



DARTS HILL
• Garden Park •

Prepared by the Darts Hill Guides, volunteers of
the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

WINTER INTEREST: Self-Guided Tour

Maps available from the Welcome Table or <https://dartshill.ca/visit-the-garden/#seasonal>

Francisca Darts had a great enthusiasm for plants with year round interest. This Winter Interest Self-Guided Tour highlights plants that flower in the winter but also includes two Rhododendrons with colorful leaf indumentum, cones, berries, bark with interesting texture and colour and the beautiful winter form of trees.

Begin the tour by walking from the Welcome Table toward **Bed 4w** and the **(1) Jacqueline Hillier Dutch elm (*Ulmus x hollandica 'Jacqueline Hillier'*)**. Jacqueline Hillier Dutch elm is a dwarf, slow-growing, densely branched cultivar that was discovered in a garden in Birmingham, England in the early 1960s. The tree in Darts Hill Garden is mature. The tiny, finely-toothed, typical elm-like, dark green leaves are carried in a distinctive herringbone pattern along the stems. This particular tree was planted by Mrs. Darts in 1988.

Immediately ahead of you, in **Bed 51**, look for the brilliant red berried deciduous shrub, **(2) winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)**. This large twiggy shrub is native to eastern North America. The long-lasting and colourful red berries are an important food resource for birds.

Continue on this path to the first interpretive sign on the Tractor Road in **Bed 15n**. Take a moment to read about one of the most striking trees in the winter landscape, the **(3) tall Stewartia (*Stewartia monadelpha*)**. Under the canopy of the Stewartia there is a **(4) Chinese silver Rhododendron, (*Rhododendron argyrophyllum* subsp. *nankingense*)**. The bright glossy green leaves of this wonderful Rhodo are heavily textured. Gently turn a leaf over to glimpse the silver indumentum on the underside. The clear pink flowers appear in spring.

Adjacent to the Chinese silver Rhodo is a compact Rhododendron called **(5) *Rhododendron degroniana* subsp. *yakshimanum* (dwarf form)**. Turn over a leaf to observe its fuzzy pale tan indumentum. Mrs. Darts had a particular enthusiasm for Rhododendrons with indumentum and many of the Rhodos along both sides of the Tractor Road have one. See if you can find them! Indumentum is defined as a woolly or hairy covering of the leaf (particularly the underside) and the stem. A leaf with an indumentum may have a sparse covering of hairs or be

very furry. Indumentum colours range from white, buff, fawn, and cinnamon, rusty-brown to grey.

Also in **Bed 15n**, the **(6) Ririei Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ririei*)** should be in bloom! It is one of the most reliable early bloomers in the garden. The purple-mauve flowers first appear in January. This Rhodo will bloom for weeks.

On the opposite side of the Tractor Road stop to admire the **(7) Jelena witch-hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia 'Jelena'*)** in **Bed 51**. This vigorous deciduous shrub has a wide spreading habit. Its large dense clusters of coppery-red flowers have a very distinctive scent. The spidery blooms are very long-lasting, too.

Make your way to the southern end of the Tractor Road and turn left on the path immediately before the Arboretum Walk. Head to **Bed 54e**. Take a moment to read the interpretive sign about the **(8) Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maacki f. podocarpa*)**. Amur Honeysuckle is a large, multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub native to Mongolia, China and Korea. It was introduced by Ernest Wilson in 1900. A close-up inspection reveals its beautiful, deeply fissured brown bark.

A little further along this path, also in **Bed 54e** look up at the stately form of the **(9) mountain Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum magnificum*)**. Mountain Katsura is a large, very rare deciduous tree native to central Japan. Did you know this particular tree is the largest in the metro Vancouver area? The leaves are dark blue-green, serrated and smell of caramel. In wintertime the twigs produce large, peg-like spurs which contain dormant buds, unlike the Katsura tree which has straight branches and lobster claw-like buds.

Turn the corner to your right and return to the western end of the Arboretum Walk to enjoy the fragrance of the **(10) Charity Oregon grape (*Berberis x hortensis 'Charity'*)** in **Bed 2w**. Charity Mahonia is a robust broadleaf evergreen shrub. The leaves are shiny, dark green and spiky and become deeply purple-red in the winter. The bright yellow flowers are produced in dense clusters from December till February. Their scent is delicious! Blooms are followed by purple-black fruit.

Walk across the South Service entry area, to **Bed 16w**, and poke your nose into another highly scented flower, the **(11) February Daphne (*Daphne mezereum*)**. The lateral clusters of 2 to 4 fragrant pink to purplish pink flowers are about a cm long and bloom in late winter to early spring. Flowers are followed by a fleshy red spherical fruit. It is native to Europe, Caucasus, Turkey, and Siberia. Hardy to Zones 5 to 8.

Next, in **Bed 30**, admire the smooth bark and sturdy trunk of the **(12) Caucasian Fir, Nordmann fir (*Abies nordmanniana*)**. Look up! Nordmann fir is a rare, large, evergreen tree native to the Caucasus area, which is east of the Black Sea. Mrs. Darts planted this tree in 1969 on what was

then the eastern edge of the pasture. It's now about 18 m (60 ft.) high. Nordmann fir can grow to 55 m (180 ft.) tall with a trunk diameter of up to 1.8 m (6 ft.). The glossy, black-green needles of this fir hold well when a branch is cut for decorative purposes. When crushed, the needles smell strongly of citrus.

