

**Please follow the black and white number and arrow signs. Parts of the tour are not wheelchair accessible.**

A treasure is something that is special, important or valuable and in this garden there are treasures of every kind. Today's tour is a treasure hunt. You will find plants that are golden, rare or exceptional and some that are highly valued by collectors or which have extraordinary stories of discovery and survival. For those who treasure experiences there will be views and vistas, the sight and sound of water, and shades of green in dramatic contrast with the jewel-toned colours of fall.

From the plaza, take the ramp to your right to the Eastern North American garden. Where the path divides, turn left and a few steps further, on your right is a young **1 - Franklin tree (*Franklinia alatamaha*)**. Originally discovered in 1765 along the Altamaha River in Georgia by John Bartram and his son William, it was named in honour of John's friend, Benjamin Franklin. William returned to Georgia in 1773 and collected seeds, but by 1803 the tree was extinct in the wild. The tree in front of you, like every Franklin tree that exists today, is descended from those seeds collected by William Bartram nearly 250 years ago.

The gravel path slopes down past several **2 – red maple trees (*Acer rubrum*)** on the left. The maple tree is a national treasure, officially designated Canada's tree in 1996, while the maple leaf has been a symbol of Canada for as long as 300 years. The Canadian flag was introduced in 1965 but the red leaf on the flag is an artist's version and not the leaf of any specific maple species. Canada's official tartan is the Maple Leaf tartan, the pattern woven in the green of the maple's summer leaves and the red of its leaves in fall.

Follow the path to cross the floating bridge over the R. Roy Forster Cypress Pond, named after the Garden's first Curator and Garden Director. On the right is a grove of **3 - bald or swamp cypress trees (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*)**, easy to recognize by their foliage which is feathery and now turning from green to gold and bronze before the needles drop. The bald cypress is a deciduous conifer, one of about 20 conifer species that are exceptions to the rule that conifers are evergreens. Around the base of these trees are knobby bald cypress 'knees' (**pneumatophores**), which are projections of the roots. They can reach a height of eleven feet but the purpose of these 'knees' is unknown.

Step off the bridge and onto the gravel path ahead that leads through the bamboo collection. The first tree on the left is exceptional and critically endangered. The **4 - coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)** is the tallest tree species in the world and the record holder is called Hyperion, measuring 379 feet tall and 21 feet in diameter. In the wild, coast redwoods only live within 30 miles of the northern coast of California and 40% of their moisture intake is from sea fog that condenses on the leaves and drips to the ground and roots below.

Just ahead on your left, the next tree is **5 - dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)**, another deciduous conifer with leaves now turning gold. It is a lost-and-found treasure. First described from fifty million-year-old fossils and believed to be extinct, there was a stunning discovery in 1944 when a living tree was found in a forest in China. At the end of the path, on the opposite corner, is a grove of another exceptional tree. Native to California, the **6 - giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)** is the largest tree in the world by volume. The record holder, called General Sherman, is 271 feet tall, almost four times the height of these trees. For a different view, stand in the centre of the circle of sequoias and look up through the branches to the sky.

Stay on the paved path on the left of the giant sequoias until you come to a very large tree on the right, partly overhanging the path. The **7 - western redcedar** is not a cedar at all but ***Thuja plicata***, a conifer belonging to the Cypress Family. The tree has played a central role in the culture of coastal First Nations for thousands of years, so essential that it is called The Tree of Life. Nearly every part of the tree is used, including the wood and bark from which canoes, totem poles, masks and baskets are made.

Next to the western redcedar is a narrow path and it is hard to miss the **8 - *Gunnera manicata***, also known as giant rhubarb or dinosaur food. Native to the South American Andes mountains and found mainly in Brazil and Chile, it is one of the largest perennials in the world. The largest leaf ever recorded was in 2011 in Dorset, England and measured 11 feet wide. In Vancouver, gunnera grows at the northern edge of its range so in October the leaves are cut down to provide a protective cover in winter.

