

# MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN



## JULY 2025 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 Garden which may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website ,(<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

The volunteer Guides preparing this walk enjoyed so many specimens in the Western Asian Gully that we ask that you begin the walk by making your way to the Duck Pond taking the path up its southern side. Opposite the amenities block, note the tiny pollen cones on the ***Cryptomeria japonica***, **Japanese red cedar** or **Sugi** on the right-hand side. This is the national tree of Japan. These conifers are superficially similar to ***Sequoiadendron giganteum*** or **giant sequoia** but have longer leaves and smaller cones. Further on is a ***Glyptostrobus pensilis*** or **Chinese Swamp Cypress**, which is an endangered conifer and the sole living species in the genus. They can grow to 10-25m with highly valued aromatic fine textured timber resistant to insects and termites. It is one of the five deciduous conifer genera represented in the MLBG (*Larix*, *Pseudolarix*, *Glyptostrobus*, *Metasequoia* and *Taxodium*).

Continuing up the path, and just after the bridge and off to the right across the runnel, is an ***Edgeworthia chrysantha*** “**grandiflora**”, or **paper bush** or **yellow daphne**. It has silver-furred buds that begin to show at the tips of the shrub's bare branches in early winter. Tiny tubular yellow fragrant flowers are compacted into dense rounded, flower heads (up to 40 flowers per head). This deciduous bush grows to approximately 1.5m tall and has a neat, rounded shape. The inner bark can be used to make quality paper (e.g., Japanese banknotes). Of botanical note, it has the extremely unusual ability to branch trichotomously with the apical meristem forming at the end of each stem splitting into three sections at once. Further up this path, and on the right, are several young specimens of *Mahonia lomariifolia*, the **Chinese holly grape**. It also known as ***Berberis oiwakensis*** but under that name it was considered only to occur in mainland China whilst ***Mahonia oiwakensis*** was thought to be limited to Taiwan. It is a shrub or tree growing to 7m with leaves to 45cm compounded with 12-20 pairs of leaflets. Its flowers are a crowded cluster of indeterminate inflorescences (fascicled racemes) up to 25cm long.

On reaching the Central Loop follow it the left. Here there are several species of birches, all members of the genus ***Betula***. These short-lived trees derive their common names from their distinctive colours. As a resilient, fast-growing species, birches are known as a ‘pioneers’ being the first to colonise barren environments in their native habitat. They may be identified by their bark which characteristically includes long, horizontal lenticels (porous tissue providing a direct means for the exchange of gases between internal tissues and the atmosphere). Heading up the hill, ***Betula pendula***, **silver birch** specimens are on the left. Known for its peeling white bark, ***Betula pendula*** is native to Europe and Asia and is Finland's national tree. It is monoecious and has both male (long) and female (short) catkins (cylindrical flower clusters with inconspicuous or no petal). Further along the path, is ***Betula papyrifera***, the **white paper birch**, which is native to North America and named for its thin white bark, which often peels in paper-like layers to reveal a pinkish or salmon coloured inner bark. Interestingly, its bark has a high oil content which gives it waterproof and weather resistant characteristics. Often the wood of a downed paper birch will rot away leaving the hollow bark intact. ***Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii***, the **Himalayan birch**, also has white paper-like bark. “*Utilis*” is a Latin epithet for ‘useful’ referring to the many uses of the trees’ wood and bark including packaging material, umbrella covers, bandages and in building and construction. From the 3rd century CE until the introduction of paper in the 16th century CE the bark of this tree was used as a writing surface for manuscripts of Sanskrit literature. It is still used now for writing sacred mantra. The Sanskrit word for the tree is “bhurja” providing the origin for the common name ‘birch’.

Further up and on the right is a striking ***Pinus wallichiana***, the **Bhutan pine** with fine needles flexible along their length of 12-18cm, often in drooping fascicles (bundles) of five. The Bhutan pine, was named for Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish botanist working in India, who first introduced its seeds to England in 1836. It a tree favoured for planting in parks and large gardens as it is a coniferous, bushy, evergreen, native to the Himalayan, Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountains. Growing to 50m it has moderately hard, durable, highly resinous wood enabling it to be a commercial source of turpentine.

