

Please follow the black and white number and arrow signs for this tour. Most of this tour takes place along wide pathways and is wheelchair accessible.

Welcome to VanDusen Botanical Garden. This tour will take you through a small part of our 55 acre (22 hectare) 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 former Shaughnessy Golf Course into the garden you are visiting today. VanDusen Botanical Garden opened in 1975. Two of the people responsible were Bill Livingstone and Roy Forster C.M. Bill Livingstone, a self-taught landscape designer and former Deputy Superintendent of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, built water features and rock formations throughout the garden. Roy Forster C.M., Garden Director and Curator, filled the landscape with 50 distinct living collections.

This month's tour is a medley of examples and facts in our collections. You will see the very old and the new; the largest of trees and the very small home grown clone; plus some very interesting curiosities. May is a blooming showcase for species of the **Pea Family (Fabaceae)** one of which is Laburnum.

From the Visitor Centre Plaza, Livingstone Lake is seen directly ahead of you. To the right of the lake is a stand of **1 – maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)**, a living fossil. A contradiction in terms, living fossil refers to plants which have changed very little for millions of years and which still are with us today. They were once thought to be extinct. Turn to your right and follow the path a short distance to the **Eastern North America** sign. Turn left and follow the path, keeping to the right, to the wooden bridge. Stop and look up at the different shapes of the four members of the **Cypress Family (Cupressaceae)** in this area and further along the path. Now look down at the base of the **2 - bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)** and note the knees or pneumatophores, distinctive root structures found in trees in the subfamily **Taxodioideae**.

This pond was recently renamed **R. Roy Forster Cypress Pond** after the former director passed away in 2018. As you stand mid-bridge, **3 - dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)** is across the pond on your right and one further down the path. This tree is another example of a living fossil and was rediscovered in the 1940s in China. Continue on the path; on your left is **4 - coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)** native to coastal Northern California. At end of the dirt path is a grove of **5 - giant redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)** native to the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. These were planted in the early 1970s making them 40+ years old. In nature these trees can live up to 3,500 years and reach a height of 94 meters. Although giants in our garden, they are infants in nature. Note dawn redwood and bald cypress are deciduous conifers.

Now for something of local interest. On your right are four **6 – hybrid white flowering dogwood (*Cornus 'Eddie's White Wonder'*)** created by British Columbia nurseryman and rosarian Henry Matheson Eddie (1881 – 1953) during the late 1930s and 1940s. They are a cross between **eastern flowering dogwood (*Cornus Florida*)** and our native **Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*)**. In 1948, a flood swept through Eddie's nursery in Sardis, BC, destroying all of the seedlings except for one fine specimen that had been moved to a property he owned in Richmond, BC. This sole survivor was the source of all Eddie's White Wonder specimens. This new dogwood is very white in colour and disease resistant in our area.

Continue down the wide pathway past the many Japanese maple trees. Further down is a collection of maple trees from Europe, northern Africa and North America. **7 - sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* 'Legacy')** is native to eastern Canada and NE USA. There are other sugar maples in our Canadian Heritage Garden, however it is not cold enough in Vancouver to produce maple syrup. Visitors often ask to see the "Canadian flag maple leaf" tree. The leaf on our flag is a stylized version similar to a sugar maple leaf.

Continue to the corner of the path to the **8 - BC Habitat Garden** which showcases local plants favoured by wildlife, birds, and bees. First Nation peoples used some of them for medicinal purposes. The area behind and adjacent contains evergreen conifers indigenous to the Pacific Northwest up to Alaska as well as some interesting sculptures and First Nations Story Poles. Walk up the path to the corner, turn left. In front of you is a huge **9 - western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*)** with a candelabra growth form. This is another member of the **Cypress Family**. It was a very important species for First Nations people and is

known as the “tree of life” because of its many uses from clothing to lodging and transportation. The **red-cedar** grows in the damp and foggy coastal forest along with **Douglas-fir and western hemlock**. These can be seen in the area behind this display garden.

Go left past the **Mountain Ash Collection (*Sorbus*)** sign. Note the **Swedish Fountain**, a memorial bronze cast sculpture made to honour the Swedish pioneers of BC. The bronze panels were moved from the garden entrance to thwart metal thieves and now surround an **European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)**.