Cross the wooden zig-zag bridge with its wide view of Heron Lake where you may see a heron, one of 88 birds identified in the Garden. The path curves to the left but keep right when it divides, through the Grotto formed of

black basalt. A grotto is a natural or artificial cave, popular in Italian and French formal gardens in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Originally, this was called the Fern Grotto and as you enter the Heather Garden, follow the path to your left which is bordered on the left by a variety of **9 – ferns**. ‘Fern madness’ was a name given to the Victorian craze for collecting ferns. They picked them, planted them and painted them. Fern designs were everywhere, from pottery to wallpaper. The Victorians were such keen collectors that they pushed some rare species of fern to the edge of extinction.

Continue past the Scottish shelter and cross the small stone bridge with Heather Pond on the right, then turn left through the Perennial Garden. The high, evergreen hedge, running the length of the garden on the left, is **Irish yew (*Taxus baccata* ‘Fastigiata’)**. In 2014, an ancient treasure was discovered in Wales. An Irish yew tree in a churchyard was estimated to be over 5000 years old, one of the oldest living plants on earth.

Walk under the three graceful **10 - weeping beeches (*Fagus sylvatica* ‘Pendula’)** that meet over the path at the end of the Perennial garden. In 1847, an American horticulturalist, Samuel Bowne Parsons, was travelling in Belgium and bought a weeping beech seedling in a small pot to take back to his nursery in Queens, New York. It is said that every weeping beech in North America is descended from that tree. Turn left up the Lavender Walk, then left again along the Laburnum Walk with its forty-four **11 - Voss’s laburnum or hybrid goldenchain trees (*Laburnum* × *watereri* ‘Vossii’)**. For three weeks in May and June, arching branches with long chains of flowers form a golden canopy over the path.

At the end of the avenue of goldenchain trees is a **12 - goldenrain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)**, with an interpretive sign. Turn right along the winding path to the stone arch entrance to the Formal Rose Garden with low, closely clipped hedges of **box (*Buxus sempervirens*)** edging the beds. The fashion for rose gardens was started by Empress Josephine. Married to Napoleon from 1796-1809, she was known by her name Rose until she met him. A passionate collector of rare plants, her favourite flowers were roses. She paid plant hunters to find new roses for her and at Malmaison, her estate outside Paris, she had over 250 species, the largest collection of roses in the world.

Throughout history, plant hunters have travelled to distant countries, often at great risk, to search for new species. The bronze busts of three famous 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century plant hunters, Carl Linnaeus, David Douglas and Archibald Menzies, are displayed in the Rose Garden. The bronze sundial in the middle of the Garden stands on a base of nephrite jade. There are two types of jade, jadeite and nephrite, and BC has the largest deposits of nephrite jade in the world. Mined in northern British Columbia, it is used for jewellery and carving and is BC’s official gemstone.

Leave the Rose Garden under the wrought iron arch. The spreading tree on the opposite corner is a VanDusen treasure planted on August 30, 1975, the official opening day of the Garden. It is a **13 - golden catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides* ‘Aurea’)**, also known as Indian bean tree or cigar tree. With a low stone wall on your right, take the path that slopes up from the golden catalpa and continues between two **14 – flower borders**. Tropical plants grow here in the summer and in the fall, the tender plants are moved to overwinter in the greenhouses. Those that remain are wrapped in straw and plastic to protect them during the cold weather, and the borders are then prepared for spring.

In October this year, over 12,000 spring bulbs will be planted throughout the Garden - and treated as buried treasure by the squirrels. Two thirds of the bulbs are tulips and most of them are planted in these two borders. ‘Tulip mania’ seized Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and as prices rose to extraordinary levels, people exchanged their houses, their land or their life savings for just one tulip bulb until the speculative bubble burst in 1637. In 18<sup>th</sup> century France, Madame de Pompadour started a craze for hyacinths. Other plants that have inspired fashion and frenzy include chrysanthemums, geraniums, orchids, primulas, rhododendrons, snowdrops, sunflowers, waterlilies and even moss.

Return to the golden catalpa, and turn right on the wide path that leads to the Phyllis Bentall Garden. Beside the bench at the side of the rectangular pool is a mound of **15 - lady’s mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)** with soft olive-green leaves. After it has been raining, water stays on the leaves as shining beads. In Latin, alchemilla, means ‘little alchemist’ and over the centuries, when alchemists tried to transmute base metals into gold, they believed these liquid beads were the purest water that exists and used it in their experiments. Follow the path for a short walk back to the Plaza and we hope you visit again to discover more of VanDusen’s treasures.