
Please follow the arrows and number signs for this tour.

Winter is a good time to explore the quiet upper reaches of VanDusen Botanical Garden. Of the 7,900 kinds of plants growing at VanDusen, many are found on the slopes of VanDusen's Sino-Himalayan Garden, a broad collection of Asian plants, which will be the focus of this tour. As you explore the Garden, savour the sounds of the birds, the fragrances of winter blooms, and the crisp textures and silhouettes of deciduous trees and shrubs.

To begin the tour, head left from the Plaza, cross the wooden bridge, then pass the Glasshouse and turn left at the paved path. Pass the wrapped banana plants to your left and the giant Minotaur sculpture on your right and follow the curve to your right onto the Rhododendron Walk.

At the next intersection is a large **1- handkerchief or dove tree (*Davidia involucreta*)**. In May, tiny clusters of flowers are each surrounded by a pair of large white bracts that wave in the breeze like handkerchiefs or the wings of a dove. In winter the dove tree offers a strong form, flaking bark, sharp-pointed red buds and small round fruits. *Davidia* is a genus of a single rare species in the dogwood family (Cornaceae), found in moist, subtropical woodlands of central China. Père Armand David, a French naturalist and missionary in China, identified the species in 1869. In 1901, British plant explorer E.H Wilson brought seeds back to England. He said of its flowers that "when stirred by the slightest breeze, they resemble huge butterflies hovering amongst the tree".

A few steps to the left is the Chinese counterpart to our native Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa* and *M. aquifolium*). **2- *Mahonia gracilipes*** was first collected on Mt. Omei in Sichuan in 1887 and introduced to cultivation in the UK in 1980 by British plantsman and author Roy Lancaster. Most *Mahonia* species bear yellow blooms in spring but this species displays pink flowers later in summer. It is a member of the barberry family (Berberidaceae).

As the paved path curves right, follow it uphill. Just before the lawn look right at **3 - sawtooth stewartia (*Stewartia serrata*)** in the tea family (Theaceae). Stewartias are native to east Asia and eastern USA. This one is endemic to Japan. Its white, slightly cupped, camellia-like flowers bloom in June, often with a red blush on the outside of its petals. Its seedpods may persist into winter.

Continue up the long paved path to reach **4- *Rhododendron pachysanthum*** on your left. In 1915 Bunzo Hayata named this rare rhododendron from Taiwan. Later in 1971 Dr. C.C. Hsu collected it above tree-line on Mt. Nanhu. A year later American plant collector John Patrick introduced it to horticulture. A compact shrub to 1.2 m (4 feet) tall, its new shoots and upper leaf surfaces are covered with a velvety fawn-colored tomentum and the underside of the leaves have a fuzzy brown indumentum. Trusses of 10-20 bell-shaped white to pale pink flowers bloom in spring.

Further up the path, turn right onto the lawn. Just ahead and to your left is the winter-flowering **5- *Camellia sasanqua* 'Setsugekka'**. This species grows in thickets and forest openings in southern Japan at 900 metres elevation. The cultivar 'Setsugekka' is prized for its elegant, slightly fragrant, semi-double white flowers with bright golden stamens, which contrast nicely with its dark glossy, evergreen foliage. This camellia can be grown in large containers or espaliered.

Left of it is **6- *daimyo* or emperor oak (*Quercus dentata*)**, native to eastern Asia. Like many deciduous oaks, emperor oak retains its dead leaves in winter until replaced by spring growth, a feature called "leaf marcescence". In Japan this quality symbolizes prosperity or good luck. On Children's Day (May 5) sweet rice cakes called *kashiwamochi* are wrapped in emperor oak leaves.

Continue up the lawn to the main paved path. Directly ahead is **7- tigertail spruce (*Picea torano*)**. Endemic to southern Japan, tigertail spruce grows to over 30 metres tall on volcanic soils at 400-1850 m elevation. Its rigid, curved, sharply-pointed leaves (needles) stand out even among spruces. The common name "tigertail spruce" may refer to the pendulous branchlets on older trees which resemble tails, or the claw-like sharpness of the needles. It is listed as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List.

Head right and then left to the intersection with **8 - deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*)**, a conifer with graceful drooping branches and its needles clustered in rosettes, a "true" cedar and a member the pine family (Pinaceae). Native to temperate forests at 1500 to 3200 metres elevation in western

Himalaya, it can reach more than 50 metres tall with girths of 3 metres. Cedar forests are sacred places to Hindus and the name “deodar” is from the Sanskrit *deva* for “god” and *daru* for “wood”.

