

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

JULY 2024 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).

This month's walk takes us to part of the southern boundary of the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden, via Magnolia Gully. Once out of the Gully, we are primarily exploring plants from temperate regions of the southern hemisphere. The walk uses part of the Boundary Loop and returns through Upper Fern Gully and New Zealand Gully.

From the car park, walk to Magnolia Gully and take the right-hand path. The bare red stems of ***Cornus pumila*** (red-tipped dogwood), growing in a semi-bog area, stand about a metre high and are highly ornamental. The new leaves emerge in spring and will be a deep purple-red colour. These are followed by clusters of slightly fragrant, white lace-cap flowers which attract butterflies and later black fruits that are eaten by birds. Most dogwood species are [native](#) to [temperate](#) and [boreal](#) areas of northern hemisphere. Toward the end of this walk, growing in a naturally wet habitat alongside the main lake look out for an upright thicket of ***Cornus flavissima*** (yellow stemmed dogwood) bearing vivid, mustard-yellow bare stems through the winter.

On the right is a grove of ***Sequoia sempervirens***, commonly known as the coast redwood, from southern Oregon and California. It is recognised as the tallest tree species in the world, growing to just over 110 metres in height. It is a conifer and has male and female cones on the same tree. Coast redwoods are the last remaining species in their genus which has been around for millions of years. They are wind pollinated, but the male and female cones mature at different times to prevent self-pollination. Being a very long-lived tree, this grove will be a significant feature here at Mt Lofty Botanic Garden for many years to come.

Heading uphill on the left is a large collection of Magnolias named to commemorate the French botanist, Pierre Magnol. The Magnolia family was among the first flowering plant families to evolve, their primitive flowers being pollinated by beetles, the only available insect pollinators. With approximately 80 species native to China, Japan and southeastern USA, magnolias are popular garden plants with arresting floral displays in predominantly white, pink and purple hues in spring. If you look carefully, you will see that the flower buds are encased in soft hairy scales, and that a few have started to open.

At the top of Gully, go right onto the Boundary Loop ignoring the roadway on your right. Here at the top of the East African Gully area is a collection of east and South African plants. Amongst these is ***Lobelia giberroa***, aptly named "Giant Lobelia": This is an herbaceous perennial which bears no resemblance to the commonly grown bedding lobelia. The leaves can grow to more than 50cm in length and the flower spikes can grow to 2 metres in length and have numerous small greenish white to blue flowers. Native to the mountains of east Africa, it grows in moist soils.

On left side of the road is another group of shrubs from South Africa: ***Euryops virgineus***. The bright yellow flowers stand out on an overcast day. In the Asteraceae family and flowering in winter, it provides food for butterflies and bees. It grows in well drained soils, from sand to clay and tolerates both acidic and alkaline soils.

A little further on is a welcome seat with an expansive view of a significant planting of the genus *Araucaria* and a view down to the Main Lake. Looking down the slope the young *Araucaria* trees look like a smattering of Christmas trees in July. *Araucarias* were around with the dinosaurs, and now all living specimens are echoes of Gondwana.

After this, take the left fork which follows the boundary fence. A pair of young New Zealand kauri, ***Agathis australis*** denotes the start of this track, and the New Zealand flora found in this section of the walk. Kauri are coniferous trees also in the family *Araucariaceae*, and are from the North Island of New Zealand. It is the largest tree by volume, but not by height in New Zealand, standing up to 50 metres tall in the emergent layer of the forest's main canopy.

Libocedrus bidwillii from the Cupressaceae family is found further along on the right. Libocedrus are conifers native only to New Zealand and New Caledonia. This is one of 5 species. It is also called by its Maori name pauhautea. It grows to 25 metres with foliage in flattened sprays. It has few pests other than possums which can kill it through defoliation. ***Dacrydium cupressinum*** is a conifer in the Podocarpaceae family. This family occurs mainly in the southern hemisphere and the different genera within the family vary considerably in appearance. This conifer is native to New Zealand and is a tall tree known as rimu. It is very distinctive, with its elegant pendulous foliage.