Further on is a grove of ***Hamamelis* sp.** or **witch hazel** which is a distinct and beautiful genus of mainly winter flowering deciduous shrubs or small trees. In most species, the small, perfumed spider-like red, amber or neon-yellow or golden flowers appear on the normally leafless branches in winter. They have four ribbon-like curled and crinkled petals which curl up in the cold and unfurl in the sunshine. ***Hamamelis vernalis***, the species name meaning spring, is native to southern and central United States. There are five species, with three being from North America, and one each from Japan and China. Nearby, ***Chamaecyparis pisifera***, **cypress** or **false cypress** is in the Cupressaceae family. Although these are examples of East Asian origin, they commonly occur in the US. The evergreen trees can grow from 20-70m and feature foliage in flat sprays, featuring scale-like adult leaves. Ahead are three ***Sequoiadendron giganteum***, the **giant sequoia**, another member of Cupressaceae with its deeply sculptured, thick fire-resistant bark. It is a giant (50-85m) and is native to the high Sierra forests of California. The oldest known example is over 3,200 years old but with the ever-increasing threat of wildfires their survival in the wild is of

concern. Originally the type name was derived from the native Cherokee silversmith named Sequoyah. Turn left here. A little way along on your right is a member of the ***Stachyurus sp.*** which is another Himalaya (spelling) native and may also be found in China and Japan. It has long, pendant racemes of four petalled flowers on bare branches which make it instantly recognisable in late winter; even now these racemes are striking in bud form. Nearby are ***Viburnum*** specimens, a genus of 150-175 species of flowering plants in the moschatel family, ***Adoxaceae***. It is native to central and southern China and the genus was previously included in the honeysuckle family. These are mostly evergreen, and spring flowering is often quite fragrant with many flower forms, often as snowballs. Small clusters of berries in autumn mature into eye catching colours of red, orange or sometimes black. Follow the step path down the steps and, part way down, turn and admire the height of the three sequoias which were established in the 1960s. Interestingly, the specimen on the right lost its leader which it has never recovered, and yet it continues to increase its girth at a similar rate to the adjacent specimens.