Turn right and walk along the west side of **Bed 30** to enjoy another Rhododendron in bloom. Take a look at the medium-sized bright pink flowers held in small, rounded trusses. Wow, **(13) *Rhododendron 'Nobleanum coccineum'*** blooming in January!

Carry on to **Bed 34** and at its east end to find an unusual deciduous shrub or small tree called the **(14) Seven Son Flower of Zhejiang (*Heptacodium miconioides*)**. This shrub has wonderful shredding, papery thin bark. The white flowers, which appear from late summer to the first frost, are fragrant. This shrub was planted by Mrs. Darts decades ago.

Heading west along this path, in **Bed 34**, there is an excellent specimen of the **(15) blue China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata 'Glauca'*)**. China fir is a coniferous tree native to China. It's a beautiful but also very messy tree since entire branches turn brown and are shed by the plant. The foliage of blue China fir is more bluish than the common China fir. The arrangement of the brown cone scales resembles a rose flower. Did you know this tree has both male and female cones?

Close to the west end of **Bed 34** enjoy the colorful red berries of the **(16) Chinese cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster meiophyllus*)**. Birds love them too! Mrs. Darts planted this delightful broadleaf evergreen shrub around 1987.

Make your way to the Magnolia Walk South and aim for **Bed 45**. Enjoy the variety of **(17) hellebores, (*Helleborus species and cultivars*)** that are now in bud or bloom in this bed.

Next, on the south end of **Bed 40** you will find a lovely **(18) Chinese witch hazel 'Diane' (*Hamamelis x intermedia 'Diane'*)**. This witch hazel is considered to be one of the best red-flowering witch hazels. Prized for its profusion of sweetly fragrant red flowers and lovely fall colours, it's a very eye-catching winter-flowering shrub.

Carry on up the gravel path to see the spectacular **(19) weeping eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus 'Pendula'*)** in **Bed 41**. The branches are strongly pendulous, creating the free-form irregular shape of this unusual pine. The sap-covered cones of this tree are huge!

Next, cross the Nut Orchard lawn and stroll up the Magnolia Walk West to the Upper Orchard and continue north on the path east of Bed 46w. Turn left at the concrete block wall to discover several exceptional winter plants in **Bed 25** like the **(20) Peryn Holly (*Ilex pernyi*)**. This holly is an evergreen, upright, multi-stemmed shrub (or a small tree). Its glossy and spiny leaves are

olive green and quadrangular in shape. The leaves are unusual in that they are borne in a flat plane along the stem. Yellowish spring blooms are followed by the long-lasting coral-red berries which are produced on the female plants only.

Make your way to Darts House via the asphalt driveway to the north of **Bed 25**. On route take a moment to enjoy the blossoms of the **(21) Kanjiro autumn camellia (*Camellia sasanqua* 'Kanjiro')**. This early flowering camellia, with its single deep pink flowers, is delightful at this time of year.

Also on the right side of the entry driveway in **Bed 25** is a very fine conifer from Japan, the **(22) Japanese white pine, (*Pinus parviflora* Glauca Group)**. This pine has very stiff blue-green needles. The unique looking cones have cupped and contorted cone scales.

Surprisingly hardy, the **(23) Royal Grevillea or Mountain Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*)** in **Bed 26** is native to cool mountain-top areas of southeastern Australia. It is considered to be a reliable, tough-as-nails plant but can suffer some winter damage here. It is very long-blooming with honeysuckle-like flowers which attracts hummingbirds all year round. Royal Grevillea grows best in full sun in well-drained soil and does well in raised beds.

Walk past Darts House and carry on down the Tractor Road to find the **(24) Japanese mahonia (*Berberis japonica*)** in **Bed 9e**. The pale-yellow flower buds begin showing some color in the late fall. The fragrant flowers are prominent in late winter to early spring. The glaucous blue fruit, which ripens in July is also very showy.

Next stop is the southernmost tip of **Bed 8w** to see the **(25) cockscomb Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Cristata')**. Cockscomb Japanese Cedar produces flattened, ribbon-like, crested stems, primarily on new growth. This phenomenon is called branch fasciation and occurs naturally. This conifer also has attractive, cinnamon-coloured peeling bark.

Return to the main entrance and enroute find the **(26) witch hazel seedling (*Hamamelis mollis* 'Darts Hill garden seedling')** in **Bed 7s**. It's likely a hybrid seedling from a *Hamamelis mollis* in Bed 25 and another witch hazel in the garden. This plant exhibits intermediate characteristics. The Darts Hill seedling is not officially named or registered. The bright yellow strap-shaped petals are very showy.

We hope you have 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.

This self-directed tour of Darts Hill Garden Park began as a Winter Interest Tour developed by Nancy Oike in 2013. Thanks to Kathy Piccott for her 2019 draft Fall/Winter Tour. This tour created by Susan M. Murray, 2021.