



MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN WALK FROM THE UPPER CAR PARK

We provide a copy of this walk 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.

This walk features both display beds of colourful summer flowers and particular plant collections. As the summer progresses, different features of this part of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden (MLBG) became apparent. In early summer there are still some late flowering spring shrubs and trees, and as the season becomes warmer these are replaced with lilies and hydrangeas set amongst cool expanses of green lawns.

Take the road from the car park, but look up into the foliage of the deciduous tree immediately on the right. A member of the magnolia family, this tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera*, is the North American representative of the genus. The other is found in China. In early summer there are still the relatively large tulip-shaped golden flowers present. Also notice the distinctive shape of the leaf: four-lobed and almost straight across the upper part. This will help you identify other tulip trees further along this walk. A bed of lupins soon provides an eye-catching display. These tall flowers are in shades of blue, purple and pink. Display beds of annuals or short-lived perennial plants provide a mass of colour, vertical accent and texture in a garden. Following their flowering period, they are removed to make way for other plants, which may be more display plants or additions to a particular collection of plants.

Close to the path on your right are more examples of tulip trees, including one with variegated leaves *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Aureomarginatum'. The leaves are lime coloured with darker green centres. Further along is a columnar form of the tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Fastigiatum'. This form has been chosen for its narrow or fastigiate shape.

At the bend, take the path ahead, leaving the road. MLBG contains a multitude of plants from the Northern Hemisphere which enjoy the cooler mountain air to be found here, even in summer. An unusual feature of certain plant families is that they have representatives in both eastern China and North America. These links developed over 100 million years ago when the northern landmasses were linked in Laurasia. The *Liriodendron* genus seen earlier is one representative of this. Another illustration of this connection, just behind the NZ Totara on your left, is a large sprawling shrub with striking red flowers. As the year progresses these will fade and the fruits will develop. *Calycanthus occidentalis* is found naturally in California and introduced to horticulture by David Douglas in 1831.

Towards the end of this walk, a Chinese specimen will be encountered, a white-flowered *Calycanthus chinensis* Xia La Mei. The common name is Chinese sweet shrub and is valued for its fragrance. It is found in nature in holy mountains linked to early Chinese Buddhism about 3 hrs drive south of Shanghai.

A superb collection of dwarf conifers, was donated by Mr David Thomson, a local nurseryman, in the 1970s. The donation consisted of over 900 specimens of miniature, dwarf and slow-growing conifers. These plants are mainly cultivated from stock which had been damaged by insects or other organisms including fungi, mites and nematodes, or genetic mutation. The damaged plant sometimes develops what is known as a witch's broom, which is a dense mat of shoots that emerge from one point. This can then be grown into a new plant with different characteristics to the original one. Take time to explore this fascinating collection and then make your way across the lawns towards the roadway and the tall copper beech tree *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea' with its dark purple leaves. Also known as European beech, this large graceful deciduous tree is valued for its purple leaves that change to a copper colour in autumn. It has a pyramidal shape, smooth grey bark that becomes textured with age, and a short trunk with low branches. The species is monoecious, with both male and female flowers on the same tree. The male flowers are borne in small catkins and the yellow female flowers produce small, edible beechnuts. Flower and seed production is particularly abundant in years following a hot, sunny and dry summer in Europe, known as a mast year.

At the roadway near the gazebo, turn right and continue along until you reach a pathway on the left. Turn here. A large spreading tree, *Pterocarya stenoptera* or Chinese wingnut tree on the left as you descend will certainly attract your attention with its curtain of catkins delicately drooping from the branches. As you walk further down the path several more specimens come into view and the whole vista is of a wall of catkins dangling from the canopy of foliage. The catkins will be composed of either all male or all female flowers in separate catkins but on the same tree, an arrangement with the term monoecious.

