

## MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

### 2026 February / March 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 late summer / early autumn walk features seasonal plants and explores areas close to the lower car park. As the season turns, there are displays of many colourful flowers, as well as early evidence of autumn in the berries, fruits and leaves. This walk follows both the entry and exit roads, so please take care.

From the car park, head to the Noel Lothian lookout which gives an overview of many of the geographic and landscape features of the garden, with the lake forming a bowl into which its seven gullies tumble. The ridgeline is clothed with messmate stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) offering a backdrop to the changing colour of deciduous, exotic garden plantings. Reflection in the lake adds to the delight of this vista.

Leaving the lookout, head to the left and down the path towards the Arboretum carpark. Beside the path is a perennial border of flowering plants, many of which will soon be dormant and cut back over winter before re-shooting in spring as the weather warms again. Amongst these are several different *Salvia* species and cultivars, which are often busy with birds such as eastern spinebills and New Holland honeyeaters looking for nectar. *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Indian Summer' has yellow daisy like flowers with a black eye, and the related purple *Echinacea purpurea* or cone flower both originate in North America and are used in prairie-style gardens. Other perennials in this bed include pentstemons, and the spiky blue sea holly, *Eryngium*, with its thimble-like flowers. Towards the end of the path are three clipped shrubs of *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea*, the leaves of which will soon turn from reddish-purple to brilliant shades of red and orange.

On reaching the car park turn right and make your way up to the exit road. Just before turning left at the exit road, note the small tree on your left. This *Magnolia tripetala*, commonly called **umbrella magnolia** or simply **umbrella-tree**, is a deciduous tree native to the eastern United States in the Appalachian Mountains, the Ozarks, and the Ouachita Mountains. The name "umbrella tree" derives from the fact that the large leaves are clustered at the tips of the branches forming an umbrella-shape. We were impressed by the many pink-red fruiting bodies on the tree. The leaves are dark green on top and pale green underneath. When flowering the smell is described as "malodorous". The name was originally described by Linnaeus in 1759. The species name 'tripetala' comes from the Latin for "three petals".

Also on your left look out for *Magnolia champaca*, known in English as **champak**, a large evergreen tree in the family Magnoliaceae. It was previously classified as *Michelia champaca*, and is known for its fragrant flowers, and its timber used in woodworking. The tall spotted trunk and the woody seed capsules are of interest. Other names in English include joy perfume tree, yellow jade orchid tree and fragrant Himalayan champaca. It is native to South Asia, Indochina, and southern China. In 2021, an isolated, presumably native population of *M. champaca* was identified in Yemen, making *M. champaca* the only species in the Magnoliaceae known to inhabit the Arabian Peninsula.

Walk on towards the gates, passing a sweet-smelling *Luculia* with pink flowers. *Luculia gratissima* is a shrub found in the Himalayas to northern Indo-China. The specific name means most pleasing, which it most surely is. It flowers from autumn into winter, adding to its appeal.

The Collin Robjohns Gates, which mark the entry into the lower entrance of the Mt Lofty Botanic Gardens, were commissioned in 1994 by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide (FBGA). They were crafted by sculptor Greg Johns in memory of Dr Collin Robjohns who became founding President of the Friends in 1977. Mt Lofty Botanic Gardens has probably the largest public collection of the works of Greg Johns, so look out for other works, two of which can be found around the main lake.

It is hard to miss the spectacular liliiums flowering now at these gates. *Lilium longiflorum*, often called the **Easter lily**, is a species of plant endemic to both Taiwan and Ryukyu Islands (Japan). *Lilium formosanum*, a closely related species from Taiwan, has been treated as a variety of **Easter lily** in the past. It is a stem rooting lily, growing up to 1 m (3 ft 3 in) high. It bears several trumpet shaped, white, fragrant, and outward facing flowers.

From here turn and return to the car park. On the right side the leaves of *Ginkgo biloba* are starting to turn from green to yellow. **Ginkgo**, or **maidenhair tree**, comes into its own in autumn, its unusual bi-lobed leaves turning a bright butter yellow. These ancient trees originated in China and Japan and their fruits are edible, despite having a pungent aroma.

*Cotoneaster* has been used extensively in the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden to retain the steep banks. As the road turns towards the carpark, the bright orange-red berries of *Cotoneaster horizontalis* make a bright display in autumn. Belonging to the family Rosaceae, in spring it bears many small white flowers resembling a species rose. The berries resemble rose hips. *Cotoneaster horizontalis* is native to mountains of Nepal, China, and Taiwan; in China it occurs from Tibet and Yunnan in the west to Jiangsu and Zhejiang in the east and is absent from the north and the very south. Nearby is a miniature member of the family, *Cotoneaster dammeri*, or **bearberry cotoneaster**, native to central and southern China and naturalized in Europe. The tiny red-brown hips can be found among the leaves if you look carefully. DS, JH and RH 3/26

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 [info@friendsbgadelaide.com](mailto:info@friendsbgadelaide.com)



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 9367 or [www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au](http://www.friendsbgadelaide.com.au)