

A SENSE OF SPRING

Self-guided Program

An educational resource for self guided sensory exploration at VanDusen Botanical Garden
When to Visit: May / June
Grade Level: K - 2

This self guided tour takes you to some of the more spectacular parts of the Garden in the spring season. Exact blooming times are in the hands of Mother Nature, so you may find not everything in this tour will be in bloom when you visit. As you walk along, be sure to look way up and way down, so as not to miss any of the beauty unfolding.

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

- preparing your visit
- activities with step-by-step instructions
- activity worksheet for copying
- Garden map (separate PDF file)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Please refer to our website at <http://vandusengarden.org/learn/school-programs/> and go to “Self-Guided Field Trips” for a detailed list of curriculum points covered in this self-guided program.



PLAN YOUR TRIP

BOOK YOUR VISIT

Visit our website at <http://vandusengarden.org/register> or call 604-257-8423

TIMING & ITINERARY

We recommend about 90 minutes for this tour. Suggested times below are for the activities only and does not include walking time unless otherwise noted. You can customize your tour depending on what you feel to be most relevant for your class. Refer to the garden map that accompanies this guide for activity locations to help plan your route. If you'd like to visit the Elizabethan Maze, add another 20-30 minutes to your visit.

Stops for the Senses	30 min (includes walking)
Mystery Bags	10 min
Earth Art	15 min
Discovering Together	10 min
Under the Trees - A Sensory Poem	10 min
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Total	75 min

ORGANIZE YOUR GROUP

We suggest an **adult:student ratio of 1:10** and recommend dividing into small groups of 10 students. Smaller groups will make it easier to move through the stops and will allow everyone an opportunity to participate in activities. Provide activity information to parents so they are confident leading a group.

VISIT THE GARDEN

We recommend visiting the Garden before bringing your class on the tour to familiarize yourself with the plants, the Garden, and navigating between stops. We provide a **complimentary admission** for teachers to prepare for the tour. Please contact us at ngray@vandusen.org to arrange a visit.

Remember, plants change with the season, and there will be times when not all plants on the *Stops for the Senses* activity will be visible or blooming. Part of the fun is searching for plants with students and perhaps discovering other plants in the process.

PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS & CHAPERONES

- provide a copy of this guide and the Sense of Spring map to each adult who will be leading a group
- fabric or other opaque bags for "Mystery Bags" activity - One for each group
- pencils and paper or printed worksheet for "Under the Trees" activity - One for each student

Please discuss Garden guidelines on page 3 with your group before coming to the Garden.

GARDEN GUIDELINES

- VanDusen Botanical Garden is a place of beauty, education and conservation with many plants and animals to see. Please do not pick any living plants or plant parts.
- Respect the wildlife in the Garden - this is their home. Spend time observing the wildlife but do not scare or hurt animals in any way (including insects).
- Respect your fellow Garden visitors: please do not run or make lots of noise in areas where other visitors might be enjoying some quiet time or a guided tour.
- Keep to pathways and grassy areas when walking to protect the plants from accidental damage. Look for small defined trails that take you through the garden beds.
- Place all garbage in garbage cans, or appropriate recycling bins. If you can't find a garbage can or recycle bin, carry your waste until you find one.
- When visiting indoor areas of the garden (such as washrooms and the Arrival Hall. Keep noise to a minimum and remember that other visitors and staff use these spaces as well.
- Have fun and enjoy the amazing world of plants!

GENERAL GARDEN FAQ'S

When does the Garden open? Garden hours change with the seasons. For more information please visit our website at <http://vandusengarden.org/plan-your-visit/hours-admission>

Where can we have lunch? Once inside the garden, you will find a covered picnic area outside the Visitor Centre if you follow the Centre's windows to your left all the way to the end of the paved area. There are recycling and garbage bins here, as well as a wooden chest to stow your bags while you explore the Garden. This box is not secure so please do not leave any valuables. Keep in mind that other visiting groups may also be using this area. If the picnic area is occupied, you are welcome to eat anywhere in the Garden. The Great Lawn or beside the Maze on the amphitheatre seats are popular options. Please **do not** use the tables on the plaza in front of the Visitor Centre.

Where are the washrooms? Inside the Visitor Centre as well as at the opposite end of the Garden in the offices building near Gate 5. You will also find portable toilets throughout the Garden. It's best to have your group use the washrooms in the Visitor Centre before beginning your visit.

