

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

Plants have been associated with legends, myths, and superstitions since human beings have tried to understand the world around them. Many a garden may contain flora that was significant in the plant lore of our ancestors. The battle between good and evil was very real to them and plants were ascribed very powerful attributes. With Hallowe'en around the corner, we still find fascinating what our ancestors found frightening. This self-guided tour will take you to some examples of these plants. And don't worry. No ghosts or spirits will be hiding along the way. That we know of at least!

To begin, walk across the Plaza towards Livingstone Lake, take the steps or the ramp down on your right and take the path on your left leading past the two wooden sculptures and along the lake. At the water's edge stands a large multi-trunked **1 - red alder (*Alnus rubra*)**. Alders have had sinister powers attributed to them, perhaps because they can grow where other trees struggle. Or maybe it's because the sap can turn blood red when the bark is cut. However, they actually enrich the soil and reduce pollution, both of which are redeeming features.

Continue along the path until it ends at a view of Cypress Pond. Take a few steps to your left to a **2 - bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*)**. Did you know that planting a bay tree near your home might protect it from lightning and the evil power of witches? Very handy at this time of year. Close to the bay tree is a **3 - strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*)**, also named Cain-apple because its small round fruits resemble the drops of bloodshed by Cain's brother Abel, who became the first person murdered in the Bible - by Cain, no less.

Now retrace your steps and continue past the bench area and along the path skirting Cypress Pond until you come to a **4 - black elder (*Sambucus nigra*)**. There are several stories associated with black elder. It is believed that Christ's cross was made of elder. And it was once thought that Judas Iscariot hanged himself from an elder. This makes it a tree you do not wish to have near your house unless you situate it near your doorway to keep out witches. Otherwise, all occupants can expect ill-health. And to prevent a baby from becoming sick, do not place it in a cradle made of elder. Matter of fact, one shouldn't cut or even prune it without apologizing. By no means bring any cut elder into the house unless you want bad luck. The only time it would be appropriate to remove a sprig would be to place it in a coffin to protect the spirit of the dead. Until well into the nineteenth century, drivers of horse-drawn hearses carried a whip with an elder wood handle for the same reason. On a positive note, consider enjoying a glass of elder wine before bedtime!

When you come to a crossroads, turn left and walk down the path leading to the Floating Bridge. Cross the bridge and note the **5 - American sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)** on your right. "Liquid amber" refers to a gum called styrax or storax, used in the ancient world for perfumes and incense. It was probably the substance Moses was told by God to burn at the altar. It actually came, however, from an unrelated Middle Eastern tree called *Styrax officinalis*. Scenting the air was also thought to counteract dangerous airborne particles and holding perfumed gloves before your face in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was believed to shield you from the plague.

Now follow the pond edge to your left until you reach the **6 - Turkish hazel or filbert (*Corylus colurna*)**. In England, on Nutcrack night (Hallowe'en) people harvested and ate nuts from the hazel tree, a ritual accompanied by fortune-telling. Understandably the nuts were also associated with fertility. A good nut crop foretold a bumper crop of babies in the coming year! And keeping a double nut in your pocket might ward off toothache. And, of course, you could always use hazel wands for divination.

Take the mulch path close-by and follow it keeping left until you come to a paved pathway. Turn right and walk to some **7 - lavender (*Lavandula*)**. Planting this can apparently protect you from both witches and "the evil eye". So, is its lovely fragrance camouflage or part of its power?

Turn left and follow the path leading through the Southern Hemisphere Garden, turn right at the stone wall and follow the path down to the Zig-Zag Bridge. On your right at the top of the planting bed is a **8 - monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*)**. Pass by this tree very quietly; otherwise your talking might result in three years of bad luck! And if you see one planted by a cemetery, look up into the spiny branches to see if the Devil is hiding there to spy on a funeral.

Continue over the bridge and walk up the slight incline. Turn right at the crossroads ahead and walk through the Grotto. Once in the Heather Garden stay on the left path. Ahead on your left are some striking

**9 - Himalayan white birches (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*).** The European version of this tree was associated with superstition, particularly in Scotland. If you have a baby, you may want to pay attention. Fairies are always on the lookout for an unprotected baby so that they can steal the child and replace it with one of their own children – a changeling. To protect your baby from such a fate, place protective birch branches over its cradle. In both the Old and New Worlds birch bark itself was thought to have magical properties and was used to make cradles to protect infants. On New Year's Eve, you might try sweeping the old year out with a birch twig broom in preparation for a prosperous new year.

