

VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN

SEASONAL SELF-GUIDED TOUR

April 2009.

As you stand on the deck facing outward you are looking at the Phyllis Bentall Garden and pond. The garden was installed in 2005. The trees lining the path to the left of the pond are pink dogwoods which will flower later in the season. Later, also, the water lilies in the pond will flower. Begin the tour by going down the ramp to the right of the deck. The first stop is at (→1) the lovely **red-flowering current** (*Ribes sanguineum*). Further down the path is (→2) an evergreen shrub **tall Oregon grape** (*Mahonia aquifolium*) native from southern BC to central Oregon. This shrub produces clusters of small purple edible berries later in the year. The third stop is at (→3) the **silk tassel bush** (*Garrya elliptica* 'James Roof') noted for its unusual leathery leaves (which seem to have suffered frost damage this year) and long grayish catkins with tiny flowers which lack petals. The catkins are borne separately on ♂ and ♀ plants. This plant is ♂.

At the foot of the Phyllis Bentall Garden, on your left, there are several large pots containing insect-eating plants. These plants obtain extra nitrogen by digesting the insects they trap in their various ways. They are worth a visit. The tour continues to the right past the Jade Fountain. On your left, just before the arched bridge, are some lovely Japanese maples. Just beyond these is (→4) a shore pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*) native to Coastal BC and Alaska, south to California. On the right side of the bridge is (→5) a striking **weeping Douglas fir** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Pendula'). From the bridge we have a nice view of Livingstone Lake. Further along on the left is (→6) a tall weeping **Nootka cypress** (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula') and then (→7) a **Siberian dogwood** (*Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'), its stems adding a splash of deep red. You are now passing the holly collection on your right in the large open grassy space. This area is to be the location of the new visitor centre that VanDusen is planning to build in order to greatly improve educational capabilities. The hollies, which represent one of the best such collections in North America, will be given another home.

Follow the path to the left. On your left and right you will see (→8) several **maidenhair trees** (*Ginkgo biloba*) and some magnolias. These trees are amongst the oldest plants on earth (see the *Ginkgo* interpretive panel). Following along the path you will see ahead (→9) the enormous silhouette of a **red alder** (*Alnus rubra*) at the edge of the lake. Alders bear ♂ and ♀ flowers in separate catkins on the same tree. The pollen from the ♂ flowers is a source of discomfort to hay fever sufferers. Opposite the alder is (→10) the showy **saucer magnolia** (*Magnolia × soulangeana*) with its silky pink blooms and interesting bark.

Now turn around and retrace your steps 20 feet or so. On your left leading North is the entrance to a wooded area unofficially called the 'pine grove'. You should be able to see the leaves of the **autumn crocus** (*Colchicum autumnale*) beneath (→11) the **Moutan** or **tree peonies** (*Paeonia suffruticosa* 'Higurashi'). Tree peonies grow to a height of six feet or more with blooms a foot across. In the pine grove the flowering magnolias contrast with (→12) the dark, strong **lodgepole pines** (*Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia*). First Nations people used these for their dwellings, hence their common name. On your right is a short side path leading to (→13) a **coast redwood** (*Sequoia sempervirens*). This species contains the tallest tree in the world at 379 feet. It was identified in Northern California in 2006 by a team of scientists after a difficult 4 mile hike into the old growth redwood forest. They named the tree Hyperion. (The previous record holder was 9 feet shorter.) The soft bark can reach a thickness of 12 inches.

On the left of the path is (→14) the expansive **rhododendron** (*Rhododendron calophyllum* var. *calophyllum*) with its trusses of large fragrant pink flowers. Ahead is (→15) the shiny evergreen

southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), a tree usually associated with the southeastern United States. It needs a sheltered location to survive the winter here. The leaves are protected from ice formation by their hard shiny surface in the same way as is our native arbutus. However, heavy snow accumulation can damage these plants.

Follow the path out of the grove. From here you can see the Cypress Pond with the floating bridge, lovely **bald cypresses (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*)** and on towards the right **viburnum** shrubs. Across the path in front of you is (→16) a **blue atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* Glauca Group)**, with bluish-green needles. Notice that these evergreen needles are in clumps of many needles, a characteristic of true cedars. Though the self-guided tour ends here, this is a beautiful area to explore further on your own.