

Winter 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 see Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Upper Car Park Walk.

After such a gloriously sunny and colourful autumn (albeit a very dry one), it is time for the cooler misty days that characterize a return to winter in this Garden. Look out for the variety and colour of bare trunks and the tracery of leafless branches, and for the colour of winter roses, camellias, early rhododendrons, as well as berries. Evergreen plants still display interesting leaves and fruits, and local wildflowers will soon also burst into flower.

Take the roadway rather than the narrow path. On your right soon after leaving the car park is a dense evergreen tree, known as **tanekaha** in NZ, or **celery top pine *Phyllocladus trichomanoides***. The common name refers to its celery like foliage, but the 'leaves' are really flattened stems called phylloclades or cladodes. This tree is an early Gondwanan taxa, with 2 other species found in NZ, another one in Tasmania and also one in the area known as Malesia (New Guinea to the Philippines).

Underneath the celery top pine look for small plants of ***Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki'** which is prized for its dense holly-like variegated foliage. The leathery leaves emerge as pink, and unfold with creamy, white, gold, and bronze variegated spiny leaves. It blooms in late summer with the strong perfume for which the genus is famous.

A collection of the **holly** or ***Ilex*** genus is found further on, to the right. Like several northern hemisphere plants, they bear fruit in autumn and into winter. Amongst the collection here can be found **Chinese holly, *Ilex cornuta*** native to China and Korea and noteworthy for its rectangular horned leaves; the **variegated English holly, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata'**, a cultivar with a broad white-margined strip around the dull green leaf; and ***Ilex aquifolium***, common holly, native to Europe, western Asia to China and regarded as the type species of the genus. The **yellow fruited American holly, *Ilex opaca* 'Xanthocarpa'** is a naturally occurring variant. *Ilex* has separate male and female plants; only females bear berries.

At the rough-hewn seat just below the Summerhouse/upper gazebo, take the left path. ***Mahonia lomariifolia*** or **Chinese holly grape** is eye-catching during winter. An evergreen shrub, it has spiny, leathery leaves. The flowers are small, bright yellow and are borne in long, upright cylindrical clusters, followed by blue-black berries.

This path has several old rhododendrons which generally flower in spring. On the left is one which has quite different flowers to observe: ***Rhododendron spinuliferum*** has fire-cracker-like red flowers. The profusion of flower buds indicates many flowers will be coming towards the end of winter.

Another osmanthus, false olive or false holly, ***Osmanthus heterophyllus*** is found further along on the left. Its form is that of a large shrub with evergreen dark green leaves, and currently bearing clusters of small white fragrant flowers. If you look closely, you might see that some of the leaves are entire, and some have spines. 'Heterophyllus' means having leaves of more than one form on the same plant or stem. The spiny leaves are more prominent on smaller plants to deter browsers, and the entire or smooth leaves predominate higher on more mature plants such as this one. Although it is hardly spectacular, it is interesting to compare it to the cultivar form of the same

species seen under the celery top pine at the beginning of the walk. Modern plant breeding produces some remarkable plants.

At Greg Johns' sculpture 'Between Earth and Sky' turn left. On the opposite corner is a small group of **snake bark maple** or *Acer rubescens*, native to the mountain forests of Taiwan. Large oval, pointed, glossy leaves emerge in the spring and become dark green with red veins, turning yellow, gold and red in autumn and sometimes into early winter. Striations in the bark, especially in younger trees, contrast to the background green bark giving a snakeskin-like appearance, so even if the leaves have fallen, it remains an attractive small tree.

Turn left to re-join the bitumen road back to the carpark. Camellia is now the dominant genus, many being the **Japanese camellia** or *Camellia japonica* and their cultivars. The genus *Camellia* was named by Linnaeus after a Jesuit priest and botanist named Georg Kamel. *C. japonica* has appeared in paintings and porcelain in China since the 11th century. Early paintings are usually of the single red-flowering type, whereas most of the camellias here are semi-double or double flowered cultivars. *Camellia japonica*, *C.sasanqua* and their hybrids are the source of hundreds of garden cultivars grown for their flowers, many with double or semi-double flowers. Our Camellia collection comprises approximately 40 species out of the known 200 species and over 100 cultivars. Many planted on top of Stan's Wall* that borders the roadway were rescued from gardens in the path of the South-Eastern Freeway in the 1960s.

Flourishing along the wall is this herbaceous trailing perennial **Serbian or trailing bellflower** or *Campanula poscharskyana*, valued for its pretty lavender-blue star-shaped flowers. It originates from the mountainous regions of the Balkans, so although the flowers look delicate, the plant itself is tough and grows vigorously beneath trees and shrubs. When the first flush of flowers is spent it can be cut back hard and will repay this treatment with another display. Autumn is a perfect time to see them. The flowers are attractive to bees and other beneficial insects. Its specific epithet honours Gustav Adolf Poscharsky (1832-1914), a botanist from Dresden, Germany.

Two unusual Japanese cultivars to look out for are **fish-tail camellia** or *Camellia japonica* '*Kingyo-tsubaki*' with its single rose-red flowers and split or dissected ends of the leaves (the apices) that resemble a fish tail. You will find this unusual cultivar next to a standard weeping birch which overhangs the wall. Further on are two specimens of **peacock camellia** or *Camellia japonica* '*Hakuhan-kujaku*', a pendulous or weeping camellia with long narrow leaves and bell-shaped red flowers spotted with white. It is quite different in form and flower from other camellias nearby.

On the left side of the road is a group of *Viburnum* species and cultivars. Some of these are bearing red berries, and perhaps a few late flowers. Viburnums are evergreen or deciduous shrubs native mainly to the temperate Northern Hemisphere.

Turn up the narrow path returning towards the car park. At the bend in the path is a group of *Camellia sasanqua*, an autumn flowering species with single open flowers, often scented. **Plantation Pink** and a white flowered variety are covered in blooms in late autumn into early winter.

*Stan Schutz started building the sandstone retaining - wall while employed as a gardener. Stan volunteered in retirement to continue building until the wall was finished.

HM, SH, RH, DS, JH 5/24