Beneath the deodar cedar is **9 - box-leaf or shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera pileata*)**, a low-growing shrub from central China with opposite leaves and small fragrant white flowers that attract bees in spring and mature into violet-blue berries in late fall. It spreads slowly, forming a groundcover by rooting along its branches.

Uphill and to your left across the gravel path is **10 - dodder-like saxifrage (*Saxifraga cuscutiformis*)**, a low herbaceous evergreen with delicate white flowers in summer. Its specific epithet *cuscutiformis* refers to the dodder genus (*Cuscuta*), a group of parasitic plants whose growth form resembles a yellow-orange tangle of string. Perhaps the small white flowers of *Cuscuta* inspired the comparison. *Saxifraga cuscutiformis* is not known in the wild and plants in commerce may all originate from seed grown by British nurseryman J.C. Loddiges (1738-1826).



Bear right and to your left look for the semi-deciduous shrub **11 - *Lyonia ovalifolia* var. *elliptica***, from Japan and China. In summer it bears racemes of small, white, fragrant bell-like flowers that are typical of the heath family (Ericaceae). In winter its exfoliating bark peels in vertical stripes. The genus is named for John Lyon, a Scottish botanist (1765-1814) who is buried North Carolina. There are about 35 species of *Lyonia*, native to Asia, the Caribbean, and North America, where it is often called fetterbush or staggerbush due to its arching, spreading habit that impedes travel.

Head right and then turn left into the peaceful wooded Fern Dell. To your right is a **12 - paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*)**, a member of the mulberry family (Moraceae) with striking striped bark. Valued for papermaking in China, Korea and Japan for nearly 2000 years, its bark has also been made into tapa cloth in the Pacific Islands for hundreds of years. In the mid 1900s, Inuit artists in Cape Dorset began making prints on Japanese-made *washi* paper. Unfortunately *Broussonetia* is a widespread invasive species, from Africa to the Himalayas to the Americas. It consumes high volumes of water and outcompetes native plants. Its pollen is also extremely allergenic, posing a challenge for allergy sufferers.

A few steps to the left, look for **13- Min fir (*Abies recurvata* var. *ernestii*)**, a conifer of high elevations in the mountains of SW China. Valued for its timber and declining in the wild today, its seed was first collected by Ernest Wilson in 1903. Note its recurved terminal needles with an identifying notch on their tips.



Continue left around the main outer path and then turn left at the junction toward the dramatic tree-like **14- *Rhododendron rex* subsp. *fictolacteum***. Gently feel the soft, thick, rust-coloured indumentum on the undersides of its large leaves.

On the opposite side of the path, on the right, is **15- *Meliosma pinnata* var. *oldhamii***, a small tree with deciduous pinnately compound leaves (leaflets in opposite pairs) and panicles of honey-scented flowers in summer followed by red-black fruits in fall.

A few steps further ahead is the semi-evergreen **16- spider azalea (*Rhododendron stenopetalum* ‘*Linearifolium*’)** with unusual narrow strap-like leaves. Its fragrant, deeply segmented pink flowers complement the leaves in spring and it has long been cultivated in Japan as an ornamental.

The last three plants on our tour are all in the witch hazel family (Hamamelidaceae). At the Y-shaped intersection, stop at **17- spike winterhazel (*Corylopsis spicata*)**. It is endemic to Japan, growing on isolated serpentine outcrops, as do the other species of *Corylopsis* from Japan. In late winter it blooms with an abundance of fragrant drooping yellow flowers with red-purple anthers.

Head left and look to your right for **18- Chinese fighazel (*Sycopsis sinensis*)**, an upright evergreen witch hazel relative from China with small yellow puffs of flowers in late winter.

Bear left to another witch hazel relative, the deciduous **19 - *Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana***, native to the Himalayas. Its botanical name commemorates German naturalist Friedrich Parrot (1792-1841) and French naturalist Vincent Jacquemont (1801-1832). Its flowers lack petals, consisting of a cluster of yellow stamens surrounded by small white bracts. Appearing in spring on bare branches, the flowers are followed by rounded overlapping leaves.

Head back to #12 *Broussonetia* and then right to exit the Fern Dell. Turn left onto the paved path and bear right onto the Rhododendron Walk and follow it to return to the Visitor Centre.

Thank you for visiting VanDusen Botanical Garden today!