



VanDusen Botanical Garden
521 Oak Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6M 4H1

Seasonal Self-guided Tour
October, 2010

Contributed by Patti Lazzerini, VanDusen Volunteer Guide

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

'I do look forward to Autumn' Georgia O'Keefe

Welcome to VanDusen Botanical Garden, which is jointly operated by the VanDusen Botanical Garden Association and the Vancouver Park Board in an enduring and successful partnership.

Please leave the deck via the main steps and the avenue of **1 - Pink Japanese Dogwood** (*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi'). The spring blossoms are a nutritious playground for hummingbirds! It is a cultivated variety of the dogwood tree, which Carl Linnaeus recorded in his two-volume work "The Species of Plants", published in 1753. His system of identifying plants is still widely used today, although there have been many changes over the years.

Walk to the end of the bricked area, across the lawn, turn left at the paved pathway and then right to enter the small bark path at the side of the Ornamental Grasses Bed. On your right is **2 - Autumn Sedge** (*Carex dipsacea* 'Olive'). This recently planted evergreen native of New Zealand has roots which form a fibrous mass and enable the plant to survive a long-term dry period, conserving precious water. Take this opportunity to admire the vista across Livingstone Lake, named after Bill Livingstone who, as Vice-Superintendent of Parks, was given the responsibility for the design of the 22 hectare Garden in 1971. Our first curator of plants, Roy Forster, was appointed in 1972 and our living museum of plants, with its scientifically organized and labelled collections, opened to the public in 1975.

Turn left and follow the bark path. On your left is the deciduous **3 - Eastern Redbud tree** (*Cercis canadensis*). In winter, the buds are tiny and dark red in color. It is very conspicuous in the spring because the showy pink flowers appear before the leaves of other trees begin to form. The leaves from all the deciduous trees in the Garden are recycled as organic mulch. On your right is **4 - Redleaf Rose** (*Rosa glauca*), which comes from the mountains of Central Europe. The beauty of this species is in the foliage and the small hips that stay on the rose throughout the winter. It is resistant to black spot and is a great rose for the organic gardener to grow. No pesticides or herbicides are used in our organic Garden!

Walk along the bark path until you reach the steps leading into the Black Garden. This beautiful area in the Garden demonstrates the Japanese word 'notan' and its meaning of the equal importance of dark and light in design. Turn right and on your left is **5 - Stonecrop** (*Sedum telephium* 'Purple Emperor'). This variety of *Sedum* was discovered as a seedling in an English garden in 1997 and is named after a rare and elusive butterfly. The nectar-rich flowers are popular with hoverflies, which are important predators of greenfly. The plum-black leaves store water, enabling the plant to do well in drought conditions.

Along the pathway are many different ornamental grasses. These provide contrast in colour and texture. Further along on the left hand side, for example, is the vivid **6 - Bowles Golden Grass** (*Carex elata* 'Aurea', synonym 'Bowles Golden'), named after E. A. Bowles, one of the 20th century's great gardeners who established a magical garden at his home, Myddleton House, just outside Central London. Rare and difficult plants were successfully grown by Bowles, who encouraged children to work alongside him in his Garden, which is still open to the public. Like Carl Linnaeus, Bowles had a very positive influence on the lives and subsequent careers of many young people.

Continue along the main path and down the incline. Just before you reach the bridge on your left is **7 - Umbrella Pine** (*Sciadopitys verticillata*). This slow-growing tree, which has successfully survived since the early dinosaur age, is now restricted to just one species growing in the forests of Central Japan. Due to over-logging, it is on the Red endangered list of the International World Conservation Union. As a member of the Botanic Gardens Conservation International, we grow over 100 rare and endangered plants at VanDusen Botanical Garden.

