

VanDusen Botanical Garden
5251 Oak Street
Vancouver, BC V4M 4H1

Seasonal Self-Guided Tour
July & August 2010

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Please follow the black number and arrow signs for this tour.

VanDusen welcomes you. This self-guided tour will take you through a section of our 22 hectare garden. It is home to over 7,500 plants from around the world and the tour will point out a few of these. A botanical garden is a living museum with their collections scientifically organized and labelled. It would not be possible to see these plants or conserve them for the future without botanical gardens.

To start the tour turn right and walk down the ramp, turning left to stop under this wonderful tree **1 - golden false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia')**, which lights up the sky with its golden yellow foliage even on the greyest of days. The species was named after Jean Robin, a botanist employed by Henry IV in France. As you scan the wooded horizon from this vantage point, you will see more splashes of luminous colour from other such specimens highlighting the varied collection of trees in this garden. Look down into the bed below to see some unusual plants called **2 - Italian arum (*Arum italicum*)** - this plant provides winter interest with its green and white foliage and in summer displays stalks of bright orange berries.

Lower down the path and on the right you can see a large green boulder which forms the base of a water fountain. This is BC jade, mined in Northern British Columbia approximately 100 miles east of Juneau, Alaska. You can see more jade at the top of the waterfall near the Stone Garden. To your left, note the large urns in front of the flower beds. These house our collection of insect eating or carnivorous plants whose habitat in wetlands and bogs is much threatened. Plant conservation of this type is one of the essential functions of a botanical garden. Look for the tiny **3 - Venus fly trap (*Dionaea muscipula*)**, one of a very small group of plants capable of rapid movement to actually capture insects; an example of an active trap. The provincial flower of Newfoundland and Labrador **4 - pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*)** grows in bogs from Manitoba eastwards and is a passive trap which collects water in its low lying pitchers and drowns its prey. If you look closely you may see trapped bees and flies. Since bogs lack essential plant nutrients, carnivorous plants have evolved the amazing ability to collect these missing nutrients by capturing and digesting small insects!

To continue, follow the arrow towards the **5 - Fragrance Garden** and pause to enjoy the many delightful scents to be experienced here. A little further down is the **6 - golden catalpa tree (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea')** which was planted to mark the official opening of the garden on August 30, 1975. Its common name is the Indian Bean Tree; look up and see if you can discover why! Straight ahead is our formal rose garden. You will notice some of the beds have a border of blue flowers commonly called **blue catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)**. In addition to being a very hardy perennial it attracts beneficial insects which eat aphids and other pests before they can harm the roses. This is one of the many organic practices used throughout the garden.

Facing the rose garden, turn left, follow the Rhododendron Walk until you reach a fork in the path. Straight ahead is the **7 - dove or handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*)**, found in China by French missionary Pere David. Each flowerhead is surrounded by two long white bracts which some say look like doves, handkerchiefs or ghosts! It is quite spectacular in the spring. The limbs of this tree reach up to 12 meters (40 feet) making it an imposing tree any time of the year.

Continue up the path to the **8 - hydrangea garden. *Hydrangea macrophylla*** can be blue or pink in colour, depending on the soil. Our rain-soaked soil is acidic, which produces blue flowers. Some gardeners add aluminum to their soil to produce more

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pink or purple flowers. Our garden is organic so any colours you see are purely natural - it is not uncommon to see pink and blue flowers on one plant which can be the result of weather or transplanting. We have many different species including a miniature hydrangea in the Camellia beds nearby. Turn right and walk up the grass to see these.

Straight ahead is the **Korean Pavilion**, a gift from the Korean people to the garden after Expo 86, which was held in Vancouver. Across the path is the **9 - Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*)** - the national flower of South Korea.

Follow the path on your left, passing the **Meditation Garden** and then the **Fern Dell** on the right until the path widens. This is part of the **Canadian Heritage Garden**. Follow the old-fashioned lane which encircles the vegetable garden. On your left are raspberries growing along the fence, beyond which are heritage apple trees and behind them are beehives. You can buy honey from these hives in the gift shop. In the **10 - Heritage Vegetable Garden**, the vegetables are grown organically and are harvested with the help of schoolchildren from our Education Program. The bounty of the garden is donated to the food bank. This year's theme covers food from Victorian times featured in Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management published, by her husband in the 1850's. They also published a women's magazine and her influence in the kitchen and household was very strong. Sound like anyone you know today?

You can't miss the colourful Alma VanDusen Garden. Walk across the stone bridge to take a closer look. **11 - Love-lies-bleeding or amaranth (*Amaranthus caudatus*)** self seeds and gives a spectacular showing every summer. There are many species of amaranth with inflorescences and foliage ranging from purple to red to gold. It is used as a leaf vegetable, cereal and an ornamental.

Continue up the path past the maze and follow it to your right. At the top of the rise on the right is a grove of **12 - katsura trees (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)**. Across the path you can see the **Stone Garden**. Lightweight volcanic rock is used to symbolize 'islands' in a dry lake. This site is the roof of the abandoned water reservoir for Point Grey. It has been brought back to life and will be an integral part the sustainable water system for VanDusen Botanical Garden's lakes, waterfall and irrigation system.

Follow the arrows to the top of the waterfall and continue down the stone steps. On the right-hand corner is the **13 - blue bean tree (*Decaisnea fargesii*)**. In late fall the leaves will turn bright yellow and the pods electric blue. Another name for the tree is dead man's fingers! Follow the steps down the centre path towards the Great Lawn. You are now standing in a grove of **Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*)**. A feature of this tree is the thick bark which helps protect it during forest fires. Take a look at the female cones scattered around. Notice the long tridentine (3 point) bract which protrudes prominently above each scale. Early myths say these are the tiny feet and tail of mice that hid in the cones to escape the danger of forest fires!

Walk down the path beside the great lawn until you reach the formal Perennial Garden, now in its full glory. Note the manicured yew hedge (*Taxus baccata*) which frames the main flower bed. Now walk under the **14 - golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)** which, if your timing is right, will show large panicles of yellow flowers which give the tree its name.

Walk through the stone arch at the head of the rose garden, turn to your left and follow the stone wall to the Black Garden. Here is an eye catching, modern palette of bright chartreuse-hued plants set against shades of striking darker foliage. At the end of the path turn right and follow the shores of Livingstone Lake. On the right-hand side of the pathway are many trees and shrubs belonging to family Rosaceae - such as **15 - Medlar (*Mespilus germanica*)**. The apple-like fruit must be 'bletted' or extremely ripe before it is eaten. It was popular in Chaucer's time, not so much today. From here you can see your way back to the deck. We hope you enjoyed your walk and that you come back soon. The garden is forever changing, almost every week there is something new to see.