Self-Guided Tour MAY 2024
WHAT'S IN A NAME?
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"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." In 2.2 of Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet, Juliet delivers these famous words. While this was true in her situation, it would not fare well in the botanic world. Calling plants by any other name would (and does) cause confusion. This tour covers a corner of the Garden often bypassed and will tell the interesting meaning and story behind some botanical and common plant names. Follow the arrows and number signs along the way. This tour is wheelchair assessable (*except where an alternate path is noted).

As you enter the plaza turn left and walk over to the North American Cultivars Garden. The first stop is **1 – Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*).** This oak was given its Latin name by Botanist David Douglas to honour his friend, Nicholas Garry, an officer in the Hudson's Bay Company. The Garry oak is the only native oak tree in British Columbia and Washington State. In BC the Garry oak ecosystem exists in southeastern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. There are a few other stands in BC, but nowhere else in Canada. In the USA this tree is known as white oak or Oregon white oak, and its range continues through Oregon, south to the San Joaquin Valley in California.

In pre-colonial days, First Nations set prescriptive fires in Garry oak meadows to perpetuate the grasslands, which were habitat for food sources such as camas, and in wetter areas the shrub understory provided snowberry, oceanspray, Saskatoon berry and dull Oregon-grape. In situ, Garry oak is a stout craggy tree with deep tap roots to survive in drier areas. It provides a richer habitat for insects, birds, and wildlife than neighbouring conifer forests. The acorns, produced once the tree is 30 years old, are an important food source for wildlife. First Nations roasted acorns and camas bulbs to make them edible.

Take a few steps to your right to **2 – weeping Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Pendula').** The hyphenated name indicates it is not a true fir. The Latin name means false hemlock. It is the state tree of Oregon, where it is known as **Oregon Pine.** The weeping leader and branches are caused by a natural branch mutation that can only be replicated by cloning. This healthy specimen is very rare - a true curiosity. VanDusen's first curator, Roy Forster, CM, planted weeping trees between various collections.

Cross the bridge, walk past the jade fountain on your left – take the mid path. On your right is **3 – Bollwiller Pear (× *Sorbopyrus auricularis),*** also known as **shipova.** The **×** in front of its name signifies an intergeneric hybrid, in this case between *Aria edulis* (whitebeam) and *Pyrus communis* (pear). It was first seen in Bollwiller, Alsace, France in the early 1600s. Beautiful tiny pears the size of a thumbprint appear in September. They're edible but you need quite a few to make a decent snack!

Continue past the allée of pink **kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi')** on your left to the **4 - Fragrance Garden** and take your time to breathe in the scents by gently rubbing various leaves and petals. Now walk straight ahead to the **5 –Formal Rose Garden**. Turn right and take the path past the sundial to the first of three bronze busts of famous botanists.

6 – Carl Linnaeus (1707 – 1778). His name has an interesting story. Linnaeus' father, Nicolaus (Nils) Ingemarsson, was the first in his family to adopt a permanent family surname – required when he entered the University of Lund. He chose the Latin name of a giant linden tree which grew on their homestead. Otherwise, his son would be known by his patronymic name Nilsson. What's in a name indeed!

The Linnaean classification system of plants and animals consisted of levels known as taxa. They were kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. The binomial names of genus and species were always in Latin, a commonly studied language among European academics, making it easier to publish descriptions of new plants across various countries. Today, biologists still follow a modified version of the Linnaean system, but the descriptions of new plants no longer must be published in Latin.

To Carl's left is **7 – David Douglas** (1799 – 1834), who travelled extensively in North America, spending much time in the Pacific Northwest. Some of the seeds he gathered were used to reforest Scotland after the loss of trees cleared for pastureland and felled for lumber. A documentary film, **Finding David Douglas**, produced by the Scottish Forestry Trust and Oregon Department of Forestry, found on YouTube, is a must see.

Further along to the left is **8 – Archibald Menzies** (1754 –1842), who forty years earlier, had visited the same areas of the Pacific Northwest as Douglas. His name is found in many of our local species, for example**, Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*).**

Turn around to see the butterfly shape of the **9 - boxwood hedges (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa')** surrounding the rose beds. These roses are bred by local rosarians to suit our rainy climate. **10 – catmint (*Nepeta kubanica*)** surrounding the outer beds is used to attract insects to eat pests that are a bane to roses. *Nepeta* belongs to the **Mint Family (Lamiaceae)**. Note the square stems, common in this family.

