

## SUMMER 2022/23 WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK



There is a downloadable version of the walk on our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>) or a copy in the Noticeboard at the Garden that may be photographed to take with you.

Summer has been a long time coming this year. However, the wet spring season has seen an extended flowering of shrubs and trees, nowhere more evident than around the Summerhouse and Rhododendron Gully where many spring flowering plants are continuing to flower well into the early months of summer.

The first tree of interest is the **tulip tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which can be seen on SE corner of the carpark, where the road leads down into the Garden. The tree is easily recognised at this time of year by its general shape and height, grey trunk, and the large, smooth, brightly coloured lobed leaves. The striking greenish-yellow tulip-like flowers, which have a faint cucumber odour, only appear in December when the tree is over 20 years old. This species of tulip tree is native to eastern North America and is a member of the Magnolia family. A little further along can be seen a cultivar *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureo-marginatum' which grows more slowly than the species tree and is narrower in shape. The cultivars having green leaves with yellow leaf margins are associated with the names 'Aurea Marginata', Majestic Beauty and Variegated Tulip Tree.

Keep to the bitumen road to the right and wander along until you come to the **celery-top Pine** (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*). This pyramidal-shaped coniferous tree belongs to the family Podocarpaceae, and is endemic to New Zealand, where it is known as the **tānekaha**. The slender branches arise in whorls, having highly modified, leaf-like short photosynthetic shoots or phylloclades, which appear fern-like, hence *trichomanoides*. The arrangement of these is reminiscent of a celery leaf, thus the common name. Small pollen cones (deep purple changing to crimson) arise on the modified phylloclades, whilst single female cones are found on the tips of the modified branches. Shedding of the lower branches gives rise to a smooth straight trunk, with the knot-free timber being highly prized.

On the left, is a group of *Clethra suaveolens*, which have been coppiced to allow the formation of multiple upright, bare trunks, through which borders can be seen. This shrub or tree is native to S. Mexico and Central America. The leaves are simple and ovate, and in summer, small white flowers appear in clusters (inflorescences), giving off a delicate cinnamon perfume.

A small copse of *Acer palmatum* or Japanese mountain maple is now on the right. Acers are probably the most widely planted specimen trees in all but the tropics. This is only one of hundreds of catalogued varieties in Japan where it has been cultivated for centuries. It is justly popular for its glorious autumn colour, hand shaped leaves and domed form. The flowers may be inconspicuous but the resulting seeds or 'keys' come in pairs known as 'samaras' with a wing to each seed.

Continue to follow the road and notice the *Ilex* or holly collection on your right, showing variations in leaf colour and many green berries. In winter these may be red or yellow. *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argenteo Marginata' is familiar to many. The name may sound like a mouthful, but all it means is "holly, needle leaf, silver edges" - which is a surprisingly good description of this variegated common holly, native to western Europe. Compare these leaves with *Ilex cornuta* a holly from China and Korea with broader leaves, some of which have a fishtail appearance. It was the early Christians of Rome who first used holly as decoration in their Christmas season, and it has featured since then in superstition, legend, folklore, songs, and stories.

**You can now choose to visit the Summerhouse (see notes towards the end) or continue a longer, steeper walk as detailed below.**

Turn right behind the Summerhouse. On the left *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* or katsura tree of northern Japan is a popular deciduous ornamental tree both in Japan and elsewhere. A bonus to the wonderful autumn colour is the caramel aroma from the leaves at that time. It can grow to 30 m and up to 2 m in diameter sometimes with several trunks that may be twisted together. It is dioecious (separate male and female trees), has small tufted flowers and winged seeds. Its timber is prized for woodcarving, high class furniture and veneers, also for pencils, cigar boxes and traditional Japanese shoes.



Between the pair of katsura trees is ***Pentapterygium serpens*** (*Agapetes serpens*) a semi-climbing shrub from the Himalayas. It is from the Ericaceae family and flowers brilliantly for a long period. The paired red flowers on arching stems are succeeded by pale purple berries. It has a bulbous root and bronze winter foliage. It will grow in subtropical as well as cool temperate areas and can be grown as a pot plant.

Take the Rhododendron Gully path which winds down hill through a collection of rhododendrons. Prominent amongst these at present is ***Rhododendron ponticum***, the common or pontic rhododendron, and distinguished by its lilac-purple flowers. Native to the Iberian Peninsula in SW Europe and the Caucasus region of NW Asia, it is frequently used as a rootstock onto which other rhododendrons are grafted. The fires of Ash Wednesday in 1983 destroyed much of this area of the Garden, but this species survived by re-growing from its rootstocks. There are other late-flowering rhododendron species and cultivars which will provide colour into December.

