many native moths and butterflies.

Take the steps down into the gully below. On your right, just after the ***Quercus canariensis***, the Algerian oak, enjoy the scent of the ***Luculia pinceana***. This plant is native to Nepal and was one of the over 12,000 plants named during the travels of Sir Joseph Hooker. The flowers have a very sweet, musk-jasmine fragrance that lingers up to 15 metres. On your left is a ***Gahnia sieberiana***, or red-fruit saw-sedge, a tussock-forming perennial in the family Cyperaceae, endemic to Australia, which favours damp sunny sites. The common name refers to the rough edges of the arching leaves which can cause painful skin cuts. Flowers occur in spring and summer in long clusters (panicles) at the end of black spikes. They are followed by shiny, red-brown seeds about 4 mm long which are very attractive food to many finches (including red brows).

Follow the path all the way back down to the Duck Pond. On approaching the Duck Pond, note the carpet of brown-orange needles under the grove of ***Metasequoia glyptostroboides***, the dawn redwood. This is normally an area in deep shade under the conifers but, as they are deciduous, there is a magnificent view out and across the recently cleaned out Duck Pond, with a profusion of ***Primula*** glowing in the sunshine (if you are visiting at the right time!). Make your way out and on to the road around the Main Lake and make your choice as to which way to follow it back around to the car park.

GB, BF, RH and NF 06/22

