

# Autumn 2025



## 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](http://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/garden-guides) see Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Upper Car Park Walk.

After such a warm, dry summer the autumn season should bring cooler conditions and much-needed rain to the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens. Already the cooler nights are having some impact as leaves begin to change colour. However, with such unseasonably dry conditions since last January, deciduous trees in the gardens, particularly those which have not received supplementary irrigation, are likely to be moisture stressed and may only have a short-lived display of autumn foliage. This walk highlights the natural features some plants demonstrate as one season ends and another begins.

On the southern edge of the car park are several specimens of the maple *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory' which are starting to reveal autumnal foliage. The cultivar name reflects the timing of autumn in the northern hemisphere, rather than here in Australia. *Acer rubrum* or red maple is one of the most common and widespread deciduous trees of eastern North America, and the cultivar 'October Glory' has been bred for dependable autumn colour.

The car park is also a good place from which to appreciate the messmate stringybark trees *Eucalyptus obliqua* as they rise to their full height with straight trunks and lofty canopies. This eucalypt is native to the wetter areas of the Mt Lofty Ranges, parts of Kangaroo Island and areas of the Southeast of SA. It is also found in cooler higher rainfall parts of the Great Dividing Range in NSW, Victoria and much of Tasmania where it typically grows to over 60 metres. In SA it rarely grows more than 35 metres tall.

From the car park take the Garden Entry path down through the large camellias. Whilst some camellia species will start to flower in the autumn, notably the single, open flowers of *Camellia sasanqua*, mostly, at the beginning of March they are still developing flower buds. However, you may notice apple-sized brown fruit on some of the camellias, notably those on *Camellia reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty'. Like other fruits, these contain seeds from which new plants can emerge. Autumn is when many plants produce seeds, so look out for other seed-carrying mechanisms like berries. Many gardeners may not see fruits on their camellias, particularly when plants are dead headed to encourage further flowering. Removing spent flowers is a common practice as the energy required to develop fruit reduces the availability of resources for further flower development for the rest of the season.

Fruit capsules are also forming on Japanese maple trees *Acer palmatum*. These smaller trees are well-known for their delicate foliage and leaves with acutely pointed lobes. This is known as a palmate leaf, hence the specific name. The fruit is a pair of winged seeds called samaras, and one tree on this path shows eye-catching red samaras in late February/early March.

When you emerge onto the road you might like to visit the gazebo, formerly known as the Summerhouse. On the right side of the gazebo look out for the fruits of the elegant Japanese snowbell tree *Styrax japonicus* which resemble large green olives in shape and colour and hang in attractive clusters with long stalks and star-shaped calyxes. Each fruit contains one seed. As both the common and species name indicate, this tree is native to Japan, and China and Korea.

Return to the roadway and follow Stan's Wall with its fine stone masonry, enjoying distant views of Piccadilly Valley. You will soon come to a sculpture crafted by Greg Johns and installed in 1980. Named *Between Earth and Sky*, this is an excellent example of the work by one of Australia's best known and most successful contemporary sculptors.

Here on the corner on the right just before a small pathway, notice the broad leaves of the persimmon or kaki tree, *Diospyros kaki*. Round green fruit will begin to turn bright orange as autumn progresses provided hungry birds and other wildlife leave them alone. As the fruit ripens its sugar content increases and its characteristic astringency, caused by tannins, reduces after leaves have fallen, provided no hungry person or animal intervenes. Kaki or oriental persimmon are sweet and eaten across the world, and numerous cultivars have been developed for horticulture and home gardens. It is native to China, Indochina and Northeast India, and now grown across the world.

Turn right at the persimmon tree, carefully, as the path has suffered some erosion. On both sides of this path is another species of maple tree, commonly known as snakebark maple, *Acer rubescens*. It has long green pendulous racemes of samaras at present. The common name reflects the vertically striated green and white bark. These trees usually develop a lovely red colour in autumn and are native to the mountains of Taiwan.

Turn right and return to the car park following this path along the edge of the bush. There may still be *Viburnum* species with clusters of red berries. Towards the end of the path is a prominent grove of golden-green Moso bamboo, *Phyllostachys pubescens*. Growing from 10 to 12 metres, this spectacular bamboo is native to China and Taiwan. It is an ornamental running variety so best grown in forests and groves, as its natural spread has no limit. It has long been used for scaffolding and is now being investigated as a sustainable alternative to using timber from slow growing trees.

Turning right at the end of this path puts you at the top end of Rhododendron Gully, from where you can return to the roadway. From the roadway you can either take the same narrow path up to the car park or follow the road around to the car park. This latter route is recommended, as the holly collection on the left side is now starting to show different coloured berries in readiness for 'Christmas in July', and early flowering rhododendron cultivars show how versatile this genus is for cooler Hills gardens.

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