How long does it take to walk to the Maze? Allow up to 20 minutes to walk to the Maze from the Visitor Centre, and another 20 minutes to explore it. You may wish to make a stop during the *Stops for the Senses* activity when you visit the Fern Dell which is close to the Maze.

Questions? Please email us at ngray@vandusen.org or call 604-257-8423

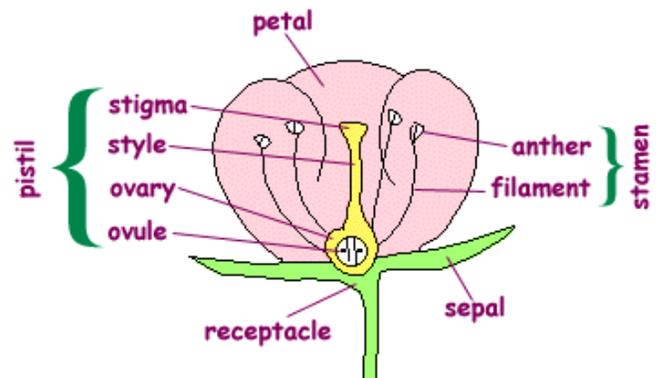
STOPS FOR THE SENSES (30 MINS)

Stops are numbered on the map that accompanies this guide. You may visit them in order, or choose those that interest you most. There are plant name labels in the beds and on trees to help you identify plants in this list.

Start: Begin your tour by exiting the main doors of VanDusen's Visitor Centre. Take a moment to use your **sense of sight** and admire the view. What is the first thing that catches your eyes out here?

Stop 1: The Fragrance Garden is full of plants with distinct scents. Take a few minutes to explore the plants here using your **sense of smell**. Which one(s) are your favourite? Right next to the Fragrance Garden is the Herb Garden. Sniff around here for a bit - use your fingers to gently rub the leaves and then smell them. What do you think people might use some of these herbs for?

Stop 2: Loderi Rhododendron Path – follow this bark mulch path to surround yourself with colour and fragrance through the Loderi rhododendron collection. Look out for “Loderi King George”, described by many as the finest of the Loderi Group, it has large pink-white blooms and is slightly scented. On a warm day, the scent from the rhododendrons on this path is more pronounced. What do they smell like to you? Which one is has your favourite colour of bloom? The large size of rhododendron flowers makes them perfect for looking at flower parts. Can you point out some of the parts?



Stop 3: Dove tree (*Davidia involucrata*) - In May, large white bracts (which are actually modified leaves) hang from the branches hiding small greenish-white clusters of flowers. Look up and see if you can guess why this large tree is also called the handkerchief or ghost tree.

Stop 4: *Rhododendron fulvum* - Look for a large rhododendron shrub with large, dark green glossy leaves. Gently feel with your fingers for the fine hairs on underside of its leaves. Try feeling under the leaves of other rhododendrons on the path to compare them.

Stop 5: Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). The common name of these ferns is derived from their fronds which resemble...what do you think? Ostrich feathers! The ostrich fern's immature fronds are known as fiddleheads, are edible, and have a flavour similar to asparagus or green beans. We won't be eating these ones today.

Stop 6: Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) - Look for a cinnamon-brown coloured tree with peeling, papery bark. Admire the different patterns and textures that the bark creates. Do you see anything in the patterns, i.e.: faces, animals, etc...?

Stop 7: Pigsqueak (*Bergenia purpurascens*) - Would you like to hear a pig squeak? Look for a plant that is low to the ground with large, dark green, round leaves that are pink underneath. Gently rub one of the thick, leathery leaves between your fingers. Can you hear a grunting noise?

Stop 8: Fern Dell - This area of the garden is full of dozens of different kinds of ferns. Spend some time walking through the area and count up how many different ferns you can find. Some of them have interesting names or leaf shapes - share your favourite with the group and explain why you like it.

Stop 9: The Laburnum Walk - The bright yellow hybrid goldenchain trees (*Laburnum × watereri 'Vossii'*) that surround you give off a scent and are beautifully contrasted by the round, puffy purple **alliums** planted below.
Note: the seeds of this tree are highly toxic!

ACTIVITES

Do as many of the following activities as you like at anytime during your tour, possibly between any of the *Stops for the Senses* on page 4.

