

History of Colac Botanic Gardens

Colac Botanic Gardens was designed for the pleasure of the people.

The land, situated on an incomparable site overlooking Lake Colac, was set aside in 1865 at the call of the people.

The Gardens have been placed on the Victorian Heritage Register for their historical, aesthetic and scientific (botanical) significance to the State of Victoria.

They are one of regional Victoria's largest botanic gardens.

The Gardens showcases 9 Living Plant Collections, 5 Significant Trees which are on the national trust register, as well as a beautifully landscaped selection of shrubs and trees in the various garden beds.

The Colac Botanic Gardens was initially laid out in 1868 by Daniel Bunce who was the curator of the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

In 1910 William Guilfoyle submitted a design for remodelling which was accepted by the Shire Council. He was the director of the Botanic Gardens

in Melbourne from 1873.

Guilfoyle said "I have no hesitation in stating that in the event of the plan being carried out in its entirety the grounds will gradually become one of the most picturesque places of the kind in the state of Victoria."

This design is held by the Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens. A reproduction is held by the Friends.

Archibald Campbell was curator from 1911 to 1941. His fine work is commemorated by a copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) planted near the fountain. The home built for Mr Campbell is now a café.

Our wildlife

Tall trees, lush vegetation, wind protection and the lake attract a variety of birds and animals, including ducks, the majestic Whistling Kite, possums and bats.

The Victorian Grey-headed Flying Foxes have a permanent colony in our Gardens. Research has provided strategies to maintain the colony by seasonally rotating their camps within the Gardens, thus protecting both bats and heritage listed trees.

The Living Plant Collections of the Colac Botanic Gardens.

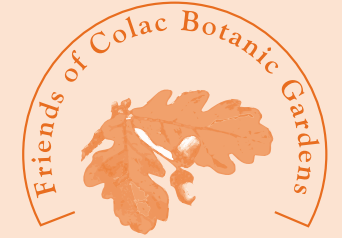
The 9 collections focus on flora of the Otway Ranges, foothills, volcanic plains, waterways and lakes.

- Southern Australian acacia
- Oaks (*Quercus*)
- Cypress (*Cupressus*)
- Pines (*Pinus*)
- Otway mountain flora
- Otway foothills/heathland flora
- *Pittosporum*
- Palms.

Five trees are on the National Trust of Victoria's Significant Trees Register:

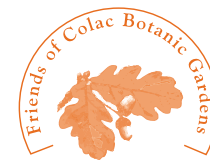
- The Pagoda tree,
- *Pittosporum tenuifolium*,
- Bunya Bunya pine,
- Huntingdon elm,
- Tecate cypress,

In 2020 the Gardens joined a collaboration of six of Victoria's regional botanic gardens in the 'Care for the Rare' project. This supports the establishment of sustainable conservation collections and activities.



Colac Botanic Gardens

For the Pleasure of the People



Friends of Colac Botanic Gardens Inc.

The Friends conduct guided tours for groups and welcome new members.

**Plant Sales & Guided Tours
PO Box 403, Colac 3250
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Photographs: Mark Murray



Colac Botanic Gardens

The Friends acknowledge the Gulidjan people past, present and emerging, who have tended and harvested this land for thousands of years.

The Gardens are a fine example of a Victorian nineteenth century provincial botanic garden with notable plantings & picturesque landscapes.

Listed on the Victorian Heritage Register for their historical, aesthetic and scientific (botanical) significance.

It is one of Victoria's significant and larger provincial botanical gardens.

Walk the oak shaded carriageway and paths to enjoy its charming, informal layout with vistas to Lake Colac. Search for the many rare plants.

A Garden Walk beginning at the Eastern Car Park.

1. Bush Tucker bed: Look for edible fruits, shrubs and tubers including yam daisy (Murnong), chocolate and vanilla lilies. Avoid taste testing as many of these plants require preparation before becoming edible.

2. Sensory Garden: Enjoy the aroma and texture of the foliage as you head towards the carriageway.

3. Playground: Integrating plants and play for family fun and BBQs. Find the 'toadstool ring' created by the Friends.

4. Rainforest and Heathland Beds: Colac is located between the Otway rainforest and the volcanic plains. These beds display the region's diverse native plants.

5 Ancient Trees: In the historic cannon lawn, look for one of the oldest living tree species, the *Ginkgo biloba*, several Bunya Bunya pines, *Araucaria bidwillii*, one on the National Trust register. These are ancient giants of Gondwana with leaves tough enough to deter dinosaurs.

6. Fountain and Lily Pond: Rest a while under the trees, with the sound of falling water. A peaceful backdrop to the tranquility of the gardens.

7. Rose Arbour: Refurbished by the Friends for the Garden's 150th anniversary. It features roses from internationally renowned breeders. Alister Clark's roses were named after Western District women.

8. Three of the National Trust Registered Trees: The Kohuhu, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* "Eila Keightly", The Pagoda tree, *Sophora japonica* and the Huntingdon elm, *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Vegeta'.

9. Rose Garden: A weeping white 'Seafoam' rose is surrounded by beds of pink & white Rugosa Scabrosa & outer beds of floribunda roses, Gold Bunny, Europeana, Remember Me & Charles de Gaulle.

10. Medlar Tree: Cultivated for its fruit since Roman times. It is surrounded by beds of herbs. Note the beautiful vistas to the lake.

11. Palm Bed: These are a common element in Guilfoyle's gardens with their upright geometric shapes contrasting with softer surrounding plantings.

12. Ornamental Gardens: Inside the main entrance the lawn is bordered by a colourful display of rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas, bright annual beds and the beautiful Atlas cedar. This lawn is a favourite location for wedding photography.

13. Curators Cottage: Now the café, it was built for Archibald Campbell, the curator from 1911 to 1941. His work is commemorated by a copper beech *Fagus sylvatica*, planted near the fountain.

14. Oak Carriageway: Almost 100 oaks, predominantly *Quercus robur*, line the carriageway providing cool summer shade. Other oak species are scattered throughout the gardens. Near the Viewing Platform are the National Trust registered Tecate cypress, *Cupressus forbesii*.

15. Flowering Gums: Many are planted in the gardens as well as on the bank of Lake Colac. *Corymbia ficifolia* was a particular favourite of William Guilfoyle.

16. Viewing Platform: A joint project of the Friends and Council. Enjoy the expansive views across the lake to Red Rock's volcanic complex.

17. Wattles: Return to the car park via the path at the base of the gardens to the most recent bed of wattles and other natives. These are in addition to over 34 varieties of Southern Australian acacias in the gardens. One is flowering every month of the year.