Take the stairs to the main path, walk past the flower beds and to your right is **11 – *Rhododendron* 'Loderi King George'**, a cross between ***R. fortunei* subsp. *fortunei* × *R. griffithianum.*** It was hybridized in 1920 by Sir Edmund Loder at the famous Leonardslee Garden in England. Its wonderful scent and blooms make it one of the finest rhododendron hybrids. *Rhododendron fortunei* was collected in China by botanist Robert Fortune, and *R. griffithianum* was collected in Nepal by William Griffiths, both in the early 1800s. Check out other hybrids in this bed.

Continue along the paved path, cross the intersecting path to the **12 – handkerchief, dove or ghost tree (*Davidia involucrata*)** named for the French missionary Armand David by French botanist Henri Baillon. The specific epithet *involucrata* means "with ring of bracts surrounding several flowers". This name is a clear example of Linnaeus' succinct binomial naming system. The bracts attract pollinators as they flutter in the breeze and protect the pollen from wind and rain. It is the only living species in the genus *Davidia*. (*the Rhododendron Walk is accessible, but not the path to 13, turn right at 12, go to 14 and continue)

Return to the paved path and follow it as it curves up to the **Rhododendron Walk.** On the right side of the path are many azaleas, formerly a separate genus (*Azalea*), now lumped into the genus *Rhododendron* with the rhododendrons. Azaleas are often deciduous, and their flowers have five stamens, while rhododendrons tend to be evergreen, and their flowers have ten stamens or more. They are members of the **Heath Family (Ericaceae).** A feature of this family is tubular or funnel shaped flowers. **Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)** and **lily-of-the-valley shrub (*Pieris japonica*)** are examples.

Take in the beautiful colours of the rhododendrons on your left as you walk to the directional sign pointing to the right. In a short way is **13 – Leyland cypress (× *Cupressocyparis leylandii*),** an intergenic hybrid found in 1888 on the estate of C.J. Leyland in Derbyshire, UK. The hybrid parents, **Nootka cypress** (***Chamaecyparis nootkatensis***) from the Pacific Northwest and **Monterey cypress *(Cupressus macrocarpa)*** from the Central Coast of California, would not have crossed naturally, since their ranges do not overlap. Leyland cypress is fast growing and hardy, making it popular for hedging. It can grow up to a metre per year, creating mayhem in England between neighbours, including vandalism, arson, lawsuits and even a murder until the 2005 High Hedges Law was passed. Step back to the Azalea Trail sign, follow the mulch path back to the main paved path.

Plants in the **Pea Family (Fabaceae)** are at their best this month. There are three examples on this tour. Just ahead on your left, climbing the side of the Lathhouse is a **14 - Japanese wisteria - (*Wisteria floribunda* 'Violacea Plena').** Continue down the path to the middle of the Perennial Garden. The next plant is ahead on the lawn and can be seen standing behind the bench in front of you. You need to continue past the next stop to access the lawn.

At the base of the Great Lawn is a very interesting tree, **15 – Adam's laburnum (+ *Laburnocytisus* 'Adamii')**. The **+** indicates a graft chimera of two species: **goldenchain tree (*Laburnum anagyroides*)** and **purple broom (*Chamaecytisus purpureus*)**. The flowers bloom in three colours: yellow and purple, true to each parent, and peachy-pink resulting from the union. The plant originated in the nursery of Louis Adam near Paris in 1825, probably by accident.

On the other side of the path is **16 – coastal Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*).** There are three varieties of Douglas-fir*:* **var. *menziesii*,** found in coastal regions, **var. *glauca*,** in the BC Interior and the Rockies, plus **var. *lindleyana*** in northern Mexico. Archibald Menzies was the first to formally describe it when he 'discovered' it on Vancouver Island in 1791. Some 36 years later Douglas sent the first seeds to Great Britain. 'Discovered' is a misnomer. For millennia First Nations have used Douglas-fir for shelter, food, and medicine. The Halq'eméylem name for the tree is lá:yelhp. Douglas-fir are long lived. Big Lonely Doug, a famous old tree on Vancouver Island, is thought to be 1,000 years old and is 72 meters tall (like a 20-storey building).

Return to the corner of the main path, walk straight ahead. Wander through the **17 – goldenchain trees (*Laburnum* × *watereri* 'Vossii')** underplanted with **19 – ornamental onions (*Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation').** In May, the Laburnum Walk brings visitors from around the world.

Come back in June to smell the sweet fragrances of VanDusen Garden's Rosaceae Collections!