On the other side of the pathway is the **Conifer Collection. 10 – Dwarf mountain pine (*Pinus mugo var. pumilio*)**. This **VanDusen clone** is a local creation and certainly a curiosity. It began as a witches’ broom which was found in a pine tree in VanDusen. Propagation of witches’ brooms in conifers has been the source of many dwarf conifer cultivars. A secret for years, our clone is now “out in the open”.

Take a short walk past the **Heather Garden** to the fork in the path over to the **Perennial Garden**. On the left side is an example of a formal English garden with its hedge of **Irish yew (*Taxus baccata ‘Fastigiata’*)** and on the right side is an informal English garden a style which came about in the 1950s when wartime vegetable gardens were put back to flowers. Between the flower bed and the Great Lawn is another curiosity: **11 – Adam’s laburnum (+*Labrunocytisus ‘Adamii’*)** a graft chimaera. It is a graft of two species, a **laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*)** and a **purple broom (*Cytisopurpureus*)** bearing shoots typical of one species, some of the other, and some which are a peculiar mixture of both “parents”. Dates back to 1825.

As you look across the Great Lawn you can imagine it was once the first fairway of the 18-hole Shaughnessy Golf Course. Each Mother’s Day weekend the lawn is host the All British Field Meet started in the early years of the garden by Roy Forster, the proud owner of a beautiful green classic MG sports car. 400 classic British cars are displayed each year.

Return to the path and past the **Lathhouse** covered in two cultivars of **12 - Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda ‘Violacea Plena’*)** and (*W floribuna ‘Yae-kokuryu’*). On your right at the corner of the path is **13 – handkerchief or dove tree (*Davidia involucrata*)** named after French Missionary Pere Armand David who found a lone tree on a Chinese mountainside in 1869. The quest to locate a specimen of this tree is a long story. The French were not successful with the original seeds sent to a Paris nursery, but pressed specimens from the Yangtze Gorge found their way to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in 1889. Nurseryman Sir Harry Veitch commissioned a young botanist, Ernest Wilson, to travel to China in search of this prize tree. Although the original tree had been chopped down, Wilson was able to find more trees within the month. It was not until 1911 that the first specimen of many flowered. The round clusters of tiny green flowers are surrounded by two papery white bracts (modified leaves). Step around the corner and look up –these trees can reach 15 meters.

With your back to the tree follow the walkway until you see the large yellow birdhouse where children can hide and watch the birds fly about in our **Backyard Bird Garden**. It was opened recently to demonstrate plantings you can use to attract the birds and bees to your own urban garden.

Backtrack across the path to the collection of **rhododendron hybrids** developed by Sir Edmund Loder. **14- (*Rhododendron ‘Loderi King George’*)** is beautifully scented and considered one of the best of the Loderi group. There are nearly 1,000 different varieties, cultivars and species of rhododendrons planted throughout the garden. The **Rhododendron Walk** is well worth a visit.

The “crown jewel” for many springtime visitors is the **15 – Laburnum Walk** which features an archway of **hybrid golden chain trees (*Laburnum X watereri ‘Vossii’*)** under-planted with brilliant purple **16 - ornamental onions (*Allium hollandicum ‘Purple Sensation’*)**. The walk was inspired by the famous Laburnum Arch at **Bodnant Garden** in North Wales.

Once through the **Laburnum Walk** turn right* past the **Heritage Rose Garden**. Stop when you come to the steps under the stone arch overlooking the **Formal Rose Garden**. Here is a modern collection of roses, some bred by local rosarian Brad Jalbert, to resist diseases caused by our rainy weather. No sprays or pesticides are used in VanDusen, hence the planting of **17 - catmint (*Nepeta x faassenii*)**. *Nepeta* attracts beneficial insects that eat the rose-loving aphids. Rose beds are edged by **18 – boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens ‘Suffruticosa’*)** and are said to be laid out in a pattern of butterfly wings.**

This is the end of today’s self-guided tour. We hope you will return often. There is always something to see no matter what season. Rain or shine, the garden is divine!

***for wheelchair accessibility turn go back through the Laburnum walk and turn left where you will find a ramp pathway to the rose garden. Pause on your way and look at the pattern of the hedges**.**