

# MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

## NOVEMBER self-guided walk from the LOWER CAR PARK



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/garden-guides> (Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Lower Car Park).

This walk visits the arboretum, the Garden's beech collection (*Fagus sylvatica*) and finally a rare treat being the flowering handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucreta* var. *vilmoriniana* which will finish flowering in mid-November. To begin, make your way to the left side of the *Quercus robur*, English oak in the car park where there is a colorful assortment of aquilegia flowers, held high above their foliage. *Aquilegia*, commonly known as granny's bonnet or columbine, is a genus of about 130 species of perennial plants found in meadows and woodlands in the northern hemisphere. *Aquila*, Latin for eagle, is in reference to the distinct spurs on the flowers that are thought to resemble an eagle's talons. *Aquilegia* self-propagates easily, and has been extensively hybridized to produce large, often multi-coloured, flowers. The delicate foliage is blue green in colour and resembles a fern in shape. Head down the path on the other side of the English oak. Opposite the pathway is an ornamental *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* var. *pendulum*, which is known as the Katsura tree, native to China and Japan. This is a weeping selection from a tree which will reach 15m tall in its original form. Its heart-shaped leaves are reddish-purple when they first emerge, turning green as they mature and become yellow to scarlet before they fall. Heading down the path and on your left is a selection from an unusual tulip tree, a variegated *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureo-marginatum' which has a distinctive highlight on the edge of its golden leaves (on returning to the Car Park look for two large specimens of the original trees coming into flower). A little further on is a *Paulownia tomentosa*, the Paulownia tree. These are fast growing trees, native to China. They are starting to produce their attractive panicles of tubular purple flowers resembling those of a foxglove. On reaching the Lower Car park there is a red flowering *Aesculus hippocastanum* which is a delightful variety of the splendid horse chestnut. In spring, if pollinated, the large candle like flowers produce shiny brown nuts known as conkers. The tree is vulnerable in its native habitat in Eastern Europe but has been planted widely around the world. It has large palmate green deciduous leaves which turn yellow in Autumn.

The Mt Lofty Botanic Garden has a significant collection of the *Quercus* or oak genus. A number of these are found in the Arboretum. The Guides preparing this walk were intrigued by several specimens in this collection. As examples, the leaf size of the *Quercus dentata*, known as Daimyo oak or Japanese Emperor oak, is amongst the largest of the oaks. A *Quercus coccinea*, or scarlet oak, specimen has been splitting in two and arborists have installed a half collar to prevent the split from widening. After even a short time the collar pieces have been partially overgrown as the tree enlarges and gardeners will have to loosen the bolt holding the tree together to prevent the collar from being totally overgrown. Nearby is a distinctively shaped upright English oak. Unlike the broad spreading shape of the usual form of mature English oak, *Quercus robur*, look for the columnar shape of *Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata'. First discovered growing in a German forest in 1783 (despite the common name, *Q. robur* is found across Europe, Asia Minor and Nth Africa), this selection was subsequently propagated from grafts. Because the genetic elements of this tree are not dominant only some acorns will produce progeny with the upright growth form.

Make your way across the arboretum heading towards the path over the bridge crossing the runnel ahead. Above and bearing right from here is a fascinating collection of *Fagus sylvatica*, the European beech. It has many forms ranging from species selections through to dwarf weeping types and with many variations in leaf shape and colour. It is a member of the Fagaceae family which also includes the *Quercus* genus (Oaks). This collection is just south of the Nursery Complex. They were all planted in the Autumn of 1991 and came as a donation from Noel Lothian, a former Director of the Botanic Gardens of South Australia. Some of the selections in this collection include:-

*Fagus sylvatica* 'Rohannii', which is a purple leaved form with a distinct fern leaf shape. It is a slow grower and was introduced into horticulture as far back as 1894.

*F. sylvatica* 'Dawyck' is a cultivar named after the Dawyck Botanic Garden, home to a fine tree collection dating back to 1680. Dawyck B.G. is under the aegis of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. This cultivar has an interesting leaf form and a reasonably fastigiate (upright) habit. It was introduced before 1850.

*F. sylvatica* 'Roseomarginata', the Tricolour Beech, has purple leaves with a pink (and sometimes cream) edge ..introduced around 1888.

*F. sylvatica* 'Rotundifolia', which is another upright grower with small round leaves. Introduced around 1874.

*F. sylvatica* var. *pendula* is one of several of the weeping forms of European beech. Some of the selections are quite tortuous in their habit and may be a form that is known as var. *tortuosa*. Introduced around 1861.