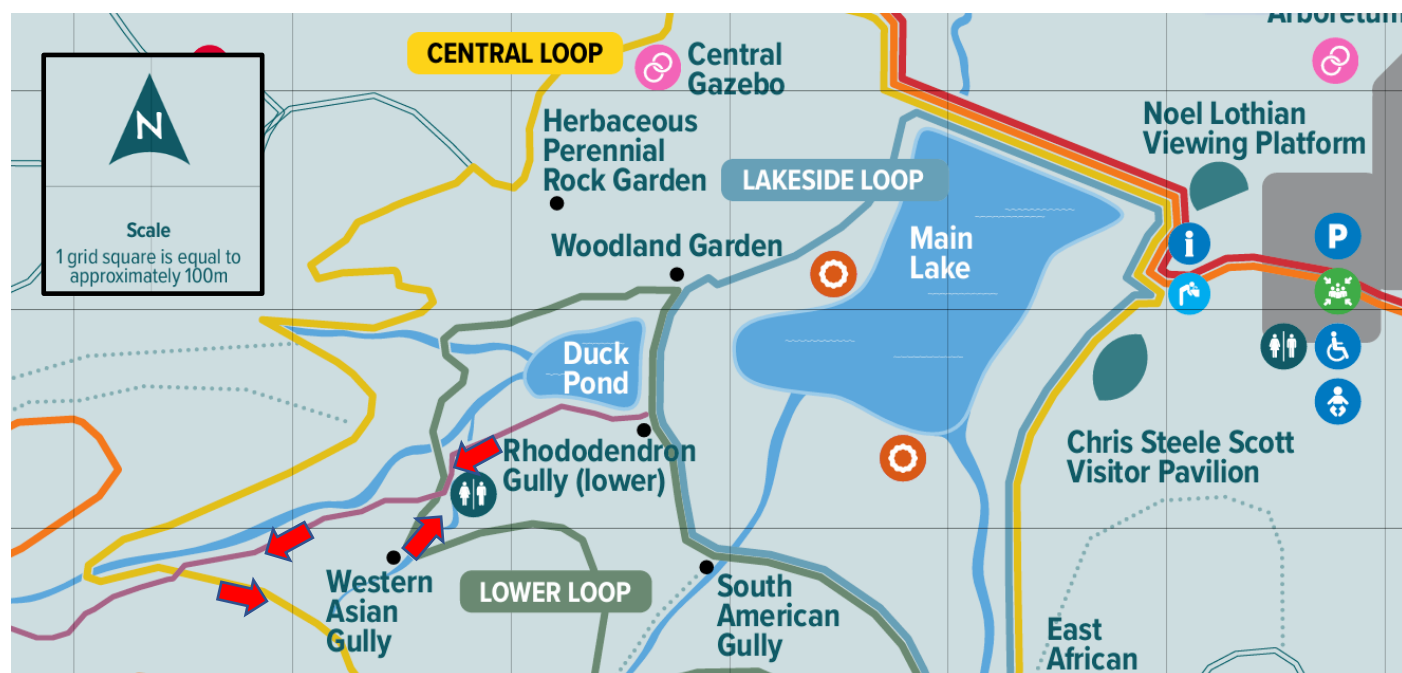
On approaching the oak tree on the right (still holding some leaves despite being mid-Winter), you will notice an incredible scent. It comes from three specimens of ***Luculia gratissima***, **luculia pink and white**, the largest of several specimens established across the MLBG. These are another Himalayan shrub well suited to this spot as it is happiest when temperatures remain above 5 degrees. The epithet "gratissima" means most pleasing and given it is floriferous and strongly fragrant, the scent of these soft pink winter flowers is glorious. It can become a little sparsely branched if grown alone.

**Winter sweet** or ***Chimonanthus praecox*** is next on the left. It flowers from late June to early July. "Praecox" means early or premature and its bare branches develop abundant clusters of fragrant, pale yellow, waxy flowers with a graceful, spreading habit. It is native to China and has been cultivated for centuries for its ornamental and medicinal properties. Further on the left is a copse of ***Stewartia sp.*** which are delightful small trees. It is in the same family as camellia (***Theaceae***) having camellia like flowers in summer. In autumn it has colourful peeling bark. This is especially so with ***Stewartia monadelpha***, the **orange barked Stewartia** native to Japan. In contrast, ***Stewartia sinensis*** has purple/brown bark and is also native to China. It requires moisture yet it is very slow growing and can take years to flower.

Having previously discussed ***Betula sp.***, we couldn't leave out ***Betula utilis var. jacquemontii*** also described as the **white-barked Himalayan birch**. Its straight white trunk and stark white peeling bark. Nearby are specimens of ***Disporum sp.*** This is a woodland plant found widely in Asia at higher elevations which loves the rich moist soil here at Mount Lofty. It is commonly called 'fairy bell' for its nodding flowers on the end of arching stems and its berries are still a feature. Finally, a specimen of ***Abies forrestii var georgei*** or Forreests fir, named after George Forrest a Scottish botanist and avid promoter of plants collected in western China. This is a young plant, and its bark is brown-grey and smooth, becoming deeply cracked and dark with age. Its cones are small and in shades of purple, brown and black. The walk finishes by the amenities block, appropriately screened with ***Luculia gratissima***.

We are a group of volunteer Guides who prepare these monthly walks, all members of the Friends of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. The Friends would greatly appreciate if you would e-mail letting us know if you find them useful, or if you have any suggestions for future self-guided walks at [friendsabg@internode.on.net](mailto:friendsabg@internode.on.net)

LE, HK, SS, RH and JH, July 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](http://www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au)