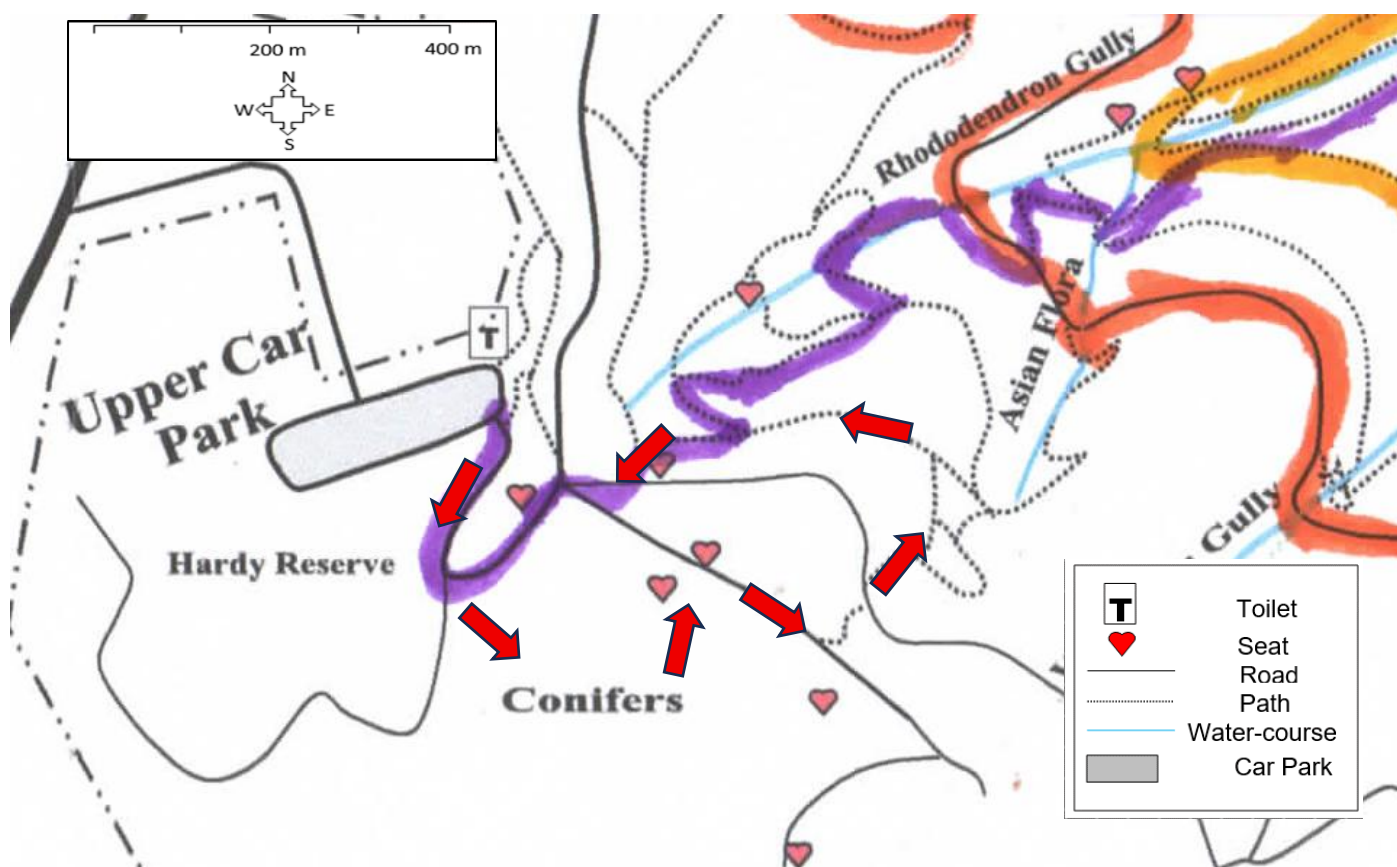
Turn at the next path on your right and continue downhill into stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) woodland. This woodland is representative of the native flora of this area of the Mt Lofty Ranges. You may be able to spot some late flowering wildflowers, including black-eyed Susan *Tetradlea pilosa*, spiky guinea flower *Hibbertia exaltata*, and chocolate-lily *Arthropodium strictum*.

Native cherry or cherry ballart *Exocarpos cupressiformis* is currently producing tiny new fruits or drupes. The species name means cypress like. This tall shrub to small tree is hemiparasitic, attaching to the roots of other plants to obtain water and minerals, and can often be seen growing close to eucalypts. The small cream flowers are inconspicuous and are followed by fruit which resembles a small nut, 0.5 cm in diameter. The edible nut is attached to a red, fleshy fruit-like structure which is an enlarged, succulent section of the flower stalk, and it is. The genus name *Exocarpos* comes from the Greek words *exo* ("outside") and *karpos* ("fruit"), referring to the unique way the fruit grows.

Amongst the stringybark is a collection of north Asian plants. These include *Berberis wilsoniae* Mrs Wilson's barberry, from western China and named for the wife of Ernest Wilson plant hunter. It has bluish green leaves, and yellow flowers that produce abundant translucent pink fruit in the autumn. *Cupressus duclouxiana* is an evergreen conifer endemic to China. It grows in deep river gorges where a specimen was recorded on 2023 as the tallest tree in Asia at 102m. The species name commemorates Francois Ducloux a French missionary and plant hunter in China. It is now endangered due to habitat loss; some old trees are protected as Buddhist holy trees.

Turn left, returning to the car park on the Rhododendron trail. You will pass an impressive grove of moso bamboo *Phyllostachys pubescens* also from East Asia. As a running bamboo, this is only suited to very large gardens. On your left you will also pass the white-flowered *Calycanthus chinensis* Xia La Mei mentioned earlier. You may like to visit the upper gazebo to see a selection of summer-flowering lilies and other interesting specimens. These include *Styrax japonicus* 'Emerald Pagoda' or Japanese snowbell, an elegant mid-sized deciduous tree with spreading branches with finely pointed ovate leaves turning yellow and orange in autumn. Native to Korea, Japan and southern China it has bell-shaped white flowers, fragrant, with yellow stamens, are borne in profusion beneath the branches in late spring to early summer, followed by fruits which resemble olives in both shape and colour. SH, DS, RH, JH 12/25

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



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