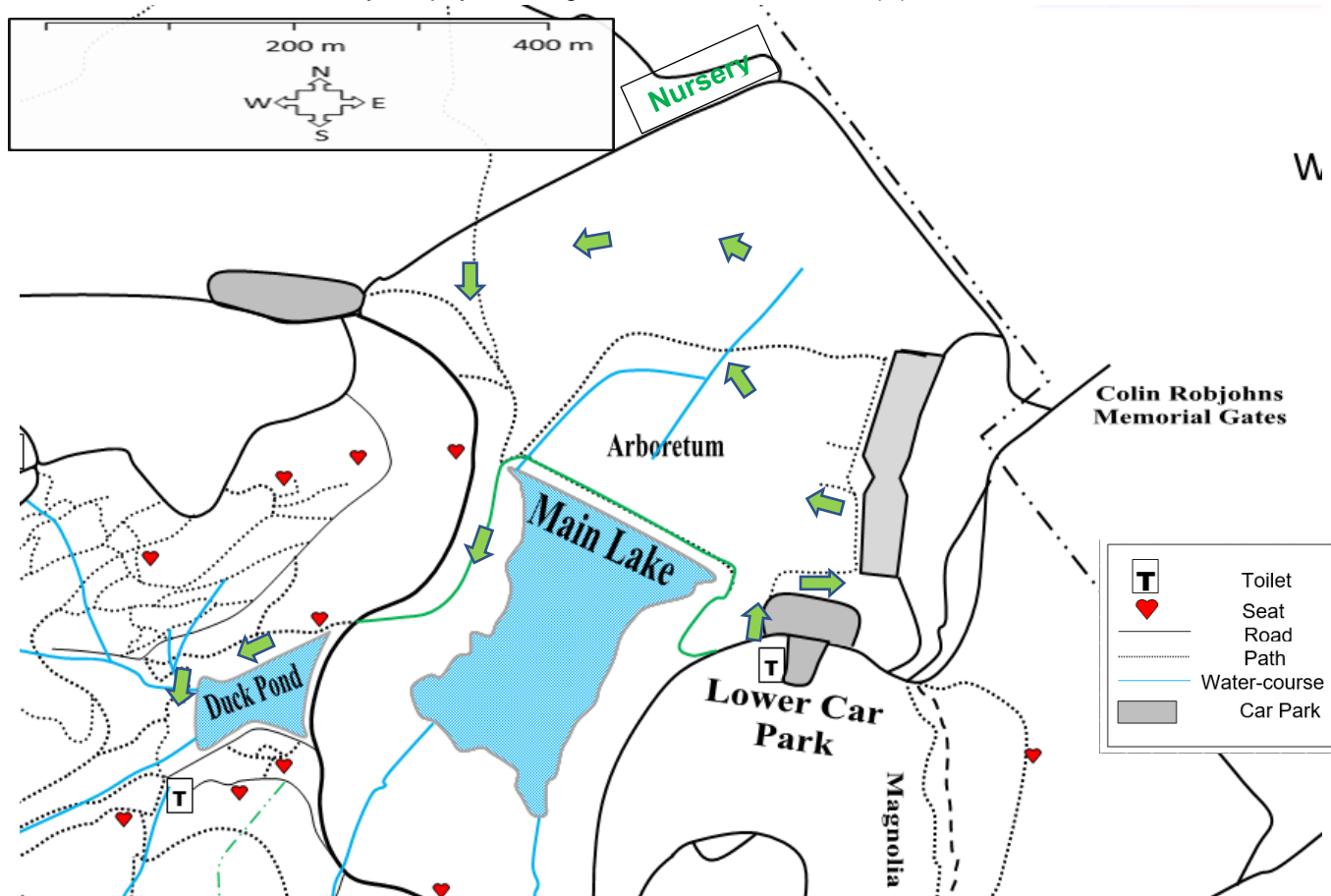
All of these are selections of different forms of the same species which have been grafted onto *Fagus sylvatica* rootstocks. An interesting story attached to the beech trees is that they mass produce their nuts in a year referred to as the “mast” year. It is also reputed to have been part of the diet of the Mongols as they ventured through Europe, apparently foraging as they travelled and using their shields as a type of cooking vessel (Wok-like utensil).

Make your way across the hill to the left and through the Acer or maple collection. One fascinating specimen the guides noticed was an *Acer monspessulanum*, or Montpellier maple which is a small deciduous tree. which grows to 6 – 12 metres high, with an oval to rounded form. Its Flowers are pendulous, yellow to white corymbs 2–3 cm long. The 3-lobed leaves turn a bright red and orange in autumn. The two-winged fruits or samaras also turn bright red. Another specimen, *Acer oblongum* or the Himalayan Maple is unique among maples as it retains its leaves all winter. Its dark green leaves are opposite, ovate-lanceolate (egg shaped) with smooth edges, unlike most maples, with glaucous (dull blue green) undersides. The trunks are buttressed, with a smooth to wrinkled bark. The flowers are small and inconspicuous, about 4 mm, greenish white, gathered in hairy racemes. On reaching the track to your left, follow it as it winds its way above the Main Lake and on to the Duck Pond. On reaching this delightful area follow the path to the right above the pond. On this path you will find a specimen of *Cornus florida*, or flowering dogwood. It is a small deciduous tree, native to eastern North America and northern Mexico. The flowers are small and inconspicuous with four green-yellow petals, which form a cluster or inflorescence of around 20 flowers. They are surrounded by four conspicuous large white or pink bracts, which initially arch over the inflorescence as they emerge. The fruit is a cluster of two to ten separate drupes, which ripen to bright red in the late summer and autumn.

Take the path to your left to the Bog Garden, where you might be lucky to see the dove or handkerchief tree *Davidia involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana* in flower (late October to early November). Looking up into the branches may reveal a fluttering pair of large unequal white bracts which give this Chinese tree its common name. The true flowers are small and inconspicuous and form a globular head. The bracts perform the function of petals in attracting pollinators. The tree was named for Père Armand David, a French missionary botanist who collected a specimen in China in 1869.

We hope you have enjoyed this walk and urge you to explore the plantings in this valley. The current display of Primulas and Rhododendron may tempt you to linger.

EB(H), JH, RH, SH, RH and DS, 10/24



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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