

AUGUST 2020 WALK FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID19 safe we have decided that, rather than supply a paper copy of the walk, there is a downloadable version from our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>) or a copy in the Noticeboard : may be photographed to take with you. The map at the end of this walk is an enlarged section of the general map of the garden and shows the location of this month's plants.

Whatever the season, there are always plants which catch the eye at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden and winter is no exception, whether from brightly coloured flowers or the different foliage shades and textures of evergreen trees and shrubs.

From the car park noticeboard, take a moment to notice the jonquils nearby. *Narcissus* is a genus of predominantly spring-flowering perennial plants of the amaryllis family, Amaryllidaceae. Common names include daffodil, narcissus and jonquil. Flowers have six petal-like tepals surmounted by a cup or trumpet shaped corona. The flowers are generally white or yellow with either uniform or contrasting coloured tepals and corona. Plants produce several alkaloid poisons which provide some protection for the plant from being eaten by animals, including humans. Research into the alkaloids has resulted in the drug galantamine for the treatment of Alzheimer's dementia.



The weeping cherries at the top of the steps are *Prunus* 'Snow Fountains' (A), small deciduous trees with long, graceful, cascading branches which, in spring, display a profusion of fragrant snow-white single flowers emerging from pink buds. Note the smooth and shiny textured bark with numerous horizontal markings called lenticels. A lenticel (pictured) is a porous tissue in stems and roots of woody flowering plants, providing a pathway for the direct exchange of gases between the internal tissues and atmosphere through the otherwise impermeable bark.

Alongside the sloping path down to the lake, *Camellia* 'High Fragrance' (B) is an informal double hybrid with delicate ivory-pink perfumed blooms in abundance. It was developed from a fragrant, vigorous white-flowered form of *C. lutchensis* from the Japanese island of Luchu. 'High Fragrance' is a cultivar resulting from considerable breeding effort since the 1960s to produce plants with larger flowers than the parent species.

The path across the lake retaining wall provides a view of the conifers which can be better seen through the tracery of bare branches of deciduous trees. On the western shore near the spillway, is Greg Johns' 'Guardian Figures' sculpture. Greg is a contemporary Adelaide based sculptor often working, as here, in corten steel which is designed to rust and preserve the metal beneath. The Garden entrance gates were also created by Greg.

The steps straight ahead and path to the right lead you past several deciduous trees with lichens (C) visible on the now bare branches. These composite organisms are a partnership of primitive algae (cyanobacteria) coexisting with fungi. Their colours range from white through green to a deep yellow. There are many forms, including those that resemble peeling paint (crustose), others with leafless branches (fruticose) and some with a flat leaf-like appearance (foliose). Lichens may also be seen on rocks, walls and exposed soil surfaces. Lichens are not parasitic, using tree parts, rocks and soil as their substrate. They do not have roots, instead absorbing water and mineral nutrients from rainfall as they photosynthesise to produce their food sources. They are intolerant of air pollution and thrive here in the clean air.

Visible through bare trees and daffodils emerging on the slope, is a bank of *Escallonia* (D) which has been tightly pruned into abstract shapes (pictured) suggested by their natural growth. The effect, particularly from here, is like clouds hovering on the skyline. This pruning has also rejuvenated the plants, which we think is a very happy outcome.



Continue uphill along the sealed road and turn left at the next junction. This 'hidden garden' is popular for weddings during summer. Planted around the gazebo is *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens,' black mondo grass (E), a clumping plant with thick tufts of arching strap-shaped, almost black, leaves about 30 cm long. Despite their grass-like appearance this perennial, tuft forming, spreading plant is not closely related to the true grasses Poaceae. Native to Japan, where it grows on open and forested slopes. Nearby is *Viburnum propinquum*, Chinese Evergreen Viburnum (F), a compact, rounded, evergreen shrub that typically grows 2 m tall and wide. Amongst the leaves are reddish-brown new growth branchlets which turn grey after the first year. The glossy, green leaves may show burgundy tones in autumn. It is native to forest areas in central and western China.

Through the gap in the hedge opposite where you entered this area, take the small path down towards the Duck Pond. On the left is *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', corkscrew hazel (G) which is probably the most famous "contorted" plant. In winter, the marvellously twisty bare branches are particularly interesting. This slow-growing shrub can reach 2-4 m and, like its other relatives in the birch family, Betulaceae, and in autumn produces yellow male

catkin-like tassels on the bare branches. These plants were an important component of the hedgerows that were the traditional field boundaries in lowland England. The plants were also coppice-pruned to produce multiple thin stems for wattle-and-daub building and agricultural fencing.

