

JUNE 2009 SELF-GUIDED TOUR

In this June 2009 edition of self-guided tours we salute rose lovers and those attending the World Rose Convention in Vancouver from June 18-24.

*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 area, you descend the central stairs through an avenue of **1 - kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi')** which provide a splendid entrance to the Garden. Kousa dogwoods occur in the wild in Japan, China and Korea where they vary from having white to green to dark pink bracts that surround the tiny flowers. They are one of 45 species of dogwoods distributed throughout the northern hemisphere and are grown mainly for their showy bracts, elegant habit, fruits and colourful autumn leaves. At the end of the dogwood 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 other path, under the Catalpa tree, turn left and follow the path to the Laburnum Walk of **2 - hybrid golden chain trees (*Laburnum* × *watereri* 'Vossii') and onion (*Allium*) species.** Proceeding along the path, enjoy the profuse, yellow pea-like blossoms of the laburnum, a truly gorgeous sight. But, beauty can be deceptive. Be certain to avoid ingesting laburnum, as all of its parts are highly toxic. Beneath this amazing golden show are many naturalized varieties of *Allium* that add an abundance of mauve colour to this pathway picture.

After the turn going up the Laburnum Walk, step onto the grass, to your right through a break in the trees, where you will see four beds containing **3 - heritage roses, defined as roses introduced before 1867.** Each bed has two or three classes of old roses: the first bed, Moss and Centifolia roses; the second bed, Gallica and Damask roses; 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 extended into autumn. The blooms are loosely double, in pinks and whites and are strongly scented. Further developments 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, the 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 but have been cultivated only 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, sometimes 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 and few were grown for beauty alone.

Gardeners at VanDusen practice sustainable gardening practices with roses by not using chemical-laden pesticides and fertilizers. Instead they are experimenting with compost tea and Neem oil this year as an anti-fungal treatment. Mulching beds with mature compost and applying nitrogen-rich alfalfa meal and blood meal provides the nutrients.

Now step back onto the path, proceed to the four corners path junction at the north end of the Perennial Garden, continue westerly to **4 - 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 unfortunate since it is neither a true fir nor a hemlock (*Tsuga*). Instead it is part of a separate small group, 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 the Captain Vancouver voyage of discovery in the late 1700s. Some time later, 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 here and there in 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 **5 - 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, **6 - 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 can be found in the brochure, *Sculpture Collection*, available on the deck on your way out.

Continue through the grassy break in rhododendrons to the paved pathway. Turn right until you come to a pathway going to your left and leading up to the waterfall, note the **7 - Himalayan blue poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*)** In early summer this deciduous perennial produces horizontal to pendant bright blue flowers with yellow stamens singly 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 arriving at the waterfall, observe the weeping tree on your right **8 - weeping maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba* 'Pendula')**. While the species is an erect tree, this Ginkgo is a weeping variety. Ginkgos are either male or female but fruits do not appear until the females are about 20 years old. These trees are very ancient plants, perhaps 300 million years older than the dinosaurs. Other than *Ginkgo biloba*, closely related species have all become extinct. "Maidenhair" refers to the distinct leaf shape and vein pattern which you can view close-up on this tree. Ginkgos are trees of temperate climes and are resistant to pollution and most pests.

Continue up the path noting the **9 - Japanese water irises and fringed irises (*Iris ensata* and *Iris japonica*)** on the way to the waterfall. At the **10 -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 being constructed in the early 1970s.

Continue along the path straight ahead until you come to a major paved pathway and you will see five **11 - Empress/princess trees (*Paulownia tomentosa*)** A fast growing specimen tree from East Asia. Grown for its showy flowers that are formed in autumn, its fragrant, 5 cm (2 inch) pinkish lilac flowers are borne in large upright stalks or panicles in late spring, during the time its bright light green leaves, to 30 cm (12 inches) in length, emerge.

Within view can be seen **12 - The Korean Pavilion**, the Expo 86 Republic of Korea pavilion which was later given to the garden. More recently, to celebrate the garden's 30th anniversary, the pavilion stain was restored to its original brilliance.

To bring you close to where you began this VanDusen Garden tour, proceed to the bottom (easterly) end of the Rhododendron Walk. Watch for **13 - dove tree or handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucreta*)** located in sight of the west parking lot gate, often used to enter the garden during special events such as the Festival of Lights or the Plant Sale. This specimen tree is normally found in woodlands of China. Its small flower heads are surrounded by showy white bracts, which give rise to its common names. Even when its flowering period is over, the dove tree's broad form can be enjoyed. You may follow the path paralleling the garden fence to return to the garden entrance.