Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Self-Guided Tour

Fall

Welcome to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSBG). This self-guided tour will take approximately 1-1.5 hours depending upon how long you spend examining the plants. Please enjoy our 22 acre display of botanical splendor!

Please keep in mind the following:

- **Collecting seeds or any plant material is strictly prohibited.**
- Smoking and pets are not allowed in the garden.
- Please remain on the paths.
- Picnicking is allowed only on the Conservatory Terrace.

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Trivia: Did you know that *Rhododendron* means 'Rose Tree' in Greek?

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

2525 South 336 St. Federal Way, WA 98063

253-838-4646

www.rhodygarden.org

Open All Year, Tuesday to Sunday

10:00 to 4:00

From the Garden Shop, walk straight to visit **#1 *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* (Doublefile Viburnum*)** native to China and Japan. This deciduous shrub provides beautiful white blossoms in the spring as well as a stunning reddish-bronze fall color.

Take a left on the main road and follow the sign to visit **the Upper Woodland Garden** which features many rhododendrons with thickly indumented leaf undersurfaces. A little further on, you will see **#2 *Acer sieboldianum*** on your right. The brilliant scarlet autumn coloration is an outstanding feature of this species. This is one of the most common species in the mountain forests of Japan. Keep going until you see **#3 *Speirantha convallarioides*****, False Lily of the Valley, on your left. This is a choice, very slow-growing evergreen groundcover with fragrant flowers in spring. Nearby is **#4 *Coptis laciniata*****, Gold Thread. This slow-spreading groundcover is native to the Pacific Northwest. The name comes from the golden yellow rhizomes that creep just beneath the surface of the ground.

Follow the sign to the main path and make a left turn. Pass the bamboo on your right and follow the sign to the narrow path to your left. This area is called **the Big Leaf Garden**. Most of the big-leafed rhododendrons eventually become very large trees in their native temperate rainforests in the Sino-Himalayas. On your left, you will see **#5 *Acer palmatum* 'Red Pygmy'**. This elegant Japanese Maple changes color from maroon (spring) to reddish green (summer) to yellow (fall) as the seasons progress. Continue straight ahead and stay on the path to visit **#6 *Acer palmatum* 'Emerald Lace'** on your right. This is an outstanding small specimen tree with delicately dissected leaves. The leaves emerge a brilliant green with red petioles in spring.

Veer slightly to the right and follow the sign to the plantings of **#7 *Rhododendron rex***** on both sides. This plant has extremely attractive, shiny deep-green foliage with a thick gray to buff indumentum beneath. In China, where it grows wild, it can attain heights of up to 45 feet. *R. rex* in one of the hardiest big-leafed rhododendrons in our climate.

Now, make a left turn on the main path. Keep going until you see **the Himalayan Blue Poppy Meadow** on your left. The towering stalks hold the seed pods of **#8 *Cardiocrinum giganteum***, the Himalayan Giant Lily from the Sino-Himalaya. These fragrant lilies bloomed in June with the tallest one measuring a whopping 13'9" tall! They are monocarpic which means they die after producing flowers. The clumps of fuzzy leaves are the blue poppies which bloom in the spring.

Keep going along the main path until you see **#9 *Acer griseum***, Paperbark Maple, on the left corner. This Chinese native features scarlet fall colors as well as the decorative exfoliating bark. Keep walking to the plantings of **#10 *Rhododendon exasperatum***. Their foliage emerges blue-green and stays smooth and glossy throughout the season. Under *R. exasperatum*, you will find **#11 *Gaultheria nummularioides***** from China**.** This small scale, evergreen groundcover is spread by aboveground and underground runners. This plant performs well under the rhododendrons forming a dense and attractive mat.

Walk the main path and you will see the Hardy Fern Foundation's **Victorian Stumpery (#12)** on your right. A stumpery is an English Victorian period garden design that romanticizes nature. The design uses tree roots and stumps places on their side or upside down creating a "Wild Scene" which is then planted with thousands of ferns and other woodland plants. Have a seat on the cut cedar-log bench at the top of the Stumpery and enjoy the view of the pond garden.

From the Stumpery. Walk back along the main path towards the paperbark maple and take the first left path. Go up the hill and you will see **#13 *Rhododendron pachysanthum*** on your left**.** This is one of the finest foliage plants in the genus *Rhododendron*. Indumentum color ranges from silver-white to rich brown on the upper surface. It's native to Taiwan. Up the hill is **the Alpine Garden (#14)**. Before you explore the alpine garden, let's visit the **#15 Katsura Tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)** from Japan. You might notice the cotton candy scent that's given off by its fallen leaves. Some people describe the scent as caramel or cinnamon.

Now, walk back to the alpine garden and walk up the hill. Most of the plants here are found at high altitudes in the mountains of Asia. Visit **#16 *Polygonum vacciniifolium*** from the Himalayas on your left. This plant performs well as a groundcover under large rhodies as well as in rock gardens. The foliage turns bright red in the fall.

Walk up towards the Gazebo which is surrounded by **#17 *Rhododendron degronianum* ssp. *Yakushimanum**.** This species is only found on the very top of an ancient volcano on Yaku-island, Japan. The foliage of this plant has thick fulvous indumentum. Follow the sign for the self-guided tour which will take you past **#18 *Stewartia pseudocamellia***, Japanese Stewartia, on your left. This is a summer flowering tree with beautiful bark. This camellia relative also has a colorful fall foliage. Continue straight ahead for **the Rutherford Conservatory** (a separate self-guided handout to tour the Rutherford Conservatory is available inside).

From the front door of the conservatory, head back to the main path and take a left. The last stop of this tour is **#19 *Fothergilla major*** on your left. This plant belongs to the witch-hazel family and is native to the southeast of the USA. The foliage of this plant turns cherry-red, orange or bright yellow in the fall and is very attractive.

From here, you can walk back to the garden shop where you started. Many of the plants you viewed today are available in the sales area. Most of these plants are rare in retail nurseries. We hope you enjoyed the self-guided tour today. Please come back and visit the garden again soon.

* For sale at Sales Pavilion