

Some botanical highlights in the Garden at the moment

The numbers refer to the gardens as shown on your map.



Hellebores and blue hyacinths in a raised bed in the carpark

The Garden is recovering from the icy blasts brought by the 'Beast from the East'. Many of the least hardy plants have been cut back by the cold weather or lost altogether. Many will survive but will take time to grow back. The cold weather has set back the arrival of spring.

As you enter the Garden, beyond the Fig Pergola, you can see a large tree of flowering *Magnolia x soulangeana*. This tree was present in the Gardens in the 1970s. It is the most popularly grown Magnolia in gardens in this country. To your right, in the Hydrangea Dell, a white flowering Willow-leaved Magnolia, *Magnolia salicifolia* Wada's Memory is in flower. This hybrid Magnolia was registered in 1959 and was named after the Japanese botanist Koichiro Wada, who helped with the introduction of Japanese species to the west.



Left: *Magnolia x soulangeana*



Right: *Magnolia salicifolia* 'Wada's Memory'

The **South African Terraces (3)** are being replanted to replace some of the winter losses. However, one plant which has survived well on the South African Terraces is ***Leucodendron Safari Sunset***, a member of the Protea family not often seen growing outdoors in this country. These evergreen shrubs have dense flowerheads rather like cones at the ends of branches, surrounded by striking fiery red bracts, much in demand by the cut flower industry. There are separate male and female plants and they are pollinated by small beetles. Leucodendrons are generally considered to be not frost hardy and they require humus rich but nutrient poor soil to grow.



Left: *Leucodendron Safari Sunset*



Right: *Camellia Desire*



Left: *Camellia Anticipation*



If you walk through the **Hydrangea Dell (5)** you will see a range of Camellias in flower (above). Some of these plants date back to the time that Hillier planted the Garden; others are more recent. You can see more Camellias in the **Oriental Garden (12)**.

It is worth making a detour to the Americas, where, to the east of the **Totem Pole** you can see a specimen of the white flowered evergreen ***Drimys winteri*** in flower. It is a native of Chile and Argentina where it is a dominant tree in the temperate coastal evergreen rainforests. For centuries before vitamin C was isolated, ‘Winter’s Bark’ was esteemed as a preventative and remedy for scurvy. Indeed, an infusion of the bark sustained Captain James Cook and his crew in the South Pacific.

Nearby, on the **Ornamental Lawns (8)**, look for a large tree with hanging pink tassels of flowers. This is **Ash-leaved Maple, *Acer negundo violaceum*** and the flowers are all male, long hanging bunches of stamens. The form violaceum, with particularly long pink tassels is not commonly seen in this country and always draws attention at this time of year.



Left: *Drimys winteri* from forests in Chile



Right: *Acer negundo* with hanging bunches of stamens

When you leave the central courtyard with the fish pond, you will see mounds of a yellow flowered shrubby succulent growing on the island bed in front of you. This is, the **Greater Mexican Stonecrop, *Sedum praealtum***, which, as its name suggests, is a native of Mexico. It is one of those plants which was always considered to be tender but has proved to be tougher than expected and is now grown in many gardens. It is naturalised (ie spreading naturally outside of gardens) in

many countries with a Mediterranean climate.



In the **Mediterranean Garden (11)**, the shrubby spurges or Euphorbias are putting on a fine show. Particularly distinctive are the bushy clumps of **Mediterranean Spurge, *Euphorbia characias*** on the south facing terrace. This is a characteristic plant of dry, stony places in the Mediterranean. Look for *Euphorbia characias wulfenii* which has golden flower heads and the main species *Euphorbia characias characias* with a more compact head and flowers with a dark eye, actually dark brown nectar glands. All Euphorbias exude a sticky milky sap when cut, which burns the skin and is very harmful to the eyes but has been used in traditional medicines since ancient times to treat skin excrescences.

Also on the Mediterranean Terrace you will see low spiky mounds of ***Genista acanthoclada*** covered with yellow pea flowers. This is a typical habit of many Mediterranean bushes. The low, dense spiky bush is less susceptible to be browsed by sheep and goats but in the spring, yellow flowers are produced above the spiky mounds to attract pollinating insects.



Left: Mediterranean Spurge, *Euphorbia characias*



Right: Mounds of *Genista acanthoclada*

If you make your way to the newly expanded **Oriental Garden (12)** you can see old Camellias and an extensive planting of new spring flowering Camellias. As well as the showy hybrids, there are also interesting small flowered species Camellias which are quite different to the ones we usually see. These include the unusual *Camellia lutchuensis* (left below) which has small evergreen leaves and small, white scented flowers. It is considered to be one of the most fragrant species and it hails from forests and thickets of southernmost China and Hong Kong. Rather similar is another small white flowered species, *Camellia transnokoensis* (right below) which has pink-tipped buds and comes from Taiwan. If you search around the Camellias you will also find plants of *Camellia sinensis*. This is the plant whose leaves and leaf buds are used to make tea.



Left: *Camellia lutchuensis*



Right: *Camellia transnokoensis*

We hope you have enjoyed looking at some of the special plants which make Ventnor Botanic Garden unique. Come back again and see how the Garden is recovering from one of worst spells of winter cold it has experienced. There is always something new to see here throughout the year and every visit will bring new botanical surprises.



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