

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

OCTOBER 2022 WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID-19 safe we provide a copy on the Noticeboard at the Garden photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

Welcome to the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, where wet and cold conditions have delayed spring but will ultimately result in spectacular displays. The Guides who prepared this walk all found specimens that they wanted to share with visitors, leaving great difficulty for the compiler as to what to leave out. To begin with, head past the “Wild meadow” and on to cross the dam wall. The meadow will soon be a blaze of colours to welcome you. The area must be covered with netting until flowering begins as the resident waterfowl find the new shoots irresistible.



Make your way across the dam wall and up the steps to the road before heading left and on to the Duck Pond. Take the opportunity to admire the “cloud” pruning of the Escallonia species further up the hill and see if you can resist climbing up to explore this magnificent display. On reaching the Pond, you will find it has a magnificent backdrop of several mature dawn redwoods, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* which is a fast-growing deciduous coniferous tree from south-central China. The dawn redwood was known from the fossil record but considered extinct until the mid-twentieth century. The new leaves are a bright fresh green, turning reddish-brown in autumn. As you make your way on the path to the right above the Pond there are three young conical forms of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* ‘Goldrush’ showing their delicate new foliage yellow foliage. Above this path is a specimen with a brilliant red/pink foliage, *Acer palmatum* ‘Shin-deshojo’, a Japanese maple selection which has showy foliage in both spring and autumn.

Follow the path down into the Bog Garden, which is above the Duck Pond, with its new bridge allowing access for most visitors to an area which previously suited only the agile. The backdrop of flowers and foliage in this area is spectacular. Not to be outdone, there is a large leafy plant, currently in flower, known as skunk cabbage, *Lysichiton americanus*. Skunk cabbage is a North American species found in the western US states of Oregon, Washington, California, Montana and Idaho, as well as in Canada’s British Columbia. It is an aquatic to semi-aquatic species, sun and shade tolerant, commonly found in swampy ground and moist forests. It has distinctive large, bright yellow “flowers” or spathes which appear from early to late spring and, as the flowers die back, large basal “cabbage” leaves appear, up to 150 cm long. The plant emits a distinctive, skunk-like smell that is noticeable when the leaves are brushed against, crushed or stepped on. The roots are food for black, brown and grizzly bears who, after hibernating, eat it as a laxative and cathartic. Its early emergence coincides with the end of hibernation.



Make your way through the bog garden and follow the main path, which has been upgraded to ensure it is capable of safe all-weather access and has protection on its sides with placement of rip-rap gravel. Further up there are specimens of *Exochorda racemosa*, which has the common name of pearl bush because of these pearl-like buds which open gradually from the main stem up to the end of the raceme. This beautiful arching and drooping shrub is from the rose family, Rosaceae. It is found mostly in China and Japan. The white flowers bloom in spring in multiple little equally spaced-out stalks (pedicels) along a stem. These groups of flowers are called racemes, hence the species name ‘racemosa’.

Further up the path on both sides are specimens of *Mahonia lomariifolia* commonly known as mahonia or Chinese holly grape. The genus *Mahonia* is named after Bernard McMahon or M’Mahon a 19th century Irish American botanist. This selection is fast-growing, the tallest and one of the most ornamental of the 70 species within the *Mahonia* genus. Originating in Yunnan Province China, it is a medium shrub 3 m high x 2 m wide with interesting leathery leaves and serrated leaflets. Fragrant yellow flowers, generally through

May to June, are followed by bird attracting berry fruits which are black and have a downy surface. The combination of serrated foliage and dark berries gave rise to its holly grape common name.

Nearby are specimens of ***Cardiocrinum giganteum***, a giant lily from the woodlands of the Himalayas, Myanmar and southwest China. The fragrant trumpet-like flowers (nearly 20 cm long) are white with a maroon throat, borne on a tall stem up to 3 m high. The plant was first described scientifically in 1824 by **Nathaniel Wallich** (1786–1854) a surgeon and botanist of Danish origin who worked in India. The species was introduced into commercial production (as *Lilium giganteum*) in Britain in the 1850s. A bulb grown from seed collected by a Major Madden flowered in Edinburgh in July 1852, while those collected by Thomas Lobb of the famous Veitch Nursery were first exhibited in flower in May 1853. Nearby are specimens of ***Disporum cantoniense*** or fairy bells. There are about 20 species in the genus of perennial flowering plants, found in Asia from northern India to Japan, south to Indonesia and north into the Russian Far East. It is best grown in a humus-rich soil with some moisture, and dappled shade is essential.



