

## OCTOBER 2019 WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



The map on the reverse is an enlarged section of the general map of the garden.  
See the main map at the car park, or take one of the brochures, to identify the location of this month's plants.

Spring is definitely here as evidenced by the new, young leaves erupting from many of the deciduous trees that make up a large part of the collections in our beautiful Mt Lofty Garden. One of the major collections in full bloom in this cool, temperate Garden is to be found in Rhododendron Gully which can be accessed either from the lower car park or the upper car park.

However, before we approach this area take the winding path down towards the Main Dam where on the right hand side bright golden apricot spires of *Isoplexis canariensis*, the **Canary Island foxglove (A)** stand out. A member of the Digitalis family, it often blooms from spring through autumn. This is a cool-climate shrub that seems to thrive even in our hot climates. Unfortunately the plant has become endangered in the wild and is rarely seen in cultivation.

On either side of the bottom of the steps it is obvious why the common name of **Chinese redbud, Cercis chinensis (B)** is given to this tree. Found in Bhutan and China it is a relative of the Judas tree. The flowers coming directly from the stems are called cauliflori. Members of the pea family Fabaceae, the unusual zig zag branching is attractive. Along the bank above the wall is the **trailing fuchsia, Fuchsia procumbens (C)**, one of four species unique (endemic) to New Zealand, which was first discovered in 1839. The unusual tubular flowers will produce bright red berries.

Walk across the dam wall and turn left up the boardwalk giving a good view of Greg Johns' "Guardian Figures". Greg Johns is a South Australian sculptor with an international reputation. The majority of his works are made from Corten steel, as is this piece. As you approach the Duck Pond, down the left hand bank there are three tall, weeping trees, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Pendulum' **(D)**. *Sequoiadendron giganteum* is known as the giant redwood or "big tree" as specimens are considered the most massive trees on Earth, and several specimens of this tree can be found near the edge of the main dam. At the end of the causeway on the left can be found the **coastal redwood, Sequoia sempervirens** (meaning always green) **(E)**

The etymology of the genus name has been presumed to be in honour of Sequoyah (1767–1843), who was the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary (set of written characters representing syllables and [in some languages or stages of writing] serving the purpose of an alphabet). An etymological study published in 2012 concluded that Austrian Stephen L. Endlicher is actually responsible for the name. A linguist and botanist, Endlicher corresponded with experts in the Cherokee language including Sequoyah, whom he admired. He also realized that coincidentally the genus could be described in Latin as sequi (meaning to follow) because the number of seeds per cone in the newly-classified genus fell in mathematical sequence with the other four genera in the suborder. Endlicher thus coined the name "Sequoia" as both a description of the tree's genus and an honour to the indigenous man he admired.

Across the Duckpond, the tall stand of trees coming into new leaf are **dawn redwood, Metasequoia glyptostroboides** (Metasequoia meaning like a sequoia). Described from fossil material from Japan in 1941, with living specimens of its one remaining species discovered in Hubei Province, China in that year and named in 1948. The Chinese name is winter spruce. Prior to this the genus had only been known from fossil remains.

Take the path to the left of the Duckpond where, just in front of the *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* mentioned earlier, pink *Dichroa febrifuga* **(F)** is showing early blooms along with a beautiful red maple, *Acer* sp. At the top of this small path you will be at the lower end of Rhododendron Gully.

There are three options to view the large collection of Rhododendron species and cultivars in the garden – cross the bridge on the right and take the first path on the left for a wonderful view over the whole gully, or take the middle path as we did for close inspection of the flowers. On the right hand side the white blooms of **common pearl bush, Exochorda racemosa (G)**. It is a member of the rose family found mostly in China and Japan. To the left of the path is *Skimmia reevesiana* **(H)** a native of Japan; it prefers cool, moist, well-composted soils in a protected, shaded position, and is frost resistant but drought tender. This small evergreen bush has glossy green leaves and creamy white flowers in sprays, and red, holly-like berries.

As you climb the steps take note of the very tall tree ferns which would have been among early plantings in the Garden. On the right of the path **paperbark maple, Acer griseum (I)** is outstanding for its attractive trunk. *A. griseum* was introduced to cultivation in Europe in 1901 by Ernest Henry Wilson for the Veitch

Nurseries, and to North America shortly after. It is one of many species of maples widely grown as ornamental plants in temperate regions. It is admired for its decorative exfoliating bark, translucent pieces of which often stay attached to the branches until worn away. It also has spectacular autumn foliage which can include red, orange and pink tones. As you cross the bridge pause to look up and down the gully at the colourful display. Follow across to the path, taking special care while descending the path. Planted among the rhododendron species are many *Mahonia*, a genus of approximately 70 species of evergreen shrubs, and rarely small trees, in the family Berberidaceae, native to eastern Asia, the Himalaya, North and Central America. They are closely related to the genus *Berberis* and botanists disagree on whether to recognize a separate *Mahonia*. The bright yellow flowers are a welcome addition to the garden.

Returning to the main road the choice is yours whether to retrace your steps back to the car park or take the road to the right passing the lower entrances to the various gullies as you wander. You may be fortunate to spot some of our native orchids along the bank on the right.

Prepared by a group of 10 Volunteer Guides 09-19

