



Native Plant Loop Self-Guided Tour (Best Seen in May)

By Guides of Darts Hill Garden Park

Enjoy your self-guided tour around the Native Plant Loop. The tour will take approximately 45 minutes for a close look or 15 minutes for a quick stroll. Following this self-guided tour will provide an excellent opportunity for residents and visitors, young and old, to learn about native plants in this Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem of British Columbia. We recommend that you also pick up from the Membership Table a colourful brochure, ***Get to Know Native Plants in Our Coastal Douglas-fir Ecosystem***. It provides photographs and lots of interesting information.

The native area is at its peak during the month of May when many of the plants will be in bloom. Later in the summer many plants, known as *ephemerals*, will set seed and then die back until next year.

This area was not actively gardened by Francisca Darts, although she did grow native plants throughout the historic garden. Now the area is under the stewardship of the City of Surrey Urban Forestry Department and volunteers from Darts Hill Garden membership and The Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society. These groups are interested in re-establishing native bio-diversity, providing food and shelter for insects, birds, and animals, and promoting the beauty of native plants.

To follow this tour, start at the bronze deer in Bed 7n and proceed in a clockwise direction around the loop, looking for the **blue number signs** to guide you.

1. Deer Garden

- Just behind and to the right of the deer sculpture is a 15-foot tree - *Cornus nuttallii* (Pacific dogwood), now in bloom. Look up to see its flowers, which are tiny, purple-tinged, and surrounded by showy white bracts.
- Further to the right is a partial clearing populated by *Polystichum munitum* (western sword ferns), *Achlys triphylla* (vanilla leaf), and two *Ledum glandulosum* [now known as *Rhododendron columbianum*] – (western Labrador tea)—one of two native species of rhododendron growing in this native garden.
- To the left of the deer is a variety of shrubs and perennials, among them *Gaultheria shallon* (salal), the fragrant *Philadelphus lewisii* (coastal mock orange), and *Aruncus dioicus* (goat's beard).

2. Winding Path

- From the Deer Garden, head a little north, then east onto a lovely winding gravel path. The left side of the path is a transitional area with both native and non-native plants. Sword ferns have been planted here to provide structure, and the area is carpeted by *Dicentra formosa* (Pacific bleeding heart) with its delicate ferny leaves and pink drooping flowers.
- On the right side of the path, you'll find a thicket of *Rubus spectabilis* (salmonberry) and *Sambucus racemose* (red elderberry) with an understory of *Achlys triphylla* (vanilla leaf), *Adiantum aleuticum* (maidenhair fern), and bleeding heart.
- Nearing the top part of the *slope*, on the left behind a log, look for *Viburnum edule* (highbush cranberry). Its red berries were an important food crop of early First Nations people.
- Across the path, see what is growing on the gnarled stump: *Polypodium glycyrrhiza* (licorice fern), and *Vaccinium parvifolium* (red huckleberry). These plants thrive in the humus provided by the stump's rotting wood. *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (lingonberry) and *Vancouveria hexandra*, (white inside-out flower) grow nearby.

3. Top of the Hill

- Just before reaching the top of the hill, look for the tall, yellow-flowered ***Berberis aquifolium*** (tall Oregon grape) on the left side of the path. Just finishing its spectacular yellow bloom, this shrub will provide structure and shiny foliage throughout the summer and black fruits in the fall.
- Take a moment to sit on the log bench and see what's going on around you. The small mossy log in front of you is host to ***Goodyera oblongifolia*** (western rattlesnake plantain) and is surrounded by lovely flowering plants such as ***Trillium ovatum*** (western trillium) and ***Aquilegia canadensis*** (red columbine).
- On the left of this clearing, among the shrubs and ferns, you'll find a variety of low-growing perennials: ***Trientalis latifolia*** (broad-leaved starflower), ***Sedum spathulifolium*** (broad-leaved sedum), and bleeding heart.
- Going a little further, on the right, look toward the large evergreen tree, ***Pseudotsuga menziesii*** (Douglas fir) with its deeply fissured bark. Growing under and to the right of the fir are a variety of shrubs: well-armed ***Ribes lobbii*** (gummy gooseberry), and white-flowered ***Holodiscus discolor*** (ocean spray). Creeping along the forest floor is ***Rubus ursinus*** (trailing blackberry), a delicious although somewhat invasive native vine—not to be confused with larger, more aggressive non-native Himalayan blackberries.

4. Downhill Slope

- As you walk down the slope toward the east, you'll see on the right an area filled with red elderberry, salmonberry, and ***Oemleria cerasiformis*** (osso berry), one of the earliest plants to bloom in the spring and a beautiful fall focal point with its orange to purple fruits. You can see the tiny fruits starting to form already.
- On the left is a similar shrub area with the notable addition of ***Vaccinium ovatum*** (evergreen huckleberry) – a shiney-leaved bushy shrub, producing black edible berries in the fall. At the bottom of the slope is ***Rhamnus purshiana*** (cascara), a small deciduous tree which produces black berries in fall and whose bark is used for medicinal purposes. To its left is a flowering specimen of ***Sambucus racemosus*** (coastal red elderberry). Spreading on the ground in front is the low-growing ***Claytonia perfoliata***, (miner's lettuce), a prolifically re-seeding edible annual.

