

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

OCTOBER self-guided walk from the LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID-19 safe we provide a copy of this walk on the Noticeboard at the Gardens which may be photographed or there is a downloadable version on our website <https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides> (Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Lower Car Park).

Despite a dry start to the year from February to May and rainfall totals well below average to date (January had twice the Long-term Average with 71mm), the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens (MLBG) are largely unaffected as its annual rainfall is almost twice that of Adelaide. This walk visits New Zealand Gully where the diversity of N.Z. flora with its fascinating range of shapes and leaf forms may be viewed.

Follow the road out of the carpark to the left of the dam. The display garden on the right currently features lupins (*Lupinus*, a member of the Fabaceae family). They are commonly called bluebonnet, due to their petal conformation. They are currently developing flowering spikes which are a feature in late Spring and early Summer. ABC Landline's program on October 6 (available on IView) has a fascinating segment on the potential of lupins for high protein supplements for humans, as current usage is mainly for animals)) Follow the road, passing the Chris Steele-Scott Pavilion and continue to the first intersection. Take the road to the left passing the pond, which is surrounded by freshly fallen leaves, a feature at this time of the year of plants of tropical origin. They are from a Red Cedar or *Toona ciliata*, which is a member of the Mahogany family and common to South Asia and Northeast Australia, although it was heavily logged in the early 19th century. The timber was so valued it was called Red Gold and unfortunately easily spotted by loggers because of its new red shoots in spring. The timber had many uses and one intriguing example is Australia's oldest surviving piano built in 1834 by John Benham in Sydney.

Above the bank on your right is a patch of the original understorey flora of this area (dominated by *Eucalyptus obliqua*, messmate stringybark) which provides a fascinating contrast with the botanical plantings. The bright yellow flowers with red highlights of *Pultenaea daphnoides* or large-leaf bush-pea are a feature during October. It is a widespread tall shrub of the pea family and is commonly found through South Australia and into the eastern states. The leaves are wedge shaped, dark above and pale below with a small point. They are popular garden plants, best on sandy loam with good drainage. They are named for the 18th century English botanist Dr Richard Pulteney and the epithet refers to its *Daphne* like flowers. Other specimens currently flowering in this area include the red of the flowering creeper, *Kennedia prostrata* the running postman and the blue of *Caesia calliantha*, the blue-grass lily.

Make your way up the hill past the Fern Gully path which is closed due to a land slip after heavy rain last year. On reaching the dogleg to the right the Guides preparing this walk stopped and looked back down the hill, reflecting on the contrasting forms of the specimens in this area and their many unique leaf shapes. As an example *Cordyline australis*, the cabbage tree (known to the Māori as ti kouka) is one of the most distinctive trees in the New Zealand landscape. They grow all over the country, but prefer wet, open areas such as swamps. Māori used cabbage trees for food, fibre and medicine. The root, stem and top are all edible and 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. Observe the weeping branches of *Dacrydium cupressinum*, rimu, which is a large evergreen coniferous tree. The name rimu relates to the Polynesian limu which implies the moss like leaf form. 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 (from the Greek pouís, foot., karpós, fruit). 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.

A contrasting shape and form may be seen in *Entelea arborescens*, known as whau, a member of the Malvaceae family which includes cotton and okra. It has large lime-like leaves and prefers open sunny areas for growth. It's Māori name refers to the hibiscus to which it bears some resemblance. Another specimen in this area is *Myrsina australis*, known as mapu, a small upright shrub. Newly formed shoots have a red bark contrasting with the leaves which are pale green with a yellowish tinge on their upper surface with a paler version on their undersides.

