

**The tour starts and ends at the Plaza and lasts about an hour. Please follow black and white number and arrow signs. Parts of this tour are not wheelchair accessible.**

October is the best month for viewing fall foliage at VanDusen Botanical Garden. On this tour you will see plant species from around the world, with deciduous trees and shrubs putting on a show of colour, while evergreens provide an attractive contrast.

This is a significant year in the history of VanDusen as it marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its official opening in 1975. Two men with great vision transformed 55 acres of an abandoned golf course into a beautiful garden. Bill Livingstone, Assistant Superintendent of the Vancouver Park Board, designed the landscaping and Roy Forster, VanDusen's first Curator and Garden Director, from 1972-1996, chose the plants. Every part of the Garden's natural feel has been carefully planned and created, including the water features, such as Livingstone Lake, which you can see from the Plaza as you enter the Garden.

From the right side of the Plaza, walk down the ramp and turn left to follow the path along the lake shore. Bordering the path are **1 – maidenhair trees (*Ginkgo biloba*)**, the oldest living tree species on Earth. Considered a living fossil, the ginkgo has remained unchanged for over 200 million years and there are no living species that are closely related to it. Its fan-shaped leaves, now turning gold, are unlike any other.

Follow the narrow flagstone path on your right into the Woodland Garden and follow the path on the right to a **2 - coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)**, the tallest tree species in the world. The record is held by a tree named 'Hyperion', measuring 379 feet tall and 21 feet in diameter. Because these trees are so tall, very little water from the roots reaches the top of tree, fighting against gravity all the way. In the wild, coast redwoods grow within 30 miles of the coast of northern California, where up to 40% of their annual water intake is from coastal fog that condenses on the leaves and drips to the ground and roots below.

The path to the right of the coast redwood leads out of the wood. Opposite is a gravel path that slopes downhill, where the ground on either side is carpeted with leaves from several **3 - red maples (*Acer rubrum*)**. 2015 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of Canada's distinctive flag but the flag's red maple leaf is an artist's version and not a copy of the leaf of any specific maple species.

It's worth a short detour along the first woodchip path on your right to see some rather sinister-looking berries. Every part of **4 - doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*)** is poisonous and the berries can be lethal. Return to the gravel path curving along the shore of Cypress Pond and stop before stepping onto the bridge. On the left is a **5 - bald or swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*)**, one of a collection for which the pond is named. Though conifers are typically evergreen, a few are deciduous and the bald cypress is one of them. The feathery green needles are now turning orange and will soon be shed, which is why it is named 'bald' cypress. Along the shore on the right are knobby bald cypress 'knees' (**pneumatophores**), projections of the tree roots. These can reach a height of eleven feet but the purpose of these 'knees' is unknown.

Cross the floating bridge and follow the gravel path straight ahead through the **Bamboo Collection**. Over 1400 species of bamboo exist and they all belong to the Grass Family (Poaceae). One of the fastest growing and strongest plants on Earth, bamboo has a wide variety of uses, from food to fabrics and skateboards to scaffolding. The second tree on the left of the path is a **6 - dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)**, another deciduous conifer. It was known to exist from fossils and thought to have been extinct but in the 1940s, a living tree was identified in a forest in China.

At the end of the path, look across to the grove of **7 - giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)**, not the tallest but the largest tree by volume in the world. When these trees were planted in the 1970s, they were about 7 feet tall. Now they are 70 feet, far short of the current record of 271 feet held by a tree in California called General Sherman. Step inside the cool, dark interior of the grove and look up to see the sky through gaps in the lacework of branches.

Sloping up past a view of Heron Lake, the path first curves left around the **Japanese Maple Collection**, then curves right past the **Maple Collection** on the left. Among the many varieties of maples here are **sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*)** from which nearly all maple syrup is made. Canada supplies over 80% of the world's maple syrup, most of it produced in Quebec. When the path divides to the left, keep straight ahead. The first tree on the right is an **8 - American larch (*Larix laricina*)**, another species of deciduous conifer which drops its needles. The American larch is also known as tamarack, a word given by the Algonquins which means wood used for snowshoes.

Around to the left, on the bank of Forest Lake, stand two totem poles. The first one, '*Al of The Gispudwada*' was carved by Art Sterritt in 1976, recognized internationally for his work protecting the Great Bear Rain Forest. In 1986, Earl Muldon carved the second totem pole, '*Mosquito*', and he was awarded the Order of Canada in 2011 for his cultural contributions.

