

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 atrium and walk across the patio towards Livingston Lake. Turn to admire the sculptural roof lines of the splendid Visitor Centre. The petal-like curves were inspired by the shape of a native orchid and offer a fitting botanical overture to the delights which lie ahead within this garden.

Follow the path to the left which crosses a wooden bridge then proceed up a slight incline until you can see a large green boulder on your left which forms the base of a water fountain. This is BC nephrite jade, mined in Northern British Columbia and is used locally for carving and jewelry. Continue up the incline towards the Bentall Pool and note the low pots in front of the flowerbed on the right. These house our collection of insect-eating or carnivorous plants whose habitat in wetlands and bogs is threatened. Look for plants that are tall, yellow-green tube-like pitchers with round 'mouths' topped with raised lids, often with red veins. The strikingly odd **yellow pitcher plant (*Sarracenia flava*)**, produces a drug in its nectar-like secretion on the lip of the pitcher which attracts insects inside where they become paralyzed and eventually die. Since bogs lack certain essential plant nutrients, carnivorous plants have evolved this amazing ability to collect these missing nutrients by capturing and digesting small insects!

Turn and note the golden yellow foliage providing dappled shade to the left of this area of the garden near the pathway leading to the building in the background. It belongs to a pair of **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 from this vantage point. These splashes of brilliant colour highlight the handsome and varied collection of trees in this botanical garden.

Retrace your steps to 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. On the left and the right side of the path, note the attractive shade of **little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* 'The Blues')**, a tufted perennial grass that does well in dry, sunny locations. Continue on the path until you come to a small tree on your left **Glastonbury thorn (*Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora')** The latter term refers to the fact that the tree can bloom twice in one year: once in spring and again in winter. This much-revered form of the common thorn is associated with Glastonbury Abbey in England and with many ancient myths and legends which you may wish to investigate later!

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* subsp. *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 **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 **western red cedars (*Thuja plicata*)**. This tree, which can grow to over 35m in height 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 and house posts.

Follow the path to the steps and you will be in the much admired Black Garden. To the left of the steps admire **Kamchatka bugbane (*Actaea simplex* 'Brunette')** bearing tall, graceful white flowers set against imposing 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 **golden creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea')** planted with **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 brightly contrasting hues.

Continue along this path until the lake comes into view again. You will notice at the water's edge a spectacular plant, **giant rhubarb (*Gunnera manicata*)** with huge, sharply toothed, deep green leaves borne on prickly stalks which can reach up to 2.5 m in length, with one of the largest leaves of any plant in the world! 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 *Gunnera* 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 path to the left down to the water and across the Zig Zag bridge to the Southern Hemisphere Garden, dominated by the spiny silhouettes of **monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*)** The tree is native to central and southern Chile and western Argentina and is named after the native Araucanians who once relied on the nuts or seeds from this tree to enrich their diet. It is the national tree of Chile but severe forest fires there in 2001-02 drastically reduced their numbers and the tree is now classified as endangered.

Follow the path up a slight incline and take the steps to the right. Here you are surrounded by many fine specimens of this tree, as well as other plants from the same region. Pause and look back across the lake for a fine view of some of the garden you have just explored. Retrace your path back down the steps and walk straight ahead towards the western red cedar on your left with which you are now quite familiar! Take the bark mulched path on your left. A little way into the garden bed stands a small **Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*)** from south-eastern Australia. As one of the oldest trees, known only to exist through fossil records, it was discovered in 1994 by David Noble, a 'bushwalker' with considerable botanical knowledge, in the Blue Mountains just 200kms west of Sydney. With less than 100 adult trees now known to exist in the wild, Botanical Gardens around the world help secure the survival of this exciting find by nurturing specimens such as the one you see here. *Wollemia* is a genus of coniferous tree in the family 'Araucariaceae' and molecular studies suggest it is *possibly* related to the monkey puzzle, their ancestry dating from a time when Australian, South America and Antarctica were linked as a supercontinent known as 'Gondwana' many millions of years ago.

Return to the main path, turn left and continue straight ahead and follow the sign to The Giant Redwoods. At the end of the path on the left is a magnificent stand of young **Giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)** planted in 1970 when they were about 2 m tall. They are now over 21 m tall and can grow to be the largest trees by volume in the world. The trees you see here are especially attractive with their huge lower limbs dipping gracefully to the ground. As they mature, these lower branches are gradually lost, significantly changing their appearance. Walk into the centre of the grove; it is cool and quite awe-inspiring.

Turn left at the crossroads and follow the path with a view of Heron Lake to your left. Ahead is an area featuring many-hued Japanese maples. At the far end of the left flower bed there is a bark mulched path which leads toward the water's edge. Follow this path and you will notice a bench on your left with a much-photographed view across the lake. Pause here for a moment to notice the elegantly branching small trees in various colours and shapes that soften the banks on both sides of the lake. These **Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*)** are native to Japan, China and Korea but they are now popular all over the world, appreciated for their delicate foliage, graceful shape and compact habit. They are one of the most widely cultivated trees and centuries of breeding have produced hundreds of different cultivars. Leave the bench and turn right, following the edge of the lake passing further examples from the Japanese maple collection, to a small stone bridge across a tiny stream which feeds into Heron Lake. Take the steps up an incline for another striking vista.

Directly ahead is a grove of tall, dark **Douglas-firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)** For a closer look, cross the lawn to see these magnificent trees with their deeply furrowed, fire resistant bark. The trees here are about 100 years old; some specimens in the Old Growth forests on Vancouver Island are as much as 500 years old. The commercially valuable wood from the Douglas-fir played a significant role in the early prosperity of British Columbia. See if you can find on the ground any of the decorative, soft pine cones from these trees. They will seem small and dainty for such large, majestic trees!

Leave the grove and proceed to your right, up the lawn between beds of young conifers and join the main path. Turn left and walk down the path towards the Heather Pond on the left. You cannot fail to notice the strange, draping branches of a multi-limbed tree on the left of the path. This towering **snakebranch spruce (*Picea abies* 'Virgata')** is a variant of a Norway spruce. Pause for a moment to read the fascinating information about this tree on the interpretive panel beside the path. Look up to see the huge, long, curved pine cones that this tree produces.

Take the path straight ahead to admire the blooms in the Perennial Garden or cross over the stone bridge and in front of the Scottish shelter to walk through the Heather Garden. Continue around the massive grey lava rocks which form a grotto leading back to the shore of Livingstone Lake and the completion of our tour. Take the path along the edge of the lake, passing the spiny *Gunnera* leaves, to return to the Garden entrance.