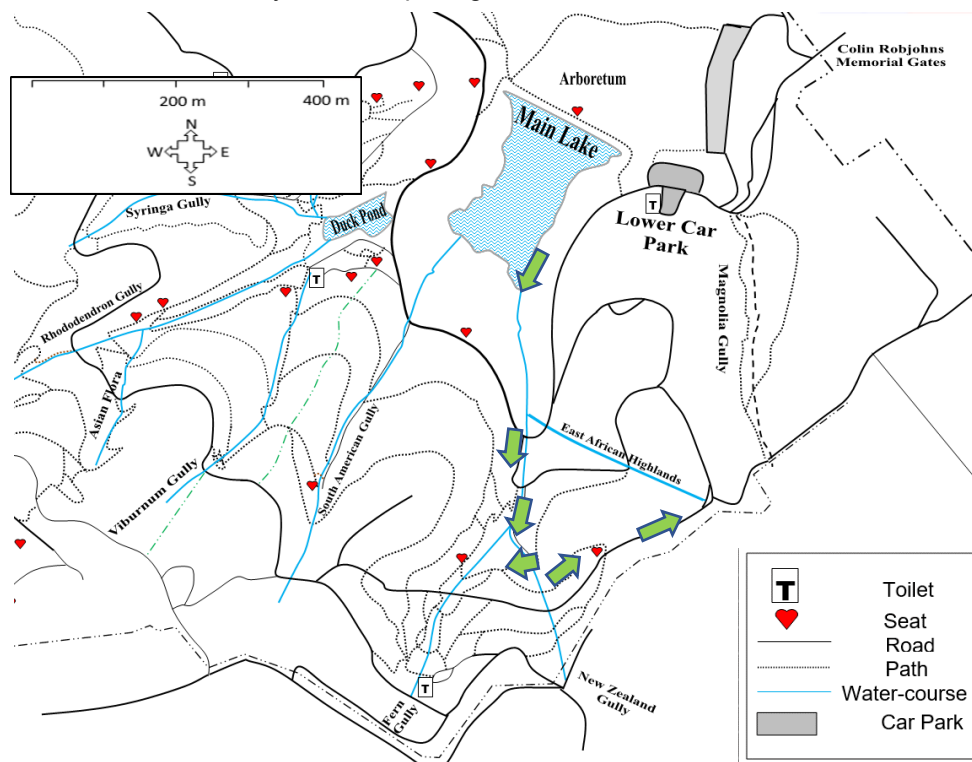
Nearby is a Kahikatea or *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*, a coniferous tree endemic to NZ. It is NZ's tallest tree, growing to 60m over a period of 600 years. Pollen remains dating back over 100 million years also make it the country's most

geologically ancient. The white odourless timber was once used for making boxes for the export of slabs of butter, a practice that has now been all but eliminated. Kahikatea dominated swamp forests from the North Island and northern South Island. The swollen seed receptacle, usually referred to as a berry, was used by Māori as a food. The juvenile foliage is a feathery light green in appearance. Further on is a Nikau palm *Rhopalostylis sapida* which is NZ's only palm representative and has the distinction of being the southernmost member of the palm family. It is easy to recognize by its circular trunk and upright fronds which have the appearance of a feather duster. Growing 10 to 15m in height, the trunk is ringed with evenly shaped scars of its fallen fronds. A slow growing plant, it is found in coastal to lowland forests in warmer regions of NZ.

Phyllocladus trichomanoides, the New Zealand Celery topped pine is a medium sized forest conifer. The species name refers to the fern leaf-like shoots which are called phylloclades. These perform most of the tree's photosynthesis as the leaves themselves are so tiny. The strong timber is much sought after with its smooth straight trunks. As one of the Podocarpus family it has a very ancient heritage from the old Gondwana or Antarctic flora. Further on is a small grove of **Agathis australis** or NZ kauri, a cone bearing tree in the family Araucariaceae. It grows 30 to 60m tall in the emergent layer above the forest canopy on the North Island of NZ. The trunk diameter can reach over 5m. Kauri leaves are 3-7cm long and 1cm broad, tough and leathery in texture, The seed cones are globose, 5-7cm in diameter and mature 18-20 months after pollination. The seed cones disintegrate at maturity to release winged seeds. Young trees have columnar growth with the trunk scarcely free of branches. The species name 'australis' denotes southern rather than specifically Australian.

Further on, and on both the left and right of the path are plants of **Pseudopanax ferox**, commonly known as the fierce or toothed lancewood. Looking something like dead sticks, these plants demonstrate both the juvenile and mature forms of lancewoods. Notice the long, narrow, dark and tough leaves with toothed margins that deflex downwards. This juvenile form can be maintained for 15-20 years, after which branching occurs at the top and the tree develops into a round-headed form (note the tree on the right). One theory is that such trees have evolved in response to browsing by the now-extinct moa, although another more accepted theory is related to climatic factors. Further up the path **Pseudopanax lessonii** or Houmapara demonstrates the more commonly found features of the genus. It has between 3 and 5 thick leathery leaflets, green flowers and purplish fruits. This evergreen shrub or small tree is restricted to the top section of the North Island of NZ, usually near the coast.

Continue to the main road ahead and chose either the path right down Magnolia Gully or to the left past Araucaria Gully to head to the Car Park. Note that the Rhododendrons and Camellias have a wonderful display, and we recommend you visit Rhododendron Gully after completing this walk. EB, JH, RH, DS, 10/24



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides 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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