

# Autumn 2024



## MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK

To help keep visitors keep COVID-19 safe we provide a copy on the Noticeboard at the Garden that may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website [www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides](http://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides) see Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Upper Car Park Walk.

Welcome to the Upper Car Park section of the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens (MLBG). The growing season for deciduous plants is nearing its end. We have experienced an unusual Summer which threatened to be hot but has been mild with good rainfall through until early January. Make your way down to the main drive to the right, where you will pass the notice boards with a backdrop of *Berberis thunbergia*, or **Barbary**, which has begun its magnificent display of autumnal colours. This is an example of one of the features of the MLBG, its collections of deciduous plants with a wide range of stunning autumn foliage.

This Autumn may have some unusual features as you will notice that some specimens are currently flowering. As an example, immediately on your right are two azalea selections which are in full flower and over the hedge on your left a *Magnolia 'Red Tulip'* has some bright red flowers as this specimen is clearly confused by the weather in the last 3-4 months. In contrast, the bright purple flowers of *Tibouchina* or **Lassiandra** are at their best during autumn. While these shrubs do not like frost, they thrive in the MLBG and can also be found in the Gully featuring South American specimens, from where they originate. Also, in this bed you will find other *Azalea* coming into flower, as well as bright pink *Lilium* sp., and *Hydrangea* beginning to show its autumn colours. Just ahead and on the left are several **Lily-of-the-Valley** trees, *Clethra arborea*. The flowers resemble lily-of-the-valley but are not in any way related. They are native to the island of Madeira. The flowers are in panicles and appear in early to mid-summer and are yet another example of delay in normal phenological behaviour which has featured this season. Care is needed with this plant as it contains neurotoxins which are harmful to humans.

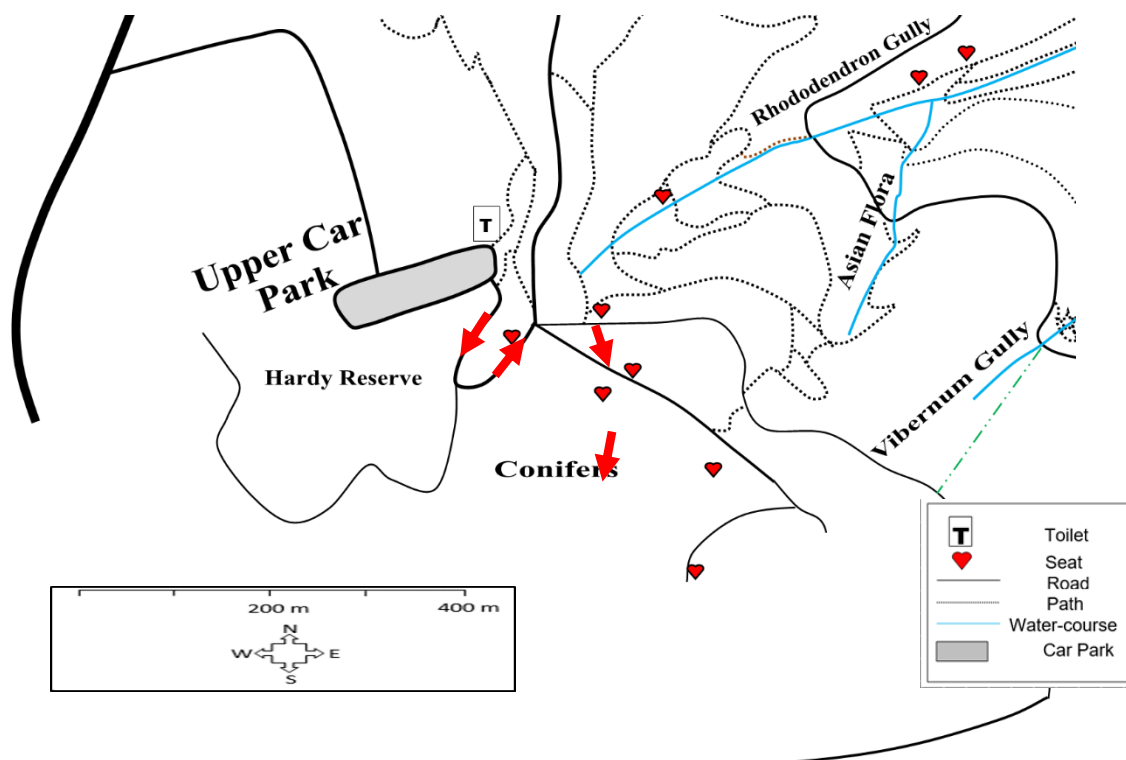
Follow the bend in the road to the left and below on your right are specimens of *Acer coriaceifolium* "**Esk Flamingo**". This maple features pink, green and white new foliage and has "snake bark", named for its striped appearance. These specimens will have glowing orange colours as Autumn progresses. Further on and on your left the feathery foliage of **silk tree**, *Albizia julibrissin* is covered in yellow flowers. These are made up of several tiny cup-like structures from which pink stamens extend up to 5cm. They are fused at the base, forming the "silk" from which the tree derives its common name. From Iran and throughout Asia, its name commemorates Filippo degli Albizzi, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian naturalist. As a member of the family Leguminosae its fruits are beanlike and abundant. Unlike other Albizias which also grow rapidly and establish readily in disturbed wet environments, these specimens are not known to be invasive.

