

Mount Lofty Botanic Garden



WINTER 2026 Walk from the UPPER 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>)

If autumn is a season of mist and mellow fruitfulness, then winter in this garden is a season of more mists, occasional showers and often great stillness and beauty. Early in the season there is still lingering leaf colour, and it is a time when berries and fruits provide intriguing interest. Native wildflowers start to bloom, and trunks and branches reveal their naked beauty in ways that cannot be appreciated when they are fully clothed in leaves.

Camellias are one of the joys of winter with their colourful and long-lasting flowers providing cheer throughout the colder months of the year. Mt Lofty Botanic Garden (MLBG) has a large collection of camellias ranging from wild species to cultivars of all shapes and sizes. This walk starts by taking the narrow path behind the signs. In late autumn and from early June *Camellia sasanqua* is in bloom. This form of camellia flower typically has a single row of petals with prominent yellow stamens and is often delicately perfumed. A good example is *Camellia sasanqua* 'Plantation Pink' and this may still be flowering when you visit. Later in the season the large ruffled pink flowers of the neighbouring *Camellia reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty' are sure to attract your attention. Throughout winter and spring *Camellia japonica* cultivars, perhaps the most seen camellia, will be flowering. These camellias often have what are called double flowers with multiple rows of petals arranged in a formal and symmetrical way. An unusual camellia at the end of the path on your left is *Camellia japonica* 'Yuriba Tsubaki' with its narrow pendent leaves and red in-curved petals which are splashed with white. Turn left onto the roadway.

If you are interested in camellia species, see directions later in this walk and visit in mid-winter.

Continue along the road until you reach Greg Johns' statue Between Earth and Sky. Take the right path here but pause to look up into the branches of the tree on the corner: the oriental persimmon or *Diospyros kaki*. In late May and early June, the bare branches are hung with orange globes of fruit. The attractive fruit has a distinctive green calyx which remains attached to the fruit. This persimmon was first cultivated in China more than 2000 years ago, and then later introduced to Japan and Korea. Persimmons are widely cultivated and eaten across the world.

Further on, a group of snakebark maples, *Acer rubescens*, have striated green bark, resembling snakeskin which retains interest even when the striking autumn foliage has fallen. This species is native to the mountain forests of Taiwan.

At this point our walk turns to the right and heads towards Rhododendron Gully (If wanting to see the Camellia species collection, go left and then right).

In July and August the mass planting of *Rhododendron spinuliferum* is usually quite spectacular. The red, fire-cracker shaped flowers are quite unlike the rhododendron flowers most of us know. This species occurs naturally in the wild in the highlands of Yunnan in China. Its flowers are made up of clusters of stamens protruding from narrow tubular flowers in a brick-red colour.

Two very different conifers can be found on the right, one of which is the Siberian cypress, *Microbiota decussata*, a prostrate conifer from the Sikhote-Alin mountains of far-eastern Russia. It has feathery, soft textured foliage arranged in flat, fan-like sprays. The foliage is bright green in summer, changing to bronze-purple in autumn and winter.

A little further on is a young kusamaki, *Podocarpus macrophyllus*, from southern Japan and China. This slow-growing evergreen conifer is the most northerly species of the Podocarpus genus. Also known as

Buddhist pine, the tree is highly regarded as a feng shui tree in Hong Kong. It is also popular for bonsai. Its leaves are oblong and dark green, and their density make the tree popular for shaping.

Turn right and make your way back up towards the car park, this time taking the curving road-way rather than the narrow path on which we started the walk. On the left side of the road is a spectacular collection of hollies or *Ilex* species and cultivars. Amongst these now bearing berries are American holly *Ilex opaca* 'Xanthocarpa' with yellow berries, variegated holly *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argenteo Marginata' with red berries, and Chinese or horned holly *Ilex cornuta* with its rectangular leaves and larger red berries. If these capture your interest, take the left path through some sweetly fragrant flowering daphne *Daphne odora* and discover more of the *Ilex* collection.

The large garden bed on the right will always have some plants of interest. Look out for early flowering azaleas (botanically Rhododendrons) such as *Rhododendron* 'Rose Glitters' with its large red open single flowers, and the extensive planting of winter roses or hellebores which line the wall. A compact and very floriferous rhododendron at the end of winter is *Rhododendron* 'Seta' with its white-throated narrow pink tubular flowers. Another interesting late winter shrub in this bed on the bend in the road to watch out for is *Stachyurus praecox* 'Rubriflora'. *Stachyurus* is a genus of plants from the Himalayas and eastern Asia which are valued for their early spring flowers hanging from bare branches. Further along and into the bed are the pale pink flower heads of *Luculia gratissima* and the regal purple tibouchina *Tibouchina urvilleana*.

RH, DS, JH 5/26

We are a group of volunteer Guides preparing 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 suggestions for future self-guided walks at info@friendsbgadelaide.com

