

JUNE 2011 SELF-GUIDED TOUR

We salute rose lovers among our visitors in this June 2011 edition of self-guided tours.

*You may break, you may shatter the vase, if
you will,
But the scent of roses will hang around it
still.*

Thomas Moore (1779-1852) *Farewell! But Whenever*

Leaving the deck, descend the central stairway through an avenue of **1 - kousa dogwoods (*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi')** which provide a splendid entrance to the Garden. Kousa dogwoods occur wild in Japan, China and Korea, and their tiny flowers are surrounded by showy bracts that vary from white to green to dark pink. They are one of 45 species of dogwood distributed throughout the northern hemisphere and are grown mainly for their showy bracts, elegant habit, attractive fruit, and colourful autumn leaves. At the end of the row turn left and walk along the path past the boxwood-framed beds toward the large golden catalpa tree (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea'). This beautiful tree was planted when the Garden opened on August 30, 1975.

When you meet the path ahead, under the catalpa tree, turn left and then take the next right up the Laburnum Walk. On your way, stop and admire the Formal Rose Garden. Continue up the path as it winds to the right. Step onto the grass, to your right through a break in the trees, where you will see four beds containing the **2 – Heritage Roses**. Each bed has two or three classes of old roses: the first bed, Moss and Centifolia roses; the second bed, Gallica and Damask roses; and, the third bed, Bourbon and Alba roses, and most easterly bed, Portland, Rugosa and Pimpinellifolia roses

The early European roses were probably forms of *Rosa gallica* which grew wild from France to the Caucasus. **Gallicas** come in all forms – single to full doubles varying in color from white to pink to red, and are once-flowering. **Damask roses**, derived from *Rosa gallica*, were the first European hybrids. They were extremely important because of their fragrance, tendency to produce double flowers and their flowering season which extends into autumn. The blooms are loosely double, in pinks and whites and are strongly scented. Further breeding produced **Alba, Centifolia and Moss roses**, which were variations on earlier themes. The real change came with the introduction of the China rose (*Rosa chinensis*). Although introduced in 1752, its influence was not seen until the early 1800s with the new, compact, repeat-flowering plants - the **Bourbon roses**. The **Portland roses** soon followed.

Roses have been in existence for at least 35 million years and have been cultivated for about 2,700 years. The use of wild roses for rose water, scented oils and other fragrances goes back to Sumerian times in Iraq around 2000 BC. Rose cultivation in China goes back to Confucius (551-479 BC) who mentions extensive plantings of roses in the Chinese Imperial gardens. In Europe, the period from 1200 to 1800 saw several new roses introduced into cultivation – these are our "old" roses. Roses are valued for their beauty and perfume, their bright hips, and have been at the forefront of garden design and plant hybridization. In centuries past they also had medicinal uses. In the Middle Ages plants had to have practical uses in order to justify their cultivation; few were grown for beauty alone.

Gardeners at VanDusen practice sustainable rose gardening practices by eliminating chemical-laden pesticides and fertilizers. Instead they are experimenting with various biological products as anti-fungal and pesticide measures. Beds are mulched with mature compost one year and aged manure the next, and nitrogen-rich alfalfa meal and blood meal are applied to provide nutrients.

Return to the path, proceed to the junction where the four paths meet at the north end of the Perennial Garden. Continue westerly to **3 – coastal Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*)**, the grove of large trees to your right. *Pseudo* means false and *tsuga* means hemlock. This species' name is misleading since it is neither a true fir (*Abies* species) nor a hemlock (*Tsuga* species). There are only five species of *Pseudotsuga*, only one of which is found in Canada. The botanical name is after Doctor Archibald Menzies, who was the first to observe the species while aboard Captain Vancouver's voyage of discovery in the late 1700s. Some time later, Scottish botanist David Douglas, who confirmed its separate grouping, studied the species. Douglas fir is the largest tree in Canada, reaching 85 m (280') in height on the coast (var. *menziesii*) and 42 m (135') (var. *glauca*) in the BC interior. Coastal specimens up to 4 to 5 m in diameter can be found. The specimens you see at VanDusen are relatively young, but nevertheless are some of the older and larger trees in the Garden, thanks to their planting within fairway groves, when the property was in its earlier, golf course life.

