

VanDusen Botanical Garden
5251 Oak Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6M 4H1

Seasonal Self-Guided Tour
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Please follow the black and white directional arrow and number signs for this tour

VanDusen Botanical Garden welcomes you. This self-guided tour will take you through a selection of our 22 hectare garden. It is home to over 7,500 kinds of plants from around the world and the tour will point out a few of these. A botanical garden is a living library with its collections scientifically organized and labeled. Botanical gardens allow the public to experience and learn about plants they otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to see, and through *ex situ* conservation they help to conserve plant species for future generations.

Leave the deck by the ramp on the right and stand beneath the golden yellow foliage of a pair of **1 – golden false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia')** The species was named after Jean Robin, a botanist employed by King Henry IV of France. The luminous foliage of other golden-leaved trees can be seen if you scan the wooded horizon on the left from this vantage point. These splashes of brilliant colour highlight the handsome and varied collection of trees in this botanical garden.

As you stroll down the path, you can see a large green boulder on the right which forms the base of a water fountain. This is BC nephrite jade, mined in Northern British Columbia and widely used locally for carving and jewelry. Note the ceramic pots of various sizes in front of the flower bed on the left. These house our collection of insect-eating or carnivorous plants whose habitat in wetlands and bogs is threatened. Look for the tiny **2 – venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*)**, one of a very small group of plants capable of rapid movement to capture insects; an example of an active trap. The provincial flower of Newfoundland and Labrador, **3 – pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*)**, grows in bogs from Manitoba eastwards and is a passive trap which collects water in its low lying pitchers to drown its prey. If you look closely you may see trapped bees and flies. Since bogs lack certain essential plant nutrients, carnivorous plants have evolved the amazing ability to collect these missing nutrients by capturing and digesting small insects!

Walk beyond the jade water fountain and take the bark mulched path on your left which leads along the top of a rise overlooking Livingstone Lake. This area illustrates the varied textures and hues that can be achieved with the imaginative use of drought tolerant grasses. Such plantings survive well through the warm, dry days of summer and demand little of our precious water supply at this time of year. Note the attractive shade of **4 – blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)**, a tufted perennial grass that does well in dry, sunny locations.

From the path, pause to take in the view across the lake. On a sunny day you will see many turtles basking on the warm rocks around the lake. These semi-aquatic turtles are **red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)**, some of the many creatures who find a home in this garden. Move along the path between the grasses, passing, on the right, the gnarled structure of **5 – common quince (*Cydonia oblonga*)**. This tree produces the down-covered yellow fruit used to make delicious quince paste, much loved in Europe and Australia. On the opposite side of the path are two fragrant young **6 – western red cedars (*Thuja plicata*)**. This tree, which can grow to over 35 m., is the cornerstone of West Coast First Nations' culture. Used for healing and spiritual purposes, it is also used to make canoes, totem poles, masks, bentwood boxes, hats, house posts etc.

Follow the path to the steps, and note on the left **7 – Kamchatka bugbane (*Actaea simplex* 'Brunette' [Atropurpurea Group])** bearing tall, graceful white flowers against striking dark foliage. Ahead is an eye-catching, modern palette of more dark-leaved plants offset with brilliant acid greens. Look across the path at the striking **8 – golden creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea')** planted with **9 – black lilyturf (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens')**

From the steps, follow this path to the right where this colour scheme continues featuring many familiar plants dressed in avant garde hues.

Continue along this path until the lake comes into view again. You will notice at the water's edge a spectacular plant **10 – giant rhubarb or gunnera (*Gunnera manicata*)** with huge, sharply toothed, deep green leaves borne on prickly stalks which can reach up to 2.5 m in length.

This is another interesting plant that has adapted to grow in wet, nutrient-poor locations. Gunnera has a close symbiotic relationship with cyanobacteria, which live in glands located along the stems and provide the plant with essential nitrogen. Everything about this plant is impressive, even the small greenish-red flowers which appear on enormous spikes, clearly visible beneath the leaves. It is also an ancient plant, one quite familiar to dinosaurs!

Follow the narrow path to the left which hugs the shoreline of Heron Lake and passes another ancient plant **11 – Japanese umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*)**. The name refers to the clusters of needles which resemble the spokes of an umbrella. This is a much revered tree in Japan but it has been over-logged and is now officially an endangered species. Proceed carefully along this path by the water then pause in the dappled shade of **12 – Borne weeping beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Bornyensis'*)**. Mature weeping trees of many kinds are a delightful feature of this garden. Peep through the branches to the grove of tall, dark **Douglas firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)** across the inlet for a glimpse of a striking new addition to the garden.

This Haida ocean-going canoe, named **Black Eagle**, is poised as if ready to launch into the lake. Made of fiberglass, it measures 15.2 metres and was cast from a mould of **Bill Reid's** original **Lootas (Wave Eater)** dugout canoe created in 1986 for Expo '86.

For a closer look follow the path and take the stone bridge on the right into the grove of Douglas firs.

Leave the grove and proceed up the lawn between newly planted beds of dwarf conifers and join the main path, turning right to walk alongside the **Mountain Ash (*Sorbus*)** collection, trees which provide an abundant feast of fall berries for the birds in the garden. Turn left at the next junction. On the right is a bank of strikingly architectural **13 – cutleaf staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina 'Dissecta'*)**. The species is native to Eastern North America and is named for the soft velvety covering on its branches. Follow the signs to the waterfall, up the hill and to the right, to one of the most popular features in the garden. Here you can sit for a moment and enjoy the sound of falling water in a spectacular wooded setting.

Take the path leading to the Fern Dell and look for two mature, stunning trees, one each side of the path **14 – Chinese tulip tree (*Liriodendron chinense*)**. Look up and examine the interesting leaves on this tree – once you have seen them you will always recognize their distinctive shape. They are squarish, distinctly lobed at the tips, hollowed at the base, with a pointed lobe at each side. The tree bears green and yellow flowers in early summer.

Take a moment to look into the sheltered microclimate of the Fern Dell, where stately **15 – Tasmanian tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*)** with their massive trunks form a back drop for another fascinating collection of plants. Ferns have neither seeds or flowers but reproduce by spores. Look closely at a few specimens and see if you can find the spores!

Head down the slope to the Korean Pavilion, a gift to the garden from the Korean people after Expo '86 which was held in Vancouver. It offers splendid views of the Great Lawn, a reminder that this garden was once a golf course. Walk down across the lawn, heading towards the magnificent beech collection where this self-guided tour ends. Follow the signs to the Garden Entrance or turn left at the Lathhouse and, for a grand finale, explore the delights of the Perennial Garden.