Just above the steps is a fascinating example of self-layering in a specimen of ***Rhododendron decorum***, one of the most widespread Chinese rhododendrons. Layering is a technique used in horticulture where “cracking” and burying of a side shoot of the mother plant leads to root development, in response to the injury. There are multiple stems growing from buried branches on this plant, indicating the ease with which this species layers. The phenomenon is exploited by nurserymen and is an



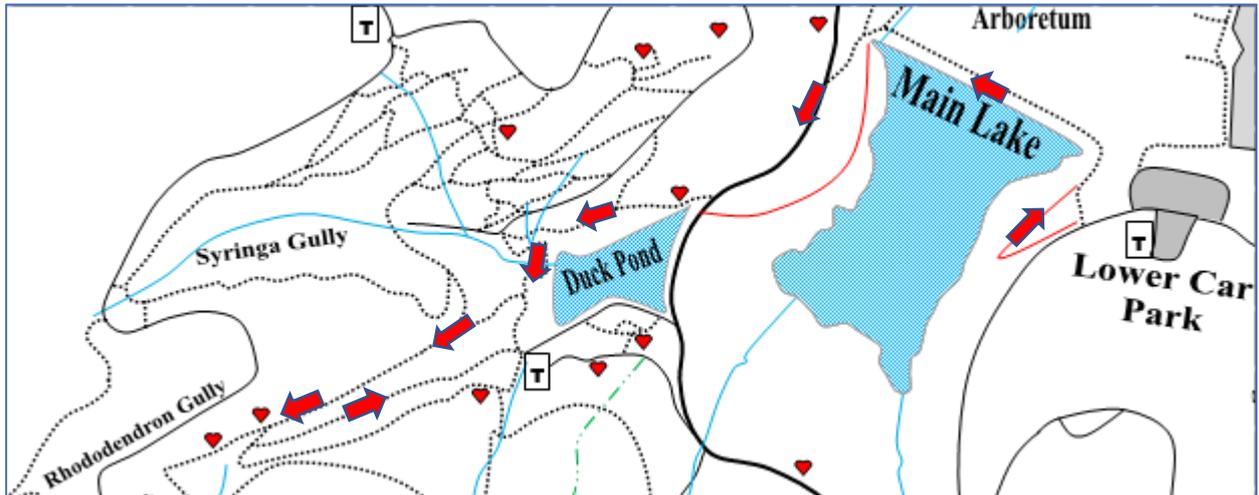
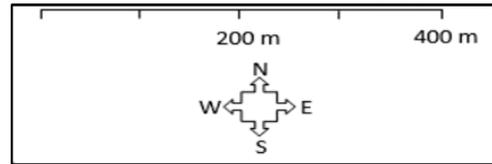
essential step in many forms of propagation including grafting of plants, as well as layering.

Another interesting specimen is the giant tree rhododendron, ***Rhododendron protistum* var. *giganteum*** which comes from China and Northeast Myanmar and is the world’s largest rhododendron. It boasts large trusses of cream, rose-pink or purple flowers and looks magnificent when in full bloom. Even the leaves are huge for a rhododendron and can be as large as 55 x 25 cm. The name rhododendron comes from Greek, meaning rose tree (rhodo=rose, dendron=tree). There are around 1,000 species in the genus but this is by far the tallest. They can take up to 30 years to flower, so we are fortunate to have a mature specimen. George Forrest first discovered ***R. protistum*** in May 1918 and the following year named it *R. giganteum*. For some time, they were thought to be different species because of the variations in their leaves as *R. protistum* had a smooth (glabrous) leaf underside while *R. giganteum* had a hairy leaf underside. It was later found that it can take up to 60 years for the hairy underside to develop and the smoothness was the ‘juvenile’ form.

In this area there are several ***Pieris japonica***, sometimes known as the lily of the valley shrub or Japanese andromeda. It is an ornamental plant within the heath family (Ericaceae) ranging in height from a 2-3 m medium shrub or in ideal conditions, to a 4-5 m high small tree. It is native to Eastern China, Taiwan and to Japan and is generally found growing in mountain thickets. There are several cultivars of this plant and the leaves of many of these are quite decorative, opening bronze to red before turning green. Trusses of small urn-shaped white to pink flowers appear in early spring and are very attractive against the young red leaves. Flowers usually last two to three weeks providing another of the plant’s common names, pearl flower, due to their pearl-like appearance. In cultivation the plant is moderately fast growing, needs acidic soils and prefers full sun to dappled shade with assured water. Please note that all parts of the plant are poisonous if eaten by people or animals.

Continue down the path back towards the Duck Pond. Just before reaching the end of the path there is a walled garden with a recently established ***Pseudolarix amabilis***, commonly known as a golden larch. However, this is not a true larch as it is more closely related to other conifers including *Abies* and *Cedrus*, hence the name *Pseudolarix*. Fossils have been found in late Eocene strata. This is another of the five deciduous conifer genera which include *Metasequoia* (which we featured at the beginning of this walk), *Glyptostrobus*, *Larix* and *Taxodium*.

Finally, we had to mention ***Viburnum plicatum* ‘Mariesii’**, which is one of the most spectacular viburnums, featuring a pyramid shape and tiered branching. The large flat ‘lace-cap’ flowers appear in spring, standing above the branches on stiff peduncles. The outer flowers are sterile while the small inner flowers are fertile and may have berries in the autumn. The leaves will turn yellow/bronze in autumn before they fall. Make your way back down to the Duck Pond and either turn left to retrace your steps to the Car Park or right to continue exploring around the Main Lake.



	Toilet
	Seat
	Road
	Path
	Water-course
	Car Park

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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