

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN SUMMER (2023/24) WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



We provide a copy of the walk on the Noticeboard at the Garden which may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website,
<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides> see Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Lower Car Park

Before leaving the Car Park glance up into the *Liriodendron tulipifera*, **tulip trees**, to spot the beautiful flowers for which the tree receives its species name. Walk towards the Chris Steele Scott Pavilion, passing on the right "the meadow" which will be displaying a range of sunflowers throughout Summer. Along the banks on the left, several *Cotoneaster* spp. are used to retain the walls. This member of the family Rosacea has tiny white flowers and produces plentiful red berries much loved by the native birds. It is like a mini quince, and in fact the Greek origins of the name mean quince-like.

Proceeding down the road, the magnificent **Scots pine**, *Pinus sylvestris*, has red flaking bark. It is the most widely distributed conifer in the world. Its natural range stretches beyond the Arctic Circle of Scandinavia to southern Spain. It is national tree of Scotland where it formed much of the Caledonian Forest that once covered the Highlands and is the clan badge of the Clan Gregor, one of the most famous Scottish clans.

The gully on the left (one of the seven which make up this garden), is planted geographically to represent East Africa. Of particular interest are the large leaves of *Ensete ventricosum*, **Abyssian banana**, the roots of which are an important food source for the people of this region, and close by, *Lobelia gibboeroa*, so named because we are told the gibbons use the leaves to form their nests as they have anti-malarial properties. Looking further up the hill you will find another *Lobelia* plant which bears a tall spike which will have white flowers over the summer. The paper daisies, *Ammobium elatum* or **winged everlasting** beside the road are from Queensland and New South Wales.

Turning left uphill are several tall tree ferns, *Cyathea brownii* from Norfolk Island and *Cyathea robusta* from NSW and Lord Howe Island and towering above them *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, **Bangalow Palm** which is endemic to NSW and Queensland. Fragrant mauve flowers appear between December and April, followed by bright red fleshy fruits. These attract butterflies and feed many native birds including the Crimson Rosella, Lewin's Honeyeater and Satin Bowerbird. It is generally found in coastal rainforest, in damp situations such as sheltered gullies, and lining the banks of streams and swamps.

At the turn of the road are the entries to New Zealand Gully and Fern Gully. Unfortunately, Fern Gully is closed at present, but as you enter New Zealand Gully look over Fern Gully and you will see the land-slip which has caused this closure. You will still be able to enjoy Fern Gully from this vantage point, and also many unique trees from NZ. On the left observe the weeping branches of *Dacrydium cupressinum*, **Rimu**, which is a large evergreen coniferous tree endemic to the forests of New Zealand. It was formerly known as "red pine", although this name is misleading since it is not a true pine but a member of the southern conifer group the podocarps. The mature cones comprise a swollen red fleshy scale bearing one (rarely two) seeds. The seeds are dispersed by birds which eat the fleshy scale and pass the seed in their droppings; they are an important food resource for some species, particularly the *Kakapo*, whose breeding cycle has been linked to the cone production cycle of the tree. The *Kakapo* is endangered as the *Rimu* only produces a good crop of seeds every 4 years, and the bird will not breed unless there is a good food supply.

Opposite the *Rimu* is *Cordyline banksii*, **Bank's cabbage tree**. The cabbage tree is one of the most distinctive trees in the New Zealand landscape, especially on farms. They grow all over the country, but prefer wet, open areas like swamps. Māori used cabbage trees for food, fibre and medicine. The root, stem and top are all edible, a good source of starch and sugar. The fibre is separated by long cooking or by

breaking up before cooking. The leaves were woven into baskets, sandals, rope, rain capes and other items and were also made into tea to cure diarrhoea and dysentery.

Turn left at the T-junction and on the left ***Alectryon excelsus***, commonly known as **tītoki**, or New Zealand oak, a shiny-leaved tree native to New Zealand. It is in the family Sapindaceae. The tītoki tree is one of the native trees in New Zealand that was traditionally planted by Māori. Usually, the pulp fruit from this tree is consumed while the wood is commonly used for making wheels because the wood is very elastic and strong. Grains from this tree are processed into hair oil and the leaves will be soaked in oil to provide a fragrant aroma. Opposite is ***Pittosporum crassifolium***, **Karo**, bearing many green fruit.

Continuing on this path a young Australian **bunya pine**, ***Araucaria bidwillii*** on the left gives the opportunity to examine the sharp foliage at close range. The New Caledonia collection of *Araucaria* species is on the hillside to the right, with many small Australian native flowers along the bank including ***Goodenia***, ***Brunonia australis***, blue pinchusion, ***Scaveola albida***, ***Pimelia linifolia***, ***Wahlenbergia***, ***Themeda triandra***, kangaroo grass and small heath.

Turn left down the hill admiring the many central African plants on the right, then return to the car park.

EB, HM, DS 11-23

