

MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN
WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK

AUGUST 2023



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/guided-walks>)

August is a fascinating month in the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden (MLBG) with the structural shape of deciduous trees starkly evident against the form of the evergreens. As the deciduous trees begin to stir with the approach of spring, the very last of the deciduous leaves, on the few specimens which hang on to their leaves for winter protection, will begin to fall as new leaves emerge from buds.

To begin this walk, enjoy the delicious scent of the **Luculia**, *Luculia gratissima* (the Latin epithet for most pleasing) on the edge of the car park and to the right of the MLBG noticeboard. The flowers have a very sweet, delicious musk-jasmine fragrance that lingers up to 15 metres away from the 3-metre-tall plant. While it is usually an evergreen shrub in milder climates, at the MLBG it is semi-deciduous. This plant is native to Nepal and was one of the over 12,000 plants named during the travels of Sir Joseph Hooker.

Make your way down to the Lake, passing a fascinating ornamental display of Brassicas (cabbages and cauliflowers) and Asteraceae (lettuce and endive). These specimens have been chosen for their colour palette and make a unique display.

The layout of the MLBG is very evident from the middle of the dam wall with all gullies emptying into the Lake. The Lake is central to the irrigation supply for the MLBG as runoff is recycled. This Lake was fully replenished after heavy rainfall in June of just under 300mm (180% of the Long-term Average rainfall for June). On a clear day the colourful reflections of the last of the **sweetgums**, *Liquidambar spp* on the opposite side of the lake. This, together with the red stems of the **Tatarian dogwood**, *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' and the yellow stems of *Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaviramea' on the left, make a delightful vista.

As you make your way across the dam wall you will begin to see that the bare deciduous trees ahead have a fuzzy appearance in shades of green to grey. This is lichen, a composite organism including a photosynthesising green alga or cyanobacterium (blue-green alga) surrounded by fungal filaments in a symbiotic partnership. They are self-contained and only require a substrate (e.g., branches or rocks) for support and moisture for growth. Colours range from green shades to olive grey under wet conditions in this area. There are also several types including crustose (adhering like paint to their substrate) to foliose (flat two-dimensional structures) through to fruticose (tufted and multiple leafless branches). These lichens thrive in areas with minimal pollution and are a feature of the MLBG.

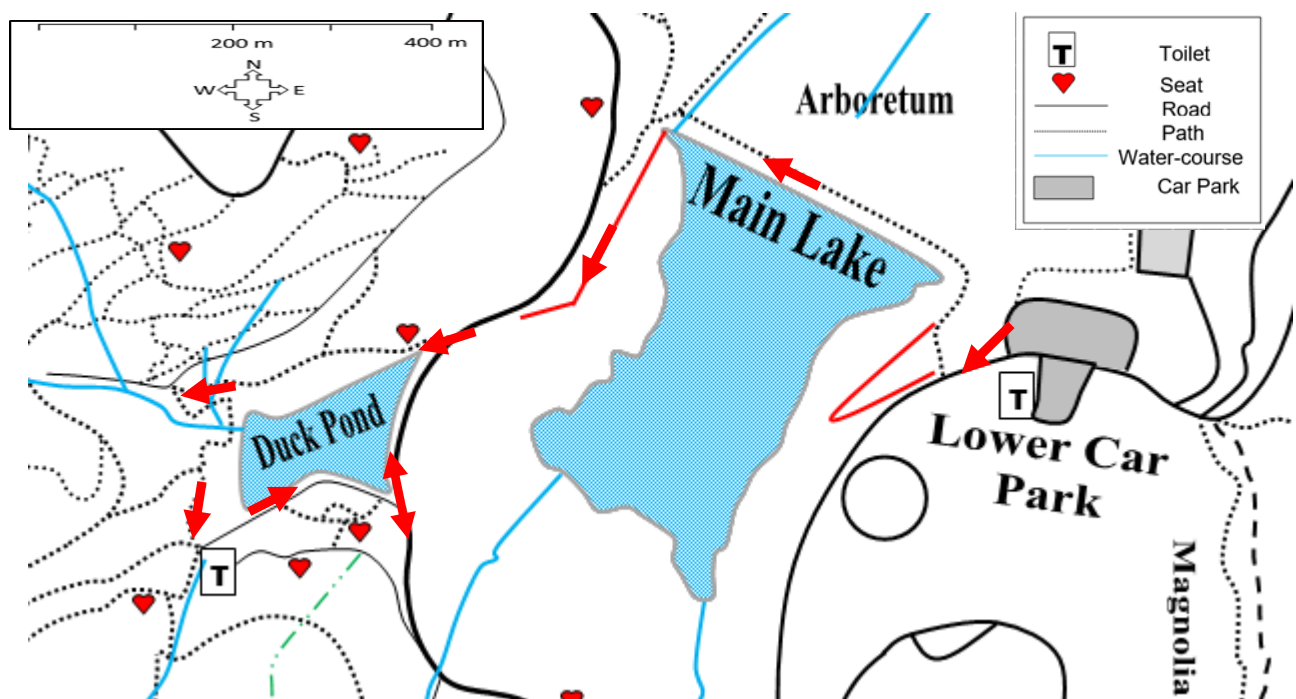
Cross the boardwalk to the left and ahead is the Greg Johns sculpture "Guardian Figures." There are four sculptures by Greg Johns in the garden (as well as the gates on the way out of the car park). All feature Corten steel which is made up of steel alloys (including silicon, manganese, chromium and nickel). Depending on the mix of components the layer protecting the surface develops and regenerates continuously providing protection from further rusting. Contrast the differences in the performance of the alloys comparing the surface of the metal railings on the boardwalk you have just passed over with the surface of this sculpture which is a higher grade of alloy. Another interesting comparison is the colours of the lichen in the trees above you where there are some yellow lichens on the lower branches which favour drier conditions, as compared to their greener cousins.

