

Please follow the directional arrows and numbers 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 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 ceramic pots of various sizes 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 **1 – yellow pitcher plant (*Sarracenia flava*)**, produces a drug in its nectar-like secretion on the lip of the pitcher which attracts, paralyzes and eventually kills the captive insect. 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!

Close by is **2 – red pitcher plant (*Sarracenia rubra*)**, which 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 some trapped bees and flies.

Turn and note the golden yellow foliage providing dappled shade to the left of this area of the garden. It belongs to a pair of **3 - 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 **4 – little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* 'The Blues')**, a tufted perennial grass that does well in dry, sunny locations.

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 **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 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. Note on the left **7 - 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 **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 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 **10 – 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. 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* 'Borneyensis')**. 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 closer look, follow the path up the slope and take the stone bridge on the right into this stand of stately Douglas-firs, with their deeply furrowed, fire resistant bark. 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 up the lawn between newly planted beds of dwarf conifers and join the main path. Across the lawn, visible through the branches of our Mountain Ash Collection, stand a stunning line of **Himalayan white birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*)** their silvery outlines in stark contrast to the darker landscape beyond.

On the right, on the far side of the main path, 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 on 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 set the scene for another fascinating collection of plants. Ferns have neither seeds nor 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 is at present awaiting restoration. From this vantage point, there are 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 and colours of the Perennial Garden.