MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

2026 Summer Walk from the Lower Car Park

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)

This gentle walk through the Arboretum and around the Main Lake highlights late spring and early summer plants and demonstrates that there is always something of interest to be found in the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden. The better weather means there is time to dawdle and look closely. Take the narrow path from the lookout down to the Arboretum through a colourful collection of perennials and salvias. The perennials include penstemons, **purple cone flower *Echinacea purpurea***, **foxglove *Digitalis*** sp. and **sea holly *Eryngium*** sp. This plant at the edge of the path bears small spiky thistle-like foliage with metallic blue, thimble shaped flowers. Also note the clipped forms of **Japanese barberry *Berberis thunbergii*** var. **atropurpurea** which contrast with the looser, more natural forms of the flowering perennials.

Along the main path through the Arboretum, you may notice a distinctive columnar or conical tree on your left. This is an **upright English oak,** or ***Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata'**. This form of the English oak (which is found across Europe and into western Asia) has dense branches that rise with a sharp and narrow angle from the trunk. Although the tree is deciduous, it does not colour well and the dark green leaves will turn brown and remain on the tree throughout winter. On your return to the car park, you may like to contrast this selection with the large spreading English oak tree at the viewing platform which is the more typical form. On the right side of the Arboretum there is a very large clump of **New Zealand flax**, ***Phormium tenax*** and, next to it, an old trough. In the early days this trough was used to wash the vegetables grown in this area before sending them to market. Until the early 2000s there was a device attached to the trough to mash the flax so that it could be used to tie up the vegetables. In New Zealand the flax is known as harakeke in Māori, and used in making textiles and rope.

A little further on your right is a recently planted young **ginkgo *Ginkgo biloba***. This was planted in 2025 to commemorate a former garden guide Barb Wheaton OAM to acknowledge the significant contribution she made in many capacities over the years to the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide (FBGA). ***Ginkgo biloba*** or maidenhair tree is native to East Asia and is the last living species in the order Ginkgoales which first appeared over 290 million years ago. It has unique fan-shaped leaves and striking yellow autumn foliage. To the right of the path is a sprawling **Turkestan shrub maple *Acer tataricum subsp. semenovii.*** Native to Central Asia, it is a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree to 6 m with grey to dark brown bark that becomes rough and lenticillate with age. Named for the peoples of Southern Russia, this subspecies has chartreuse-coloured blooms which develop in the spring followed, in summer, by bright red samara or seed pods. Note the tree's habit, its boughs drooping with age, covered in spectacular lichen, and beginning to layer where they touch the ground.

On leaving the Arboretum, follow the board walk of the Lakeside Loop to the left of the Main Lake. Note the prostrate ***Cotoneaster horizontalis*** on the right, a member of the Rosaceae family. The first of its tiny white flowers are developing which will produce bright red berries in autumn which hold throughout winter. Planted extensively in this area to clothe the steep banks and minimise erosion, it is now starting to take hold after several years. It is native to the temperate regions of Asia, Europe and North Africa, and the mountains of south-western China and the Himalayas.

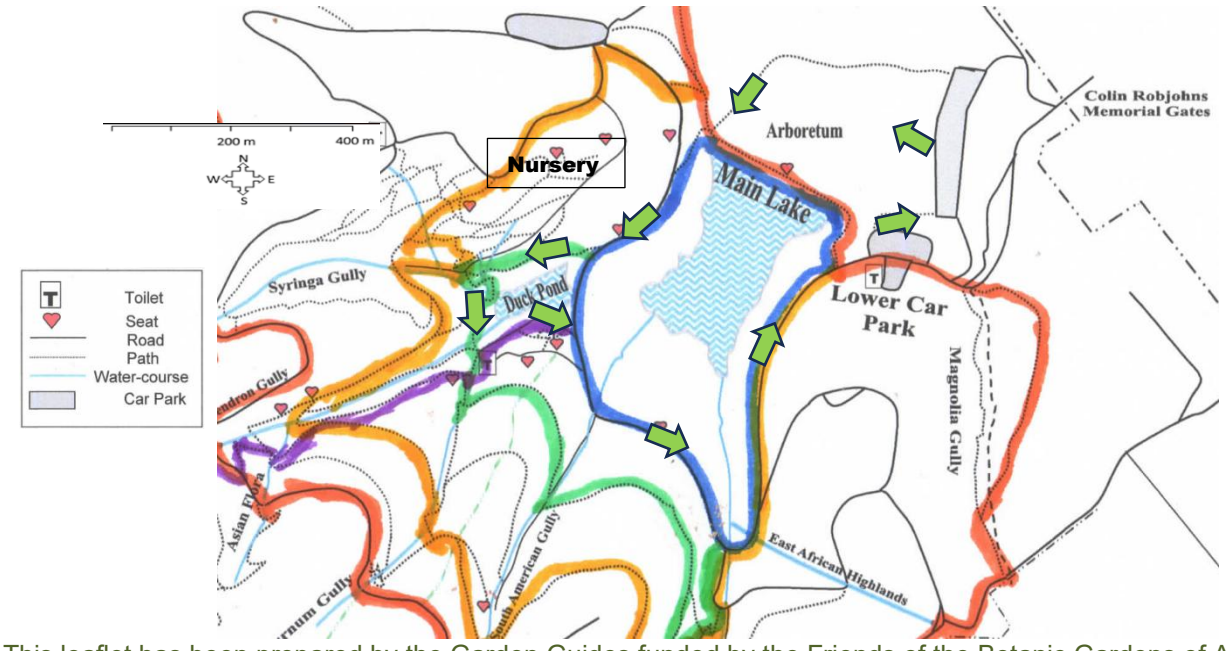
On reaching the roadway leave the Lakeside Loop and cross over to the narrow path to the left of the Duck Pond in order to visit the Bog Garden area. To the right, on the hill close to the path, are two examples of the **Mexican dogwood *Cornus florida subsp. urbiniana***. In spring the Mexican and common dogwoods have flower buds that are enclosed by four bud scales that open, producing distinctive, white, petal-like bracts surrounding clusters of small yellow flowers. Note how the Mexican dogwood's bract tips hold together transforming the flower clusters into something resembling a Japanese lantern.