On reaching the Duckpond, take the path up to the right. Below the path is a rapidly developing **Cedrus atlantica** 'Glauca Pendula', a weeping selection of the **blue Atlas cedar**. This was grafted to a standard trunk six years ago and is now spreading, due to its growth habit. Continue on and below the camellias on the left-hand side of the path are **Hellebore spp.** which flower over winter. There are between 15 and 20 species, in the family Ranunculaceae, found in Europe, western Asia and China. The leaves are deeply

dissected into 3, 5 or many blades, those displayed here are cultivars showing great variation in their usually nodding flowers. The “flowers” are sepals which surround a ring of small cup-like nectaries (petals modified to hold nectar) and prominent stamens. The sepals do not fall as petals would but remain on the plant, sometimes for many months. Further on in this walk there are plantings of the tall green species, *H. argutifolius* with toothed three-lobed leaves, and *H. foetidus* with many lobed leaves. Many legends surround the hellebore. In witchcraft it is believed to have ties to summoning demons. In Greek mythology, Melampus of Pylos used hellebore to save the daughters of the king of Argos from a madness, induced by Dionysus, that caused them to run naked through the city, crying, weeping, and screaming. During the Siege of Kirrha in 585 BC, hellebore was reportedly used by the Greek besiegers to poison the city's water supply. The defenders were subsequently so weakened by diarrhea that they were unable to defend the city from assault. Some historians believe that Alexander the Great died because of a hellebore overdose taken as medication.

Make your way down across the Bog Garden and take the path on the side of the Duck Pond. At the head of the pond are specimens of the **dawn redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides***, which is one of the five deciduous conifers and very rare in the wild. In 1941, a Chinese botanist visiting the village of Modaoxi in Hubei discovered a few old trees. Subsequent studies identified several more natural stands and by the end of that decade seeds were freely distributed to major botanic gardens across the world. It is a fast-growing enormous tree and, there are specimens which have lived for over 500 years. Look closely at the bare branches and visible on long spikes are the paired pollen cones (microsporangiate strobili). The seed cones (megasporangiate strobili) are less obvious higher up in the tree and will eventually develop into cones not much bigger than marbles. As spring approaches, the new foliage will envelop the cones.

Vireya rhododendrons are outstanding for the brilliance of the colour of their flowers, with the added feature of typically blooming more than once a year. Sometimes known as tropical rhododendrons, their native range is the cloud forests of SE Asia to Australia. More than half of the 300 species are found on the island of New Guinea. Vireya rhododendrons are often epiphytic (grows on another plant without being parasitic) but may be terrestrial or even lithophytic (grow in or on rocks). The flowers are waxy and long-lasting, and the leaves are glossy, with scales on their undersides. The relatively new collection in this area comprises examples of Vireya species, hybrids and cultivars. Continue to the main road, then make your way back to the car park by either retracing your steps or exploring further around the Lake. JH, HM, RH and DS 07//23



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 please see <http://www.fbga.asn.au>.