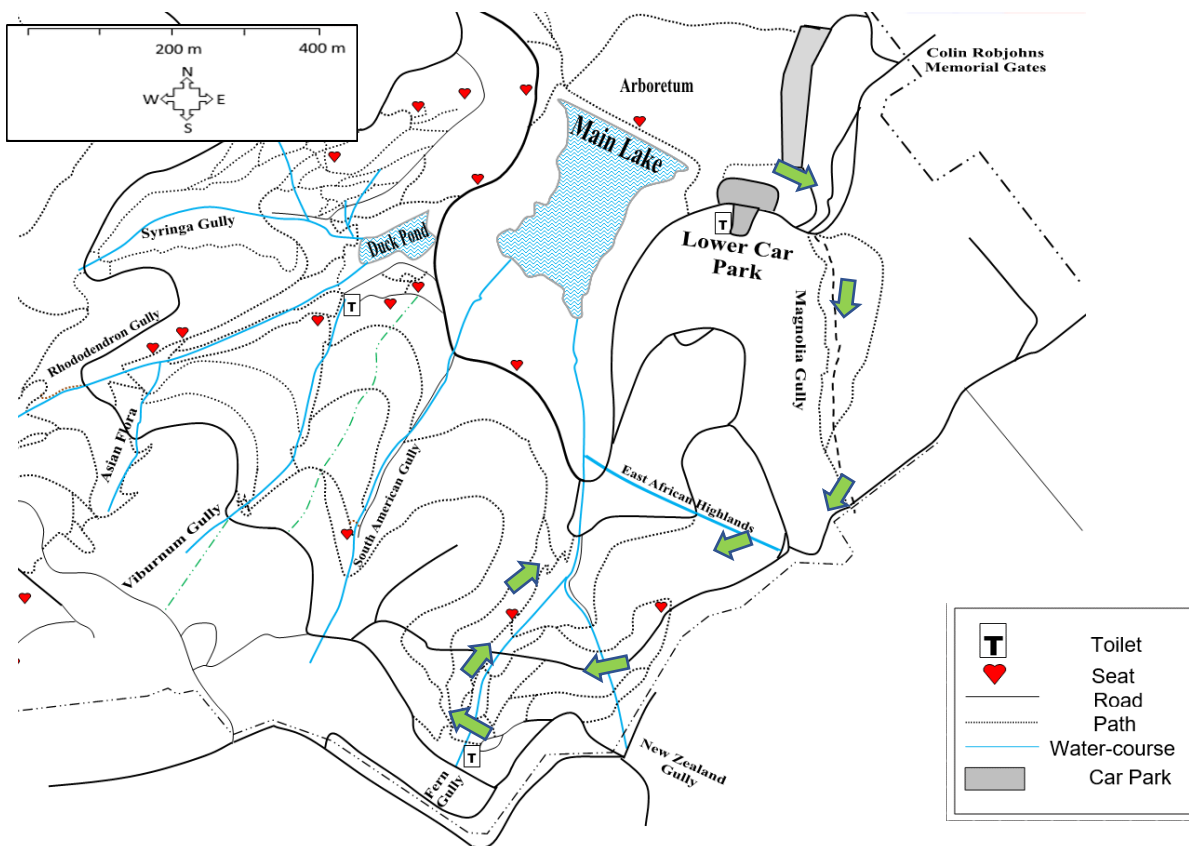
In the bushland on the left-hand side, you may notice some wildflowers coming into bloom. One of these is common heath ***Epacris impressa***, a small upright plant with sharp pointed leaves and groups of pink or white flowers hanging at the tips. Common heath flowers from late autumn into winter and the nectar is sought by honeyeaters.

At the next junction take the left path to an area of eastern Australian flora including banksias, grevilleas and tall spotted gum ***Corymbia maculata***. On the road edge look for a scrambling coral fern ***Gleichenia microphylla*** which forms large colonies in sunny damp sites around swamps, on exposed banks as here, and along creek margins. It is native to, and widespread in, Australia and New Zealand, though less common in some states such as SA.

Take the downhill path at the signs which indicate Lower Car Park and Boundary Loop. The large clumps of ***Doryanthes palmeri*** or giant spear lily are endemic to eastern Australia. The leaves can reach three metres in length and produce spectacular spikes of red flowers in spring, on stalks as long as five metres. Descend through Upper Fern Gully, being careful if the paths are wet. There is a wide variety of both tree and ground ferns in this area and it is worth spending time looking at the size, form, colour of the ferns, and the rows of sori on the back of the fronds. Sori (singular sorus) contain spores from which new ferns emerge.

In the green and magical world of Fern Gully, cross over the paved road to a small path almost immediately opposite and walk down the lower section of New Zealand Gully. Alternatively, turn right and follow the paved road back to the car park.

AT, JA, RH, SH, BF, LE, GB, RH, DS, JH 6/24



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

www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au