



AUTUMN INTEREST: Self-Guided Tour. A 3-part adventure

Maps available from the Welcome Table or www.dartshill.ca: Fall Highlights map

Part 1: Make your way to the Meet and Greet area, as indicated on the Fall Highlights map, to begin your self-guided tour of Autumn Interest. Look way up for the tiny berry-like fruit of the **(1) Chinese raisin tree (*Hovenia dulcis*)** in **BED 6**. This tree is native to Asia and is known for its health benefits when consumed as a tea. Started from seed purchased in 1979, this tree grows up to 10 metres.

Walk up the path just left of the **Mule Deer** statue (donated by Don Robson's family, October 2000). First stop in **BED 8w** is the **(2) coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)**. Coast redwoods can be found with trunks up to 6.4 metres in diameter. Coast redwood are among the tallest (some measuring over 115 metres) and oldest living trees (some living for 2,000 years). Surprisingly, for a tree of such size, the cones are quite small, about the size of a nickel.

Your second stop in **BED 8w** is the **(3) silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*)**. The large diameter of the trunk is an indication of size and height of this tree – one of the common trees in the USA. Reaching for sunlight, this tree can grow to heights of 25m (82 ft). The winged seed pods (fruit) are the largest of any native maple.

Walking around the top of Bed 8w, stop number **(4)**, in **BED 98**, is a **giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)**. Giant sequoia specimens are the most massive individual trees in the world. They grow to an average height of 50–85 metres with trunk diameters ranging from 6–8 metres. Giant sequoias are among the oldest living organisms on Earth, with recorded lifespans of these trees at 3,200–3,266 years. Giant sequoia bark is fibrous, furrowed, and may be almost a metre thick at the base of the trunk. The thick bark provides protection from fire damage.

Keep walking along the crushed gravel path, cross the Tractor Road, and step along the basalt steppingstones, past the waterfall and pond. At the south end of the pond find the **(5) tea or Hubei crabapple (*Malus hupehensis*)** in **BED 20**. Look for the yellow-green leaves, before they drop off revealing the flaking, gray-brown bark.

Backing up a bit to the south end of the pond, you will find a deciduous **(6) bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)** in **BED 20** with its feathery pale green foliage and distinctive knees surrounding this tree. Take a moment to read the interpretive signage about Trees Knees.

Turn south once again, walk the pathway between BEDS 14 and 19 to find the 3-pronged shape trunks of the **(7) paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*)** in **BED 14**. Noted for its exfoliating chestnut-brown bark and showy Autumn colour, *Acer griseum* was awarded the prestigious Award of Garden Merit by the Royal Horticulture Society.

Turn left towards the tractor road, stop next to ***Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan'** to get a full view of the **(8) fernleaved beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia')** in **BED 5**. Planted in 1970, this magnificent beech has outgrown all usual heights and widths. Fruit from this tree appear in a 7-year cycle with hundreds of nuts being produced. Autumn leaf colour is yellow.

Walking south along the Tractor Road, the bright bark of **(9) Japanese stewartia (*Stewartia monadelphica*)** in **BED 15n** should attract your attention. Orangebark stewartia is an outstanding tree for year-round interest with small camellia-like flowers in the summer. The dark green foliage becomes a brilliant mix of rich red-orange and fire engine red in the Autumn. As the leaves drop, they reveal the beautiful cinnamon brown bark of the trunk and branches.

Now for the tricky part – you need to walk along the narrow path between BEDS 15n and 15s. Continue along the path between BEDS 17 and 18. At the end of this path, turn slightly left then right into the arching path between BEDS 29 and 34. On the Crabapple Walk; the **(10) Siebold crabapple** trees (*Malus sieboldii*) were all started from seed in 1980, by Francisca Darts. The fruit may have fallen but can you imagine the arching branches of spring blossoms.

As you walk to the end of the Crabapple Walk, turn right to admire the **(11) Chinese wingnut** (*Pterocarya stenoptera*) in **BED 29**, a deciduous tree in the walnut family with very long hanging stalks. The mature nutlets on these stalks turn brown in the early Autumn.

At the top of this pathway is our stopping point – with quite a view. LOOKING right is the **Spanish chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*) in **BED 22**. This tree can produce hundreds of spiky shells protecting the nut inside. LOOKING to the left is our Heritage tree, **(12) Juglans ailanthifolia x J. cinerea var. cordiformis**. Yes, that’s a mouthful – you can call it a **Buartnut**. Take a moment to read the interpretative plaque at the base of this magnificent tree. It was one of the first trees to receive a heritage designation in the City of Surrey. A truly special tree, please respect its fragile nature (the metal props and cables are there for support). Please do not climb it!

Continue to **PART 2** of this self-guided tour, or stroll on your own and enjoy the garden at your leisure.

PART 2: Keep walking along the path past the Buartnut towards the upper orchard. Mr. and Mrs. Darts purchased this land in 1943. Following clearing the land and removing the old growth stumps, they began creating orchards of award-winning fruit trees. The City of Surrey and the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society (DHGCTS) continue, through the Darts Hill Garden Park Collections Committee, to preserve that legacy by maintaining and adding to the collection of fruit trees in the garden.