5. Hemlock Dell

- Head south a little and you'll find on your left a shady area under the graceful evergreen, ***Tsuga heterophylla*** (western hemlock).
- This area is filled with a variety of shade-loving ferns, shrubs and perennials: western sword fern, ***Gymnocarpium dryopteris*** (western oak fern), salal, red and evergreen huckleberries, goat's beard, western rattlesnake plantain, and ***Oxalis oregana*** (redwood sorrel).

6. Sun Garden

- On the right side of the path, across from the Hemlock Dell is the sunniest area of the native loop.
- Anchoring this garden on the west are two Douglas firs. Notice how the smaller one has smooth bark, while the larger one has developed the deeply fissured bark typical of the mature species.
- Along the pathway, you'll see an abundance of the bright pink ***Plectritis congesta*** (sea blush). It is likely that this tough plant will soon spread throughout the native garden area. Growing among it are ***Eriophyllum lanatum*** (woolly sunflower) and broad-leaved sedum.
- Also in this area are the fragrant ***Philadelphus lewisii*** (coastal mock orange), ***Lonicera involucrata*** (black twinberry), numerous ***Shepherdia canadensis*** (soopalallie), and the later blooming ***Solidago canadensis*** (Canada goldenrod).

7. Garry Oak Meadow

- South of the pathway, on a sunny, well-drained southern slope is a replica of a Garry Oak meadow.
- What exactly is a Garry Oak meadow? . . . an open forest dominated by *Quercus garryana* (Garry oaks) with a few additional tree species such as Douglas fir and *Arbutus menziesii* (Pacific madrone, arbutus), all carpeted underneath by a meadow of grass and wildflowers.
- Garry oak meadows are among the rarest ecosystems in Canada. On Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, they still exist, but only over a small area. In the lower Fraser Valley, where they once thrived in limited areas, they're all but extinct.
- Among the wildflowers growing here are the bright blue *Camassia quamash* (common camas), *Primula pulchellum* (few-flowered shooting star), *Erythronium oregonum* (white fawn lily), *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow), *Allium Cernuum* (nodding onion), *Aquilegia canadensis* (red columbine), and seablush.
- *Amelanchier alnifolia* (coastal Saskatoon) is the tall shrub growing at the bottom of the slope near the main pathway. It provides lovely white flowers in spring and sweet edible black fruit in autumn.

8. Lower Path.

- Continuing along the gravel path towards the west, you'll encounter along both sides of the path a variety of common native deciduous shrubs: *Symphoricarpos albus* (common snowberry), *Rosa nutkana* (Nootka rose), *Cornus stolonifera* (red osier dogwood), and salmonberry.
- A carpet of *Berberis repens* (creeping Oregon grape) and trailing blackberry provides groundcover in this area.
- The spreading perennial, *Tellima grandiflora* (fringecup), provides a border of on each side of the path. Tall, fragrant, greenish-white flowers rise above a base of heart-shaped leaves.
- Look also for *Ribes sanguineum*, (red flowering current), an early bloomer and hummingbird magnet, and *Rubus nutkanus* (thimbleberry) with soft maple-like leaves, white flowers, and fuzzy edible red berries later in the season.

9. Fern and Rhododendron Garden.

- Continuing toward the western edge of the native area, you'll encounter on the left an area dominated by ferns, rhododendrons, *Berberis nervosa* (dull Oregon grape), and a very common tree of this area, *Alnus rubra* (red alder).
- Several native rhododendrons are growing here—*Rhododendron macrophyllum* (Pacific rhododendron), which grows on the west coast from B.C. to northern California.
- Fern varieties growing in this area include *Adiantum aleuticum* (western maidenhair Fern), *Struthiopteris spicant* (deer fern), *Polystichum braunii* (Braun's holly fern), *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* (oak fern), western sword fern, and licorice fern.
- Also growing in this area and throughout the loop trail is the charming groundcover, *Cornus unalaschkensis* (western bunchberry or dwarf dogwood).

10. Vine Maple Garden

- Finish your tour across the path at the vine maple garden.
- *Acer circinatum* (vine maple) is a small maple that will look as lovely in your home garden as it does in the forest. Its green-barked trunk and branches tend to sprawl and spread. Its leaves are yellowish green, turning bright red or yellow in autumn.
- Among the vine maple trunks grow a variety of moisture-loving plants such as *Sidalcea hendersonii* (Henderson checker mallow), *Gaultheria shallon* (salal), goat's beard, and red columbine.

***We hope you've enjoyed your walk through the Native Loop Trail.
Please come back in other seasons. There will always be something of interest to see . . .
and maybe some new ideas for your own space.***