

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

June

JUNE 2025 WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors 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 (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

Winter at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden is a time of great beauty. Traces of autumn still linger early in June, with **tulip trees** *Liriodendron tulipifera* now displaying their last russet-orange leaves, whilst on the hillside beyond the Duck Pond the **liquidambar** trees *Liquidambar styracifolia* steadfastly hold onto their dark red foliage. Mists across the Main Lake present an ethereal picture, and low cloud rests gently on the higher eucalyptus ridges. Bare trees and shrubs present a tracery of branches, and herbaceous perennials are fading fast for their winter rest.

Start your walk at the meadow bed which is currently planted with ornamental vegetables from the **Brassica** family, and fennel. The pastel shades of pink, cream and green in the brassicas, and the feathery foliage of the fennel will continue to develop into an eye-catching display. Cross over the wall of the Main Lake, stopping to admire the changing views. The Main Lake was constructed in 1978, just after the Garden's opening to the public in 1977. Originally the site of a farm dam which provided water to a market garden, it was substantially enlarged. Clay from the present Arboretum area below the Lake was mined to provide the fill required for the Lake wall. The Lake now provides a reliable source of water for the Gardens capturing natural rainfall, water from springs and any seepage from watering in the gullies, and is supplemented by a bore. The expanse of water is also a major landscape feature of the Garden and one of its best-known. After such a dry period, the level of the Lake is low.

At the top of the steps the large **Japanese elm** *Zelkova serrata* is still displaying its golden autumn foliage. Native to Japan, Korea, Eastern China and Taiwan this tree is highly resistant to Dutch elm disease and also shows resistance to elm leaf beetle. These attributes together with its form and colour make it popular with gardeners. It is also used for bonsai.

Take the right, uphill path and follow the yellow Central Loop to the Middle Gazebo. A feature here is the hedge in front of the gazebo which is planted with an evergreen *Escallonia* sp., here cloud pruned to make a pleasing undulating form. This area was formerly called 'The Tarn', as it was the site of a small dam, rather like the mountain lakes in Northern England known as tarns. Similar words also exist in Scandinavian languages. This dam was eventually filled in to create the lawn and viewing area, which overlooks the Piccadilly Valley.

Opposite the gazebo you might like to explore the lawn area and its plantings. There are some notable conifers here. The **Wollemi pine**, *Wollemia nobilis* is one of these, assumed to be extinct until re-discovered near Sydney in 1994. Note its bubbly bark and the female cones growing at the top of this specimen. These trees seem to grow better in less exposed positions, as the grove of Wollemi pines adjacent to Fern Gully demonstrates.

Another interesting conifer here is the **Japanese umbrella pine** *Sciadopitys verticillata*, the sole living member of its family, and considered a living fossil. A living fossil is any living species of plant or animal with no known close relatives outside the fossil record.

This unique conifer is endemic to Japan, growing in the cool cloud forests of central Japan. It is slow growing with dense whorls of long dark green linear leaves. The whorls look somewhat like the spokes of an umbrella.