A little further is a planting of **Helleborus (H)**, members of the buttercup (Ranunculaceae) family, the genus comprising approx. 20 species. The flowers have five "petals" really sepals, surrounding a ring of small, cup-like nectaries (petals modified to hold nectar) and prominent stamens. The sepals do not fall as petals would, but remain on the plant, sometimes for many months. They are found in the northern temperate zones from Europe to western China and are particularly suited to woodland conditions.

Many legends surround the hellebore. In witchcraft it is believed to have ties to summoning demons. In Greek mythology, Melampus of Pylos used hellebore to save the daughters of the king of Argos from a madness, induced by Dionysus, that caused them to run naked through the city, crying, weeping, and screaming. During the Siege of Kirrha in 585 BC, hellebore was reportedly used by the Greek besiegers to poison the city's water supply. The defenders were subsequently so weakened by diarrhoea that they were unable to defend the city from assault. Alexander the Great is believed to have died because of a hellebore overdose taken as medication.

At the sharp turn down to the Bog Garden, look out for the tiny white **Galanthus nivalis, snowdrop (I)** from the Greek gála "milk", ánthos "flower", a small genus of approximately 20 species of bulbous perennial herbaceous plants in the family Amaryllidaceae. The plants have two linear leaves and a single small white drooping bell-shaped flower with six petal-like (petaloid) tepals in two circles. The smaller inner petals have green markings. Snowdrops have been known since the earliest times under various names but were named *Galanthus* in 1753. While now widespread through a large area of Europe, they originated in Turkey and the Caucasus and are thought to have been brought to the British Isles by the Romans.



Take the path down across the rocks through the Bog Garden, where primulas (pictured) are flowering. **Primula pulverulenta, candelabra primula (J)** is endemic to China where it grows by the side of streams; our Bog Garden environment is ideal. The tiers of floral whorls have a range of colours, with sometimes as many as seven whorls on a tall stem. In ideal positions they can bear multiple stems. Pulverulenta means "dust" and refers to the mealy white layer covering the stems.

Take the footpath up the hill and across the footbridge, turning left at the junction to pass the Duck Pond on your left.

At the next junction, **Abies pinsapo, Spanish fir (K)** has a commanding position overlooking the lake and valley. It is a native of the mountains of south eastern Spain and northern Morocco and is one of the most drought tolerant of the firs. It will reach about 30 m in height, not quite as tall as the Mexican pine, *Pinus patula* to be found further along, which will be 35m tall when mature. The long, thin needles of this pine droop gracefully, a beautiful component of the mountain forests of tropical eastern Mexico. Much taller at maturity than either of these are the redwoods of the western USA. On the roadside opposite the Spanish fir is *Sequoia sempervirens*. Growing up to 112 m high in the seaward facing coastal mountains of southern Oregon and California, they are the world's tallest trees and may be 2,000 years old.

Follow the bitumen road around the lake, passing South American Gully. The hillside between here and the entrance to Fern Gully is left as native bushland, part of approximately 30% of this Garden not cultivated. **Acacia myrtifolia, myrtle wattle (L)** is a small shrub starting to show its pale-yellow fluffy flowerheads. Past Fern Gully, you may also see the small prickly shrub *Acrotriche fasciculiflora*, Mt Lofty groundberry, which bears its tiny succulent fruits at the base of the stem. These red berries are savoured by rosellas and bandicoots, among other birds and animals.

The bank along the sealed road is edged with **Cotoneaster dammeri (M)**. This prostrate shrub, native to central and southern China, is in the rose family, Rosaceae. In autumn and winter it is covered in decorative red berries (fruits, pictured) which follow the small white spring and summer flowers. *Cotoneaster* is a large genus of hardy ornamental shrubs, both deciduous and evergreen and with varied habit, making them suitable for hedging, borders, wall shrubs or ground covers. The name is derived from "cotoneus", Latin for quince.



Back in the car park, you will have detected the magnificent perfume of **Daphne odora, winter daphne (N)** (pictured) almost before you see it. It is well protected by the **English oak, Quercus robur**, shaded in summer and the fallen the oak leaves providing a thick insulating and acidic mulch. *Daphne* is native to China, later spreading to Japan and Korea. The Latin 'odora' means fragrant; in Korea daphne is known as 'churihyang', the thousand-mile scent. It is an evergreen shrub with glossy foliage and fleshy pink four-lobed tubular flowers. Also in the bed is the white form **D. odora 'Alba'**, which has a more lemony perfume. Despite its beautiful scent, all parts of the plant are poisonous to humans and some domestic animals and can cause dermatitis from contact with the sap.



Compiled by TA, GB, MD, LE, BF, NF, PL, HM, DS and MT. 07/20