

Summer 2023/24



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.

The summer months bring a changing palette of colour, shape and form to the garden beds near the upper car park. These colours include the various shades of green which provide a restful and cooling backdrop to individual plants and shrubberies. The lawns provide aesthetic value and are green, pleasant places to stroll, to sit and generally relax. In the heat of summer, lawns cool the air.

Start this walk by taking the roadway from the car park. As you enter the road, there is a good view over the southeastern Adelaide Hills. Notice how the native messmate stringybark trees (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) frame the view. They were used by the Kaurna and Peramangk people and also were heavily logged in the early days of European settlement. You might like also to pause at the stately tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) at the very start of your walk, on your right. In late November or early December, you may be able to see the relatively large golden goblet-shaped flowers amongst the leaves. The tulip tree is a member of the Magnolia family, and this species hails from eastern North America. Growing to a tall deciduous tree, it is valuable for its timber as well as a prized garden subject in large gardens. The leaves are blunt and flattened and have four lobes.

At the base of the tulip tree is a planting of liliiums which will produce spectacular, and often scented, flowers as the summer progresses. Liliiums grow from bulbs and are perennials.

The walk down the roadway shows many trees and shrubs with quite varied leaves. One such tree on your right is the celery-top pine (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*) with its celery shaped leaf-like phylloclades. Whilst the celery-top pine is a conifer, it is not a true pine but belongs to the Podocarp family rather than the Pine family. The celery-top pine is native to New Zealand where it is called tanekaha which means "strong man". Underneath is a new planting of a variegated form of small holly leaved shrubs (*Osmanthus heterophyllus*) which have green leaves splashed with yellow. In winter these plants will produce inconspicuous flowers with a highly aromatic scent. These shrubs are sometimes called false holly.

Opposite the celery-top pine is a group of small evergreen trees of the *Clethra* genus originating from a wide range of temperate and tropical climates including Asia, North, Central and South America and the island of Madeira. The leaves of these are described botanically as simple and ovate. In February when other flowers are scarce, they will flower in clusters called racemes. The perfume is a warm and spicy cinnamon.

Another scent to enjoy is that of *Daphne x transatlantica* 'Eternal Fragrance' which forms a low hedge along the roadway. This modern cultivar is scarcely without flower throughout the year.

Soon you will reach a collection of real hollies. There are more than 400 species of holly, including the common holly *Ilex aquifolium*. There is significant variation in leaf colour and form amongst this collection of plants, and you might like to make a note to return in June when the berries are ripe.

Where the road intersects with a few paths, take the right one towards the Summerhouse gazebo. As the summer season progresses so will flowering in the garden beds here. This includes day lilies ***Hemerocallis sp.*** which flower prolifically with a new flower opening each day over a long period. Also planted here are penstemons, commonly known as beardtongues, and hydrangeas. Penstemons are native primarily to the Americas and there are roughly 280 species and many more cultivars. Whilst some are fully deciduous, most penstemons have a woody stem and persistent basal leaves. Heights can range up to three metres and colours vary from red, pink, purple and lavender, sometimes with a white centre.

Hydrangeas are shade loving plants which flower spectacularly in summer in many colours including white, blue, purple, pink and red. Typically the flowerheads contain two types of flowers: small non-showy fertile flowers in the centre of the flowerhead and large, sterile showy 'flowers' with colourful tepals often extended in an outer ring. The colour of the flowers is influenced by the presence of aluminium ions in the soil which are either available or tied up depending on the soil's pH. Mopheads and lacecaps are two well-known forms of hydrangea. Also look out for the oak-leaf hydrangea ***Hydrangea quercifolia*** which has flowers on erect panicles at the branch tips. The flowers age in colour from creamy white to pink and brown by autumn and winter. The leaves turn rich shades of red, bronze and purple in autumn.

Surrounding the Summerhouse are more liliiums with ***Lilium 'Friso'*** soon bearing flamboyant crimson centred flowers, shading to broad white edges and tips. It has abundant scented blossoms and flowers for an extended time. Also of interest are the tree ferns, with both rough tree ferns ***Cyathea sp.*** and soft tree fern ***Dicksonia antarctica*** being represented. The coin spot tree fern ***Cyathea cooperi*** is a tall and elegant tree fern which gets its common name from the smooth oval scars left on the trunk when the dead fronds fall.

The lawns in front of the Summerhouse are shaded by messmate stringybark ***E. obliqua*** whose tall trunks give a sense of grandeur and perspective to this space. Elsewhere in the Gardens, these trees are surrounded by native bush, so to see them on their own here provides another opportunity to appreciate them.

Cross over the path to where a copper beech tree with dark purple leaves ***Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*** is making a dramatic show. A variety of European beech, these deciduous trees are native to Central Europe, slow growing but long lived and can reach 50 metres tall. The leaves turn shades of red and copper in autumn before falling.

Go left through a shady glade to another lawned area where Greg Johns' statue Guardian Figure dominates the scene. Greg Johns is a well-known Australian sculptor who works in Corten steel, and several of his works are displayed in the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden. Here you may choose to sit and admire the scene, or you may like to continue across the lawn and continue down the slope to explore the dwarf conifer collection before returning to the car park.

JH, RH, DS November 2023