Also, on the right a little further along is the **blue spruce *Picea pungens* 'The Blues'**. Blue spruces (or Colorado spruces) are native to North America and can grow to magnificent conical trees of 50 metres in the wild. This variety, however is a weeping form and will only grow upright if staked. If not, it will tend to become a ground cover unless upright branches prevail. "pungens" means "sharply pointed" and refers to its striking stiff blue needle-like leaves.

Further on, is a **Himalayan cedar *Cedrus deodora*** which grows to 40 to 50 metres and is native to areas from Afghanistan through to India growing at elevation of 1500 to 3,200 metres. On crossing the bridge at the top of the Duckpond, note the weeping cedar**, *Cedrus deodora* "Waverley Ridge"**. This is a local hills selection from the nearby area of Waverly Ridge at Crafers, grown for its weeping form. Ahead, a **Chinese fringe tree *Chionanthus retusus*** is a large shrub easy to ignore until it comes into flower. The white racemes of flowers give it its common name and at this time of year make it hard to miss. It is native to Eastern Asia, and in Japan's Aichi prefecture there is a group of seven which are renowned and revered for their showy blossoms and led to their being declared a national monument in 1923.At the boardwalk look out for a young specimen of **Chinese swamp cypress *Glyptostrobus pensilis*** on the right. It is native to SE China, North Vietnam and is found on river floodplains, or swamps in water up to 60 cm deep. It is almost extinct in the wild due to overcutting for its valuable decay-resistant, scented wood. Iit is widely planted along the banks of rice paddies where its roots stabilise the banks and reduce soil erosion.

Turn left to return to the Lakeside Loop, and turn right at the road. You will soon reach South American Gully. At the extreme edge of the garden bed at the edge of the Lakeside Trail it is worth stopping to appreciate ***Hippeastrum papilio***, a perennial herbaceous bulb native to the Atlantic forests of southern Brazil. Its specific name 'papilio' means butterfly, which describes the shape of its very large flowers which are green with maroon or purple striations. The leaves are broad and strap-shaped.Further along the Lakeside Loop you will come to the East African Gully. Looking to the top of the hill and the larger **Abyssinian banana**, ***Ensete ventricosum***, you will see this herb's developing pendant flower cluster (a thyrse) which can be up to 3 m long and bear 30 or more hands covered by large pink bracts. As a monocarp it will flower and set seed only once, but a single plant can produce up to 400 suckers. Cultivated in Ethiopia for its edible roots and pseudostem, the fruit is inedible due to the presence of large black seeds. Each plant takes 4 - 5 years to mature and yields about 40 kilos of food.

Also flowering here in late spring is **blue broom bush, *Psoralea pinnata***. It has large clusters of blue, white or lilac pea shaped, sweet-smelling flowers in spring. After flowering there are small pods, each containing a single dark seed. It is in the Fabaceae family and therefore can fix nitrogen from the atmosphere through nodules on the plant's roots. LE, CM, SS, RH and JH 10/26



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides funded by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Inc. For information on the Friends and/or guided walks, please telephone 8222 9367or **www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au**