
Please follow the arrows and numbered black and white signs. Parts of this tour are not wheelchair accessible.

Welcome to VanDusen Botanical Garden. This tour will take you through a small corner of our 55 acre (22 hectares) museum of living plants from around the world. There are more than 7,500 taxa (unique species and varieties of plants) arranged in 50 collections throughout the garden. Work began in the 1970s to convert the existing golf course into the garden you are visiting today. Two of the people responsible were Bill Livingstone and Roy Forster CM.

Bill Livingstone, a self-taught landscape designer and former Deputy-Superintendent of the Vancouver Park Board, built water features and rock formations throughout the garden. Roy Forster CM, Garden Director and Curator, filled the landscape with 50 distinct living collections. Often he planted a **weeping** or **pendulous** tree within collections.

Facing Livingston Lake, turn left to view one such collection. At the edge of the plaza is the **1 - Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*)** collection. It replicates one of the rarest ecosystems in Canada, found on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and south into Washington, Oregon and California. In the United States the Garry oak is often referred to as **Oregon white oak**.

These ecosystems occur in areas that experience frequent fires, which do little to harm heat-hardened Garry oaks but burn away other trees allowing edible plants such as **2 – common camas (*Camassia quamash*)** to flourish in the meadows. Traditionally, First Nations peoples used prescriptive fires to allow the camas to flourish.

In November 2009, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall planted the smaller **Garry oak** tree. At the same time she presented Harry Jongerden, then VanDusen Garden Director, with a small but valuable packet of seed of native British Columbia plant species from the vaults of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew's Millennium Seed Bank. In return, Mr. Jongerden presented the Duchess with wild-collected BC native plant seed not currently held in Kew's collections.

At the small wooden bridge on your right is **3 - weeping Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Pendula')**. Watch for more weeping trees as you stroll through the garden. Cross the bridge. Immediately on your left is a jade water fountain. The jade is mined in large boulders in northern British Columbia – some 100 miles east of Juneau, Alaska.

Cross the path where you will find two tall planters. In the first pot is a collection of insect eating or carnivorous plants. The provincial flower of Newfoundland and Labrador, **4 - pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*)** grows in bogs from Manitoba eastwards. Its modified pitcher-shaped leaf is a passive trap, collecting water and drowning any insects that enter the pitcher. Take a look inside to see trapped bees and flies.

In the second planter is **5 - scouring rush or horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*)**. Horsetails have an unusual chemistry. They contain several alkaloids (including nicotine), various minerals and are rich in silica deposits. These silica crystals make horsetail a great scouring pad to use when camping.

Cross the path to the **Fragrance Garden** and adjacent **Herb Garden** on the right. Feel free to rub the leaves of any of the plants and herbs to release their scents. There are many wonderfully scented flowers and shrubs in this area. Turn left and walk between these two gardens where you will find the **Alpine Troughs**. In 1976 these tufa (a type of limestone) troughs were imported from Yorkshire, England. Troughs were used to hold water and feed for livestock until the early 19th century when galvanization was patented. Metal troughs then replaced the stone ones.

In the centre trough on the ledge is a very tiny rhododendron **6 - Rhododendron 'Ramapo'**. It's at least 44 years old, a garden original. These alpine plants are not bonsai. They are naturally dwarfed as an adaptation to survival in very harsh, dry, windy conditions.

On either side of this trough are small triangular alpine display gardens. The alpine "crevice garden" on the left shows how terraced sharp upright stones offer protection for these tiny plants from severe elements. The display on the right uses sandy, rocky 'soil' made up of ground-down tufa stones to provide alpine plants with sharp drainage so they can avoid wet feet and thrive.

Climb the steps to your left (you will have to duck your head under the **7 - weeping blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus libani* subsp. *atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula')**). The Atlas cedar is a true cedar (belonging to the genus *Cedrus*) while other conifers commonly referred to as 'cedar', such as western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) are not actually cedars.

Turn right, then left and straight ahead to the bed by the fence. You are in the recently opened **Backyard Bird Garden**, built to demonstrate wonderful flowers and trees you can plant in your own garden to attract birds, not to mention bees. For example, **8 - Japanese persimmon (*Diospyros kaki* 'Hachiya')** and the nearby **black mulberry (*Morus nigra*)** provide fruit and berries for many local species of birds.

Turn to your right and leave this area, cross the path and the lawn then enter the bark mulched Loderi rhododendron trail (beside the Minotaur sculpture). **9 – *Rhododendron* 'Loderi King George'** and ***Rhododendron* 'Loderi White Diamond'** with their beautiful large pink-white blooms are beautifully scented, especially noticeable on a warm sunny day. Return to the paved path and continue up a short distance to a fork in the path.

Look up at the large tree in front of you. This **10 – dove or handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*)** is named after Pere David, a 19th century missionary who lived in China. He first described the tree in 1869. The Latin specific epithet *involucrata* means 'with a ring of bracts', referring to the pair of white handkerchief-like, modified leaves which surround a tight cluster of tiny flowers. Continue up the path to your left. Turn around to see just how high this tree has grown.

You are now at the foot of the **Rhododendron Walk** which contains a collection of rhododendron hybrids on the left and azaleas on the right. Azaleas are a group of rhododendrons with 5 stamens, instead of the 10 or more stamens found in all other rhododendrons. Along this walk you will find collections of both deciduous and evergreen azaleas. Species rhododendrons can be found in the Sino-Himalayan Garden, which you will pass through later, the Eastern North America collection and other areas of the garden. Continue on for a few minutes – take in the beautiful jewel like colours on each side of the path - and stop at the **Magnolia & Hydrangeas** sign on your right. Directly across the path is **11 - *Rhododendron yakushimanum* 'Mist Maiden'**. Check the underside of the leaves and feel the soft tawny material called indumentum. It helps protect the plant against moisture loss. Go back across the path and walk amongst the hydrangeas and magnolias. Look on the ground for the lacy remains of last year's magnolia leaves. Silica deposits help strengthen the leaf veins so they remain intact after the rest of the leaf has decomposed.

Go back to the paved path and walk until you come to the end. You have just passed the Japanese collection of plants. **12 – Japanese larch – *larix kaempferi***, like all larches, is a deciduous conifer. Note previous year's cones hanging from the branches. It's as beautiful in the winter as it is now in spring with its new bright green needles emerging in clusters.

Continue down the paved path, passing by the **Korean Pavilion**, a gift to the garden after Expo 86. VanDusen's **camellia** (Korea's national flower) collection is here, with the peak bloom period beginning in early March. Continue down the path for a few minutes until you come to the intersection. Turn right onto the Great Lawn and you will find yourself in a stand of mighty **13 – coastal Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*)**. *Pseudo* means 'false' and *tsuga* means 'hemlock', referring to the fact that this magnificent species is neither fir nor hemlock. Douglas-fir is the only species of this genus found in Canada and is Canada's largest tree, reaching 85m (280') in height on the coast (var. *menziesii*) and 42 m (135') in the BC interior (var. *glauca*). Stroll down the path until you reach the next intersection. You can see evidence of the original golf course fairway from here.

Continue a few yards straight ahead. On your right is the month of May's jewel in the crown. The **Laburnum Walk** features an archway of **hybrid golden chain trees (*Laburnum xwatereri* 'Vossii')** under-planted with brilliant purple **ornamental onions (*Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation')** – sight to behold. It was inspired by the Laburnum walk at **Bodnant Garden** in North Wales.

You have come full circle in this corner of the garden. We hope you enjoyed yourself and will continue to see more of the garden on your own or come back again soon. Every day is different, rainy or sunny, and the garden will always offer something new to discover.