The perennial **BED 44**, is one of the last BEDS designed by Francisca Darts. It is maintained by the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society volunteers. Turn up the path past **(13) the weeping Katsura** (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* ‘Morioka Weeping’), a rare weeping form. The foliage of this tree will turn bright butter yellow with orange and apricot tones in the fall. Fallen leaves have a wonderful fragrance of strawberries and cotton candy.

Stroll towards the south side of **BED 46e**. Look for our most unusual-shaped edible fruit, the **(14) medlar** (*Mespilus germanica*). Medlar has been cultivated since Roman times and the fruit becomes edible, when softened by cold temperatures, in the Winter. If you can find any fruit, check out their unique shape, but please don’t pick them.

Continue to **BED 25**. Straight ahead is **(15) Rhododendron schlippenbachii**, commonly known as **Royal Azalea**, which should be showing its lovely Autumn colour of brilliant red, orange and yellows. The shape of the branches and leaves are worth investigating. LOOK to the left at the tall **(16) Persian ironwood** (*Parrotia persica*). It has one of the most beautiful foliage displays, reddish purple in spring to yellow orange or scarlet in the Autumn. Turn right!

As you reach the driveway, turn left. In that corner of **BED 25**, just past the low boxwood hedge is the **(17) Satsuki azalea** bed. These Rhododendrons have been hybridized in Japan for at least 500 years. The word Satsuki means ‘fifth month’ in the Japanese lunar calendar. These plants are evergreen, late spring blooming and eye catching, especially in a Bonsai form. The Satsuki azalea bed was planted in 2016 by Society volunteers.

Continue along the driveway, looking in all directions and stopping at the gate. On the north side, **BED 26**, is the **(18) Antarctic beech** (*Nothofagus antarctica*). This tree, native to Chile, has very small crinkly margined leaves that turn yellow to orange in the fall. Looking beyond the beech, at the top of BED 26, are 3 very tall **(19) incense cedars** (*Calocedrus decurrens*). The foliage of these cedar have a strong incense-like smell when crushed. Incense cedar are not common in the South Fraser Region.

As you are still standing by the gate, the **(20) maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)** in **BED 25** may have dropped its leaves by late Autumn. These trees have long lives, with specimens recorded at 1,000 years of age. Just before leaving this location, at the top of **BED 42** along the fence, admire one of our **(21) blue Spanish fir (*Abies pinsapo* 'Glauca')**. This evergreen conifer has distinctive frosty blue needles and is well over 60 years old.

Start walking down the hill to the south end of the garden. The original hazelnut orchard, planted in 1951, succumbed to Eastern Filbert blight in 2016. The Darts Hill Garden Park Collections Committee acquired and planted two disease resistant varieties of filberts or hazelnuts and several other edible nut trees to create the new Nut Orchard in 2020. See if you can find the two varieties of **(22) hazelnuts (*Corylus avellana* 'Jefferson' and *Corylus avellana* 'Yamhill')**. Along the fence line in **Bed 41** is **(23) sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboretum*)**. This tree has bright red fall colour with grey, fissured, and ridged bark. If tasted, the leaves are sour but we recommend you not taste.

PART 3 will begin at the bottom of the Nut Orchard and take you back to the entrance of the garden.

As you stroll along the path between **BEDS 36 & 45**, stop to take in the vista – the Pasture, Lower Orchard, and the Darts' home, all create quite the view. Autumn colours should be plentiful.

Continue strolling along the South Magnolia Walk. In **BED 38w**, the rare and unusual variegated **(24) Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia* 'Variegata')** has a multitude of tiny, heavily speckled leaves. This tree is often used in Bonsai.

The autumn color of the **white enkianthus in Bed 50 (*Enkianthus perulatus*)** is an often-stunning yellow to orange to scarlet red. It should catch your eye as you continue walking.

Next stop is **BED 39**. The foliage of the **(25) golden larch (*Pseudolarix amabilis*)**, native to coastal mountains of China, should have turned to golden yellow for a spectacular Autumn display.

Across the path, the very large **(26) Caucasian wingnut tree (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*)** should still be displaying the brown nutlets on pendulous stems. This tree is a member of the Walnut family.

In **BED 16e**, the multi-trunked **(27) Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)** was planted in 1960, from a seed acquired from the Alpine Garden Club of BC. It is readily identified by the orange-red peeling bark and short blue-green leaves. There are well over 100 varieties of Scots pine with those from westernmost Scotland the most distinctive.

At this point, you should be at the South Operations gate. Continue walking to the path between Beds 1 & 2 (the Arboretum Walk). This area of the garden contains some of the earliest plantings made by Mrs. Darts. Enjoy the **(28) Japanese stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*)** in **BED 2e**, started from seed acquired through the Royal Horticulture Society. Dark green foliage turns reddish-orange and burgundy in the Autumn. Reddish-brown bark provides good winter colour and interest.

The last tree of significance before leaving the garden is the **(29) western, or giant red cedar (*Thuja plicata*)** in **BED 4e**. Native to the Pacific Northwest, imagine these trees in abundance as part of the old growth forests in this region.

We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour of Darts Hill Garden Park. Please visit again, the garden is magnificent in the spring! Information about Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society membership can be found on our website, www.dartshill.ca. Feedback is appreciated at info@dartshill.ca

Fall Highlights