Make your way on to the gazebo and then follow the grass path to the right amongst the *Liriope platyphylla* (also known as *Liriope muscari*) or **lilyturf** which is thriving in its shady surrounds. A magnificent **Sitka spruce**, *Picea sitchensis* lies ahead and is on its way to being the size that makes it the largest species of spruce. Its home range is in southern Alaska, Canada and northern California. The Sitka spruce is the fifth largest conifer after the North American giant sequoia and coast redwood, the New Zealand kauri and the North American western red cedar. This section of the garden, like the Woodland Garden adjacent to the Duck Pond, features *Hydrangea* and *Azalea* species which are thriving as understory to the taller trees around them. *Osmanthus heterophyllus* '**Goshiki**' also features in this section with its compact evergreen growth and variegated holly-like foliage. Goshiki is Japanese for five coloured and the foliage colours, together with the tiny fragrant white flowers, makes for an excellent specimen for cool shady gardens.

Continue out to the “Guardian” lawn, named for its Greg Johns sculpture. This is crafted from Corten steel, a steel alloy which forms a stable rust-like surface which does not require maintenance. There are several of these sculptures through the MLBG including the main gates to the lower car park. Two feature specimens in this area include *Gleditsia triacanthos* ‘Ruby Lace’ for its foliage and *Lagerstroemia indica* ‘Lipan’ or *Crepe Myrtle*. The Gleditsia’s spreading canopy and weeping foliage are enhanced by the colour of new ruby red growth which gradually turns bronze in summer and then yellow later in autumn. This Crepe Myrtle features a profusion of flowers at its branch tips which bloom throughout summer and, in this season continue well into autumn.

Make your way down to the Dwarf Conifer collection. Mr David Thompson was a notable nurseryman at a popular nursery at Summertown in the Piccadilly Valley. Sophie Thompson, David’s daughter is a well-known gardening identity. Mr Thompson donated his collection of over 900 specimens of miniature, dwarf and slow-growing conifers. These plants are mainly selected from stock which has shown unusual characteristics and have been carefully grafted on to compatible stocks to preserve the features of the selection. The unusual characteristics have many causes including damage by insects or other pests which result in the plants reverting to juvenile growth, known as “a witch’s broom”. Careful propagation of these “sports” results in distinctive plants with surprising diversity in size, shape, colour and form. There are hundreds of species of conifers, selections of which may be found here, from trees, shrubs of all shapes to prostrate or trailing ground covers. Variants include round, spreading, pyramidal, oval, conical, vasselike, columnar, open form, weeping, erect with almost parallel branches and slender or spire like. One of the specimens is *Abies koreana*, the **Korean fir**, native to the higher mountains of South Korea. It grows at altitudes of 1,000–1,900 metres in temperate rainforest with cool, humid summers, and heavy winter snowfall. The cultivar ‘Starker’s Dwarf’ has a conical shape which does not require pruning as its growth is slow at only 3-7 cm a year. Please explore this section, with its hidden nooks and crannies and forms of conifers to both surprise and please. To return home, make your way northwards back up to the car park.

EB, HM, RH and DS 02/24



The Garden Guides of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Inc. have prepared this leaflet.  
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