Also in this area is ***Dichroa febrifuga*** Chinese quinine, an evergreen shrub in the hydrangeaceae family, which flowers profusely throughout the summer, white buds opening to bright blue flowers, followed by shiny blue berries in winter. Native to China through to Nepal, the plant is considered one of 50 fundamental herbs of traditional Chinese medicine and believed to have anti-malarial properties; 'febrifuga' means 'fever banishing'.

With holly-like leaves but not a member of that family, ***Mahonia lomariifolia*** the Chinese holly grape is a large upright shrub growing up to 9 m high. This mahonia is native to the region between Yunnan, Sichuan, northern Burma and east to Taiwan. The leaves are up to 45 cm long, compound with 12-20 pairs of leaflets, with an additional terminal leaflet. Yellow flowers are borne in racemose upright inflorescences at the tips of the branches. New growth is many hued and mostly reddish. The tall spikes of yellow flowers are followed by powder blue to dark blue fruit that look like grapes and are used to make jam.

At the corner where the track goes left is a medium to large shrub bearing plentiful white flowers in late spring to early summer. This is one of the *Philadelphus* species, commonly known as mock orange in reference to their flowers which have a scent like that of an orange. The genus is mostly deciduous, with arching to slightly pendulous growth and covered with snow-white deliciously scented flowers.

Continue down the path and cross over the bridge and, if you are in the Garden in late November to early December, you should soon notice frothy delicate flowers on your right. This is ***Kalmia latifolia*** the mountain laurel or calico bush which flowers in late spring. The flowers are described as resembling a lampshade, and the buds as rosettes of piped icing decorating a cake. Each flower is hexagonal and cup-shaped, 2-2.5 cm wide with 10 stamens which on first opening are curiously held in little cavities or pouches in the corolla. When the pollen is ripe and the bend in the filament is touched, the anthers carrying the pollen are released. This mechanism facilitates insect pollination. ***Kalmia latifolia*** is native to the eastern USA and is the state flower of Connecticut and Pennsylvania. It grows in acidic cool mountain soils and is a member of the Ericaceae family, as are rhododendrons, blueberries, and heaths.



Take the left path just below the bridge and, as you start climbing back up, there is a collection of small, flowered *Magnolia* species, previously known as *Michelia*. If the weather is warm, the dark red flowers of ***Magnolia figo*** the port-wine magnolia will open and release their intriguing scent, variously described as bubble gum or banana. No doubt the purpose of this heady scent is to attract pollinating beetles. ***Magnolia yunnanensis***, with small white open flowers and ***Magnolia skinneriana*** are among the species also found here. The seat provides an opportunity to rest and enjoy the scent of the port-wine magnolia and the lilies which should flower closer to Christmas.

Further uphill a small grove of Australian tree ferns provides cool shade in the heat of summer. There are two types of tree ferns here; ***Dicksonia antarctica*** or soft tree fern and ***Cyathea* sp.** The soft tree fern has large spreading dark green fronds which are very hairy at the base of the frond (the stipe). Endemic to Australia their native range is SE Queensland, through the NSW and Victorian coasts and into Tasmania. They thrive in filtered light, lots of organic matter and plenty of water.



On your return from the gully, **a visit to the gardens around the Summerhouse** is worthwhile, or indeed can make a pleasant and gentle walk on its own.

Surrounding the Summerhouse is a variety of both spring and summer flowering plants. In late spring to early summer ***Styrax japonica*** 'Emerald Pagoda' or Japanese snowbell tree is adorned with pendulous bell-shaped white flowers. As the name suggests, this small deciduous tree is native to Japan, Korea and China. The slightly fragrant flowers are followed by fruits which resemble olives in shape and colour.

Liliums will be spectacular as the summer progresses. The cultivar 'Anastasia' features large oriental type flowers of soft pink with a darker pink shading. These liliums produce many highly fragrant flowers on tall stems. Liliums grow from bulbs and are perennials.

Hydrangeas are also a feature of this area throughout the summer. The flowers develop in corymbs or panicles, most often at the end of the stems. 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. Mopheads and lacecaps are two well-known forms. Also look out for ***Hydrangea quercifolia*** the oak-leaf hydrangea 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.

In most hydrangea species the flower colour is white but some have flowers in colours of blue, pink, red, purple. In these species the colour change is due to the presence of aluminium ions which are available or tied up depending on the soil pH.

EB, MW, JH, NF 11-22

This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides and 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](http://www.friendsbgadelaide.com)