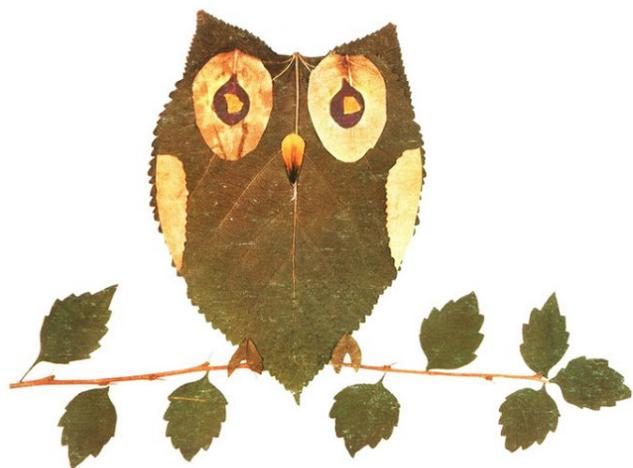
1) MYSTERY BAGS (10 MINS)

With cloth or other opaque bags, collect a few natural items during your walk. After you've collected a few, ask students to touch the hidden objects and try to guess what each one is, perhaps finding an example in the Garden. **Remember to stay on pathways and return the natural items to the Garden before you leave.**

2) EARTH ART (15 MINS)

Find an open area (eg: the great lawn or near the maze or Forest Lake). Spend some time looking for and gathering natural objects that have fallen on the ground nearby, such as leaves, seeds, flower petals, interesting pebbles, sticks etc...Be thoughtful and considerate of the plants and the landscaping of the Garden as you collect. Items on the edges of garden beds can be taken as long as they are not attached to plants and you do not need to walk into the beds to retrieve them.

Come together as a group in the open area again and create some 'earth art' on the ground. Think about colour, shape and texture while you work. You may want to make something abstract, or perhaps make something that resembles a plant or animal. Some example images follow:



Earth art is meant to decay back into nature, so take some photos if you like, but please leave your artwork in the garden for others to enjoy and allow it to return to the earth!

3) DISCOVERING TOGETHER (10 MINS)

This activity is best done in a large area that the children can explore on their own such as around the Great Lawn or near the Elizabethan Maze. Students will work in partners.

Objectives:

- Students will use their senses of touch and smell to explore objects in nature
- Students will be actively involved in teaching their classmates

No materials required, except for one natural object that you picked up previously that has an interesting smell or texture.

What to do:

- Gather all students and adults into a circle
- Ask for one student to be a volunteer. Ask them to close their eyes and you give them the natural object
- Ask your volunteer to use descriptive words to describe how the natural object smells or feels. Let them open their eyes to see what the object was.
- Now tell students they are going to work in pairs and they have to find objects to show their partner
- One of the pair will have to close their eyes while the other seeks interesting natural objects.
- The partner that can see carefully leads the other to the natural object (such as a plant to touch to smell), or gives an object to their partner
- The one with the eyes closed has to use descriptive words to describe it.
- They can alternate after each object

Guidelines for activity:

- The partner that can see is responsible for the safety of their partner
- Don't lead partner to anything that they wouldn't want to touch or smell
- Give them their boundaries for the area to explore

Summarize by asking the group as a whole:

- What was the most interesting natural object that you felt or smelled?
- Did you enjoy finding things for your partner to experience? Why?
- Would anyone like to take the whole group to see any of the natural objects they experienced?

4) UNDER THE TREES – A SENSORY POEM (10 MINS)

Recommended location: the Great Lawn

Ask each child to choose a tree nearby that they think is special and sit down underneath it quietly for 5 - 10 minutes. Suggest they focus on the following:

- Take time to listen to the sounds of the trees and wildlife around you.
- Feel the ground beneath the tree and the parts of the tree you can reach – the roots, trunk and bark, low branches and leaves.
- What woodland smells do you notice? Does your tree smell at all?
- Look closely at different parts of the tree. What colour is the bark, leaves, flowers or seeds? Are there any patterns in the bark or flowers? Are there any holes or signs that animals have visited this tree?

Using their observations and discoveries invite them to write a tree poem.

For example, finish each sentence: (You may use the worksheet on page 5 for this activity.)

Under the trees I saw...

Under the trees I heard ...

Under the trees I smelled ...

Under the trees I touched ...

Under the trees I felt ...



Under the trees

at VanDusen Botanical Garden

written by:

Under the trees I saw...

Under the trees I heard...

Under the trees I smelled ...

Under the trees I touched ...

Under the trees I felt ...