Cross a bridge of flat stones and turn left, down to a small clearing in a stand of **9 – Douglas-firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)**. Records from more than a hundred years ago describe Douglas-firs that were over 400 feet high, which would have made this once the tallest tree species in the world. It took lumberjacks days to cut down such enormous trees, as depicted in this sculpture, '*The Last of the Giants*' by Janice Woode and Steve Paterson.

Return to the path which soon joins a paved path. On the other side is **10 - salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)**, an evergreen shrub that is popular with florists because the shiny leaves remain green for months after being cut. Salal berries have always been important for local First Nations, used to sweeten foods and dried for winter supplies. Walk left and at the corner of the lawn is a towering **11 - Western redcedar**, which is not a cedar at all but *Thuja plicata*, a conifer belonging to the Cypress Family. Western redcedar is the official tree of BC and has played a central role in the culture of the coastal First Nations for thousands of years. This tree was planted when the original golf course was laid out in 1911.

To the left of the Western redcedar, wide views open up on both sides of the path. On the right is the **Mountain Ash or Rowan Collection (*Sorbus species*)**, and the **Ash Collection (*Fraxinus species*)**, the trees laden with bunches of red, orange and yellow berries. Beyond the trees is the Great Lawn, once the sweeping fairways of the old golf course. Further along is Heather Pond and the Heather Garden, which represents a typical Scottish moorland with heather, heath, Scots pine and silver birch.

Beside the small stone bridge leading into the Heather Garden is a **12 - contorted filbert or corkscrew hazel (*Corylus avellana 'Contorta'*)**. Falling leaves reveal a mass of tightly twisted branches from which yellow catkins hang in winter. Scottish singer and comedian Sir Harry Lauder, (1870-1950), was once the highest paid entertainer in the world. He carried a curly stick made of the wood during his music hall performances and was so popular that this shrub was named '**Harry Lauder's Walking Stick**'.

Continue through the Perennial garden, passing a high evergreen hedge of **Irish yew (*Taxus baccata 'Fastigiata'*)** on the left and walking under three graceful **weeping beeches (*Fagus sylvatica 'Pendula'*)** which meet over the path at the end of the garden. Turn left along the Lavender Walk and although the flowers of **English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)** may be over, rub the leaves to release their lavender scent. At the top of the lawn on the right is what, at first, looks like a tall shrub that has lost all its leaves. This is a work by B.C. artist Alastair Heseltine called ***Salix iterum (Repeating Willow)***, made with woven willow shoots. Created in 2013, it will eventually decay and return to the earth.

Turn left along the Laburnum Walk where there are forty-four **13 – Voss's laburnum or hybrid goldenchain trees (*Laburnum × watereri 'Vossii'*)**. For three weeks in May and June, arching branches with long chains of bright yellow flowers form a canopy over the path. Though the tree is deciduous, the leaves do not change colour in the fall before dropping. Every part of the tree is poisonous, especially the seeds. At the end of the Walk, turn right to where the branches of a **14 - Himalayan pine (*Pinus wallichiana*)** overhang the path and large clusters of long, thin cones drip with resin. Some advice - don't touch the resin as it is very difficult to remove! Sugar maples are tapped for sap to make maple syrup and in the same way, Himalayan pines are tapped for their resin, which is distilled to make high quality turpentine.

Next, a stone arch frames the Formal Rose Garden, the beds laid out in geometric patterns called *parterres de broderie* ("embroidery patterns"). This pattern was inspired by the 16<sup>th</sup> century gardens of Versailles in France. In formal gardens, the beds may be enclosed by low, closely-clipped evergreen hedges of **15 - boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*)**. Herbs are also used and the corner beds here are planted with **Faassen's catmint (*Nepeta × faassenii 'Dropmore'*)** which attracts beneficial insects that feed on aphids and other harmful pests.

Go left down the steps from the Rose Garden, turn left again and then right. Ahead, on your left, is one of the most colourful trees in the Garden. The **16 - mountain ash (*Sorbus hupehensis 'Pink Pagoda'*)** is covered with bright pink berries that last into winter and are eaten by robins and thrushes. Take the small path beside the mountain ash to the top of the embankment for a good view of Livingstone Lake and the Visitor Centre, an award-winning, green building which opened in 2011. Follow the path to the right through the **Ornamental Grasses** collection, turn left over the wooden bridge and return to the Plaza.