As you cross the stone bridge, notice another hazel on your left, this one a contorted hazel (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'), also called Harry Lauder's walking stick after the singer who carried a twisted cane while he entertained soldiers during the two world wars. Turn right and continue on the paved path past the alien-looking snakebranch spruce (*Picea abies* 'Virgata') until you come to grassed areas. On the left hand side are a group of ash trees (*Fraxinus*). Ash trees can grow tall and have deep roots, making them perfect sacred trees, with their crowns touching heaven and their roots, the underworld. Yggdrasil, the Norse Tree of Life, was traditionally an ash tree. Communication between the two worlds was facilitated by a squirrel running up and down the tree! The Norse god Odin created the first man from an ash tree. (In case you are interested, woman was created from an elm.) Among the magical properties associated with ashes is their supposed ability to repel snakes. Ash leaves apparently cure snakebites (when mixed with a "pleasant white wine").

Further along, you will see a group of berry-laden mountain ashes (*Sorbus*) or rowan trees. In Europe, rowan trees were important to the ancient Celts, who hung twigs over their doorways to keep away the spirits of the dead. Hundreds of years later it was considered a protection against evil spirits and on Hallowe'en, people carried rowan springs around with them. Please retrace your steps now and return to where you exited the Heather Garden. Walk straight ahead to the crossroads and to the left edge of the Perennial Garden. Here you will find an **10 – Irish yew hedge (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata')** creating a clipped, formal back-drop for the plants displayed here. Yew hedges have been associated with death and funerals for a long time. Mourners in funeral processions customarily carried yew boughs to the grave and left them there. Bringing them home was believed to result in death among the family by that year's end.

As you face the Perennial Garden, turn left and continue along the paved path leading to the rose gardens. Pass the Laburnum Walk and Heritage Rose Garden area and walk through the stone archway leading into the Formal Rose Garden. Keep left and walk towards the stone steps. You may pass the silver-leafed and stalked mullein plant (*Verbascum*), or what remains of it, leaning out over the wall just past the archway. Apparently mullein stalks were soaked in tallow and used by witches to light their Black Sabbats, such as Hallowe'en, when they worshipped the devil. That is why mullein stalks are still referred to as witches' tapers.

Now turn left, walk to the end of the path and turn right. Stay on this path a little ways until you come to an **11 – hawthorn (*Crataegus*).** Hawthorns, like the English hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata* 'Autumn Glory') were believed to be often planted by fairies, so treat them with respect. Do not damage or cut these trees. Otherwise, you may experience barrenness, serious illness or even death when the fairies work their revenge on you. Treat them right and hawthorns will guarantee good crops and even protect against lightning and black magic. Hawthorns are also one of the trees associated with Christ's crown of thorns. This led sailors to carry hawthorn branches on board for protection. One such ship was the Mayflower.

Watch for and enter a mulch path branching off toward the left. The **12 - Glastonbury thorn (*Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora')** is a cultivar of the common hawthorn. Legend has it that Joseph of Arimathea (who had buried Jesus in his own intended tomb) came to Britain to found a church. As he sat to rest, he stuck his staff into the ground, and despite the fact it was winter, it burst into flower. He then built Glastonbury Abbey on the site.

Take the pathway on your right heading through the grasses and with a view of Livingstone Lake on your left. Turn left at the paved pathway, walk past the Jade Fountain and cross over the bridge. On your right, just past the bridge leading to the Plaza, you will see a **13 – Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*),** native to southeastern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The English oak (*Quercus robur*) was revered by the ancient Druids who believed it provided protection and should never be cut. Otherwise, punishment by fire or sickness would result. The oak was also thought to help to foretell the future. For example, finding an ant inside an acorn would predict a good grain crop in the coming year. Finding a spider presaged pestilence, a fly, wars and a small worm, plenty in the coming year.

You are now back at the Visitor Centre. We hope that you have enjoyed your tour through a portion of our 55 acre Garden. As Hallowe'en approaches, you may look at the plants around you from a different perspective. We may think that science has won over superstition, but those myths, legends and stories still spark our imagination. And maybe you will take a second look at that acorn you pick up next time!