Cross the bridge, follow the main path and turn left to see one of the world's rarest plants **8 - Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*)** growing in the raised bed. Believed extinct for millions of years, three small clumps were discovered by a bushwalker in 1994 in the isolated rainforest gorges of the Greater Blue Mountain World Heritage area, just 150 kilometers from the metropolis of Sydney, Australia. The site around the Wollemi Pines was rich with fungi, including a previously unknown one that produces small amounts of the anti-cancer drug, taxol. Who knows what other extraordinary plants and medicines are still waiting to be discovered?

Continue along the main path and turn left. Continue to the wooden sign on your left (which provides directional arrows for the Rose and Heather Gardens) and enjoy the spicy scented **9 - Guernsey lily (*Nerine bowdenii*)**, indigenous to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Did you know that, whilst occupying just 1% of the earth's total land surface, South Africa contains almost 10% of the world's total known bird, fish and plant species? This area of our Garden is a recreation of the alpine bulbous meadow eco-system found in that beautiful country.

Now turn left where a gravel path leads to the lawn. Walk left along the edge of Heron Lake, past the large willow and onto the bark path through the spectacular Japanese Maples, which have been culturally significant in Japan since at least the ninth century, when court dress dictated that women match the color of their kimonos to that of the maples fall foliage. There are more than 1,000 cultivars of this tree, which was introduced to North America in 1861 by Francis Parkman, a historian and keen gardener. Why not rest awhile on the bench and enjoy the vibrant reflections in the water, reminiscent of those which provided such inspiration to Georgia O'Keefe and Claude Debussy?

Rejoin the main path. On your right is a collection of trees, including **10 - Linden (*Tilia*)**. This important tree produces some of the most powerful herbal medicines known to humans. The national tree of the Czech Republic, it provided an invaluable natural medicinal resource during the Balkans civil war, when pharmaceutical remedies were unavailable. The dried white blossoms make a pleasant herbal tea and an effective digestive and anti-stress remedy. Young leaves can be eaten raw and a good chocolate substitute can be made from the paste of the ground fruit and leaves. A calming bath for an overwrought infant can be made by adding a strong linden infusion to the bath water!

Turn left and follow the arrows across the colorful Maple Grove until you reach the small bark path. Follow the path and cross the stepping stones to the opposite side of Heron Lake. The sound of running water you can hear is from a small waterfall nearby. All the ponds and lakes in VanDusen are interconnected and we are working steadily towards a model of water conservation that will enable us to pump excess water from our lakes into our reservoir and use that water during our hot, dry Vancouver summer.

Turn left and walk along the side of the lake and take a close look at the magnificent Japanese maple, **11 - (*Acer palmatum* 'Atropureum')**, named by Carl Peter Thunberg, a student of Carl Linnaeus, and the author of the first detailed description of the flora and fauna of Japan. Note the seedpods on this tree and the shape of the leaves, named 'momiji' or baby's hands in the Japanese language. Continue walking along the side of the lake. Perhaps its namesake, the blue heron is still perched in his favorite weeping beech tree?

Cross the large, irregular stepping stones and follow the right hand path through our blooming Heather Garden. At the end of the path, turn right, cross the stone bridge and turn left. Ahead are the treasures of our Perennial Garden! On your right, the perennial plants are displayed in island beds. Look for **12 - Golden Hakone Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola')**, which was chosen as the 2009 Perennial Plant of the year by the U.S.A Perennial Plant Association. On your left is the traditionally shaped bed and its clipped evergreen Yew hedge - the favored nesting tree of the raven.

Now rejoin the main path and walk straight ahead through the canopy of weeping beech to the bottom of the Great Lawn. On your right is the stunning exhibition of sculpture by Sebastian, the Mexican artist whose internationally renowned work reflects the dazzling autumnal hues of our beautiful Botanical Garden. This exhibition celebrates the Bicentennial of Mexican Independence and is co-sponsored by the Mexican Consulate and the Vancouver Biennale.

Turn left at the bark path and enjoy the green canopy of rhododendrons, whose blooms are so magnificent in spring. At the end of this path you can easily find your way to the main deck. We hope you have enjoyed your tour and that you will return soon.