Walking on the grass under the cherry trees you will see a white marble sculpture entitled **4 - Meta Morphosis** sculpted by Olga Jancic of Yugoslavia as part of the International Sculpture Symposium held in the summer of 1975 just before the Garden opened. Thirteen sculptors participated and their works are in various locations throughout the Garden. Walking straight up to more Douglas firs, is another sculpture, **5 - Between**, by Adolf Ryszka of Poland. This one consists of two pieces and is in travertine. Note the lines in the stone. More information about the sculptures in the Garden can be found in the brochure, *Sculpture Collection*, available on the deck on your way out.

Continue through the grassy break in the rhododendron bed to the paved pathway. Turn right until you come to a pathway on your left leading up to the waterfall. Note the **6 – Himalayan blue poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*)**. In late spring and early summer this deciduous perennial produces stunning horizontal to pendant bright blue flowers with bright yellow stamens on bristly stalks. Sometimes the blooms are clustered at the tops of the stems and colour variations of purple and white may be seen.

Before you reach the waterfall, observe the weeping tree on your right **7 - Maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba 'Pendula'*)**. While the species is typically erect, this ginkgo is a weeping variety. Ginkgos are either male or female but seeds do not appear until the females are about 20 years old. The species is ancient, perhaps 300 million years old, older than the dinosaurs. *Ginkgo biloba* is the only species within this botanical group, with all of its closest relatives having gone extinct. "Maidenhair" refers to the tree's distinct leaf shape and vein pattern which you can view close-up on this tree. Ginkgos are trees of temperate climates and are resistant to pollution and most pests.

Continue up the path. At the **8 -Waterfall** you can sit on a bench and enjoy the view. The waterfall was designed by Bill Livingston, first Superintendent of the Garden. The stones used to build the waterfall and outline the streams and paths were obtained from local building excavations and the False Creek development in the early 1970s. As you sit and enjoy the view, note the **9 - weeping katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum 'Morioka Weeping'*)** in front of you on the left. Beneath the weeping branches is a wonderful place for a picnic! As you can see, this tree is valued chiefly for its foliage and beauty. "Katsura" is its Japanese name.

Continue to your left along the path until you see a paved pathway up ahead. Before reaching the path, look to your right to see the **10 – Fern Dell**, a collection of native and non-native ferns. Ferns reproduce, not by seed, but by spores – a microscopic single-celled phase of the plant's life cycle. Since reproduction by spore requires abundant woodland moisture, ferns are characteristically absent from drier sites. Turn over a fern leaf to see the rusty-coloured bumps or spots on the underside. These are called sori and are where the spores are produced. Sori vary in appearance depending on the species. Look at the underside of several ferns to see sori of different shapes and sizes. Ferns can also increase their numbers within a moist woodland by reproducing through their rhizomes, creeping underground stems that grow horizontally and root at the nodes to form new plants.

Exit the Fern Dell onto the paved path and you will see two **12 – princess trees (*Paulownia tomentosa*)**. A fast-growing tree from East Asia, princess tree is grown for its showy, fragrant pinkish lilac flowers borne in large stalks or panicles in late spring. After the flowers begin to fade its bright, light green leaves emerge and reach up to 30 cm (12 inches) in length.

Within view you can see the **13 - Korean Pavilion**, a gift to the garden from the Expo 86 Republic of Korea pavilion. More recently, to celebrate the Garden's 30th anniversary, the stained wood in the pavilion was painstakingly restored by hand to its original brilliance. Step into the pavilion and enjoy the view.

To head back toward the Garden Entrance where you began this tour, proceed to the bottom (east) end of the Rhododendron Walk. Watch for the **14 – Dove or handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucreta*)** at the bottom of the Rhododendron Walk, across from the gate leading out into the parking lot. This specimen tree naturally occurs in woodlands of China. Its small flower heads are surrounded by large, showy white bracts that drape from the tree and gave rise to its common names. Even when its flowering period is over, the dove tree's broad form can be enjoyed. Follow the path along the fence, with the fence to your right, to return to the garden entrance.