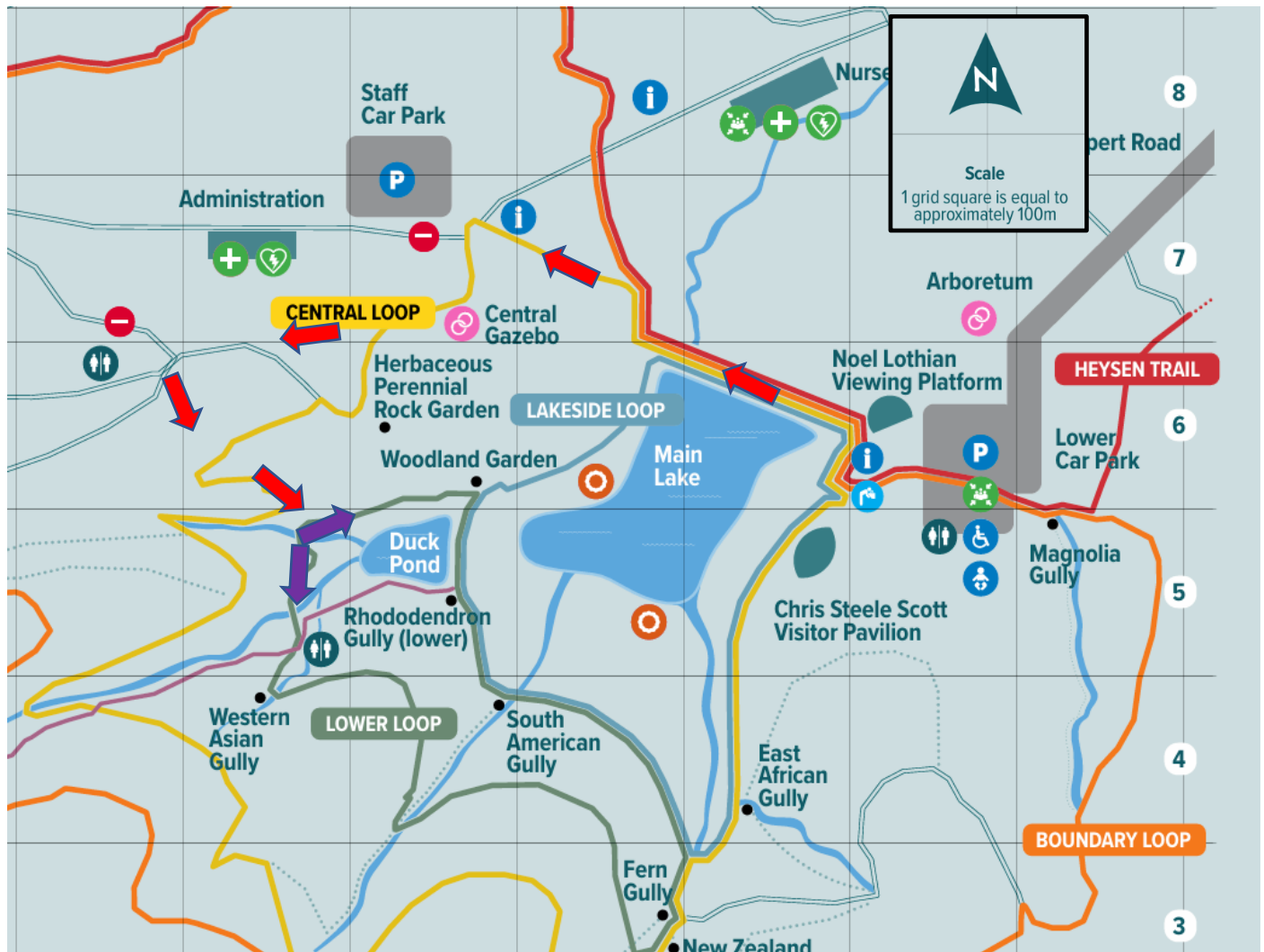
Follow the road uphill to a planting of camellia cultivars which line both sides of the road. These are the **Japanese camellias** *Camellia japonica* which have been selected by gardeners for their large round colourful flowers, often with a display of central yellow stamens. The species is native to Korea, Japan and China. The cultivation of this camellia started in China and can be traced back to the Song Dynasty when

15 varieties were recorded in the literature. Flowering in Australia from late autumn, they are a feature of cool climate winter gardens.

Continue uphill to the road intersection, turning left. Here two choices are offered. If you are keen on a longer, though perhaps easier walk, continue left along the paved road until you come to Rhododendron Gully. Then descend and make your way back to the Main Lake, and return to the car park. Alternatively, you might like to leave the paved road and take the path on the left into the Woodland Garden. These narrow paths zig-zag, sometimes quite steeply, along the hillside as they descend. However, your slower progress will reveal a range of plants that thrive in the cool shade, such as **mahonia** (*Mahonia* sp.) with their holly-like leaves and yellow winter flowers, hydrangeas still showing their mature summer flowers, the fragrant pink flowers of winter-blooming **Luculia**, and the green flowers of **Corsican hellebore** *Helleborus argutifolius*. You might want to make a note of the plaque denoting the Violet Henderson Tree Peony Collection and plan to visit again in late spring when these are in flower.

The Woodland paths will eventually wind downhill to the Duck Pond, and then the Main Lake where you can return to the car park, having had an invigorating and rewarding exploration of the wonders of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden.

JH, RH and DS June 2025



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides and funded by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide
For information about the Friends and/or guided walks see www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au