

Please follow the arrows and number signs for this tour.

Welcome to the beauty of VanDusen in winter. On this tour we invite you explore the diversity of plants in the Sino-Himalayan section of our garden – just a sample of the plant diversity of the vast Sino-Himalayan region of Asia.

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 and the giant Minotaur sculpture on your right and follow the curve to your right onto the Rhododendron Walk.

Before the junction look left at **1- *Rhododendron auriculatum***. Its large trusses of fragrant white flowers bloom as late as July and August. Its pointed leaf buds begin to unfurl in fall. The species name *auriculatum*, meaning “eared”, refers to the rounded earlobe shape at the base of the large leaves. The genus *Rhododendron*, one of the most diverse plant groups in cultivation, includes over 800 species. For the 19th C European plant explorers the vast mountain ranges and gorges of China, Tibet and upper Burma were rich in plants to discover. This native of China was found by Augustine Henry in Hubei Province in 1885 and introduced to cultivation by Ernest Wilson in 1901. Listed by IUCN Red List as vulnerable, it has been depleted in the wild by collection for fuel and for the horticultural trade.



Continue up the Rhododendron Walk and look left for **2- Amahogi maple (*Acer cissifolium*)** reaching over the path. This maple is endemic to mountainous areas of Japan and has a trifoliate 3-part leaf. Japan has about 7000 species of vascular plants and about 2900 of these are endemic to Japan, meaning they occur nowhere else on Earth.

Farther along the path on the left across from the hydrangea bed enjoy the graceful **3- Chinese dogwood (*Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*)**. Fall colour, a late-spring bloom, edible (but bland) red fruits in late summer, attractive bark, compact form, and disease resistance make this a popular choice for small gardens. To find out the year it was planted look at the small black plant label in front and note the number on the lower left that begins with the year planted: 1979.

Just ahead on the right is **4- Japanese azalea (*Rhododendron* 'Hino-crimson')**, belonging to an ancient group of Japanese cultivars known as Kurume azaleas that were imported to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston in the early 1900s. ‘Hino-crimson’, a Great Plant Pick, is valued in the Pacific Northwest for its dense, compact form, dark green foliage and profuse crimson blooms that brighten gardens in early spring.

Farther ahead on the right is the Japanese bed with **5- Silver Mist mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus* SILVER MIST ‘Kijimafukiduma’)**. The genus *Ophiopogon* is native to Japan and China where it is sometimes known as “winter wheat” or “bordering the steps grass”. Just around to the right, then left, at the back of the bed you can find a planting of its black-leaved relative *Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Nigrescens’, which is also a feature of VanDusen’s Black Garden. Mondo grass spreads slowly by rhizomes or stolons.



Japan’s diverse and unique flora was created through a combination of natural conditions and human interventions. Featured over centuries of Japanese horticulture are ornamental maples such as the **6- golden full moon maple (*Acer shirasawanum* ‘Aureum’)** just ahead toward the back of this bed. This species is named after Miho Shirawasa (1868-1947), a Japanese dendrologist (a scientist specializing in trees and shrubs).

At the junction ahead turn right, go past the Korean Pavilion, through the next junction and look left for **7- ring-cupped oak (*Quercus glauca*)**, also called blue Japanese oak. This evergreen tree, native to China, Japan and the Himalayas, has leathery oblong leaves, toothed near the tips, up to 5.5 inches long, glossy green above and grey-green below. The cups of its acorns have 5-6 concentric rings. In India and China its leaves are



used as fodder for domestic animals. In north China tussah silkworms feed on this and other oaks, rather than mulberries, and have been managed in the wild for 3000 years to produce tussah silk.

Ahead on your left is **8- golden Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan-sugi')**, a cultivar valued for its bright yellow foliage. The species is probably endemic to Japan where it is called “*sugi*” and has been widely planted around temples and shrines. The 400 year old Cedar Avenue of Nikko is lined with about 13,000 *Cryptomeria* trees and is 35.41 km (22 miles) long.

Further along on the left look up at the interesting branching pattern and winter buds of **9- Sargent’s magnolia (*Magnolia sargentiana*)**, endemic to western China and introduced to horticulture by Ernest Wilson in 1908. Come back in April to enjoy its soft pink flowers.

Ahead on the right is **10- *Persea yunnanensis*** native from Nepal to central China. Some botanists place this evergreen tree in the genus *Machilus*. Even so, it is a close relative of the avocado, *Persea americana* of central America.

At the 4-way junction look left at **11- *Tetracentron sinense*** a native of western China, Myanmar and Nepal. It is monotypic, i.e the only species of its genus, and in the family Trochodendraceae, which has just one other genus which is also monotypic – *Trochodendron*. *Tetracentron* is deciduous with tiny wind-pollinated flowers that hang in slender catkins. Once more widespread, its fossil record extends back 60 million years in the northern hemisphere and includes BC and Washington.



Spreading around the base of this tree is a fine-leaved mondo grass, another *Ophiopogon*.

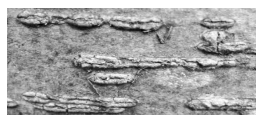
To the right of the path is another monotypic genus **12- yin shan (*Cathaya argyrophylla*)**. This relict conifer once had a wider distribution as well. In the Tertiary, it occurred in Europe, Russia and Canada. Found only in southern China today, where the number of mature individuals is less than 1000, it is listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Vulnerable and it is protected in China.

Continue ahead and look left at the rough-barked **13- three-flowered maple (*Acer triflorum*)**, a small tree native to north China and Korea. Its exfoliating bark sometimes reveals its orange-brown inner bark and the large trifoliate leaves turn vibrant orange to red in fall.



To the right of this tree is a **14- birchbark cherry (*Prunus serrula*)**, a native of SW China and Tibet which was introduced to horticulture by Ernest Wilson in 1908. Its silky red bark with striking horizontal lenticels is a striking accent in winter.

A short way ahead to your right and spreading over the walk is a **15- birch (*Betula insignis*)** from central and western China. The species was first collected in 1900 but not widely introduced to cultivation until new seed collection by a 1985 expedition to Fan Jing Shan in Guizhou province. The epithet *insignis* means “remarkable” and perhaps refers to the unusually long male and female catkins of this birch. Observe the horizontal lenticels that are typical of birches.



As the final stop, turn right to the **16- northern Japanese hemlock (*Tsuga diversifolia*)**, a conifer endemic to the mountains of northern Japan. The genus name *Tsuga* is derived from the Japanese name for this tree, 榧 (ツガ). This species has been in cultivation as a garden tree since 1861 when it was introduced in England by J.G. Veitch. Two hemlocks are native to BC: western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*).

This tour has sampled the beauty and diversity of VanDusen’s Sino-Himalayan collections which are a wonderful legacy of the vision, knowledge and botanical artistry of VanDusen’s founding Curator and Director, Richard Roy Forster, CM (1932-2018). As he wrote in 1990, “Who could not be fascinated by plants from the richest floristic region of the world?”

To return to the Visitors Centre retrace your steps or continue to the next junction and turn right for the paths through the Heather Garden and along the edge of Livingstone Lake.