Ballarat Botanical Gardens

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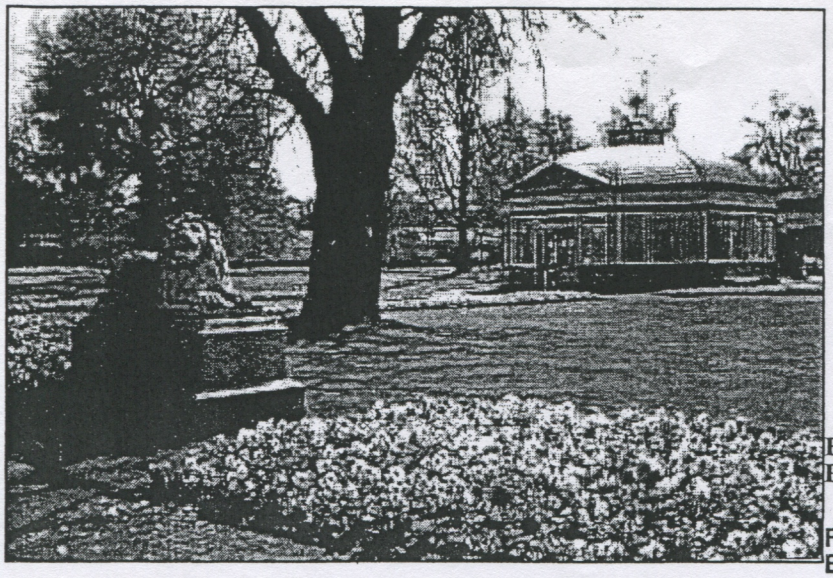

BOTANICAL GARDENS AND ROBERT CLARK HORTICULTURAL CENTRE, WENDOUREE PARADE, BALLARAT. 3350
Phone (03) 5320 7444

Ballarat Botanical Gardens entrance & Statuary Pavilion

For more detailed information on The Ballarat Botanical Gardens click HERE

Thumbnails of more images

The Ballarat Botanical Gardens are characterised by their bountiful bedding displays, statuary collections, avenue plantings and landmark heritage and contemporary architecture. Located on the western shore of picturesque Lake Wendouree The Gardens offer something for everyone.

Notable Features
Two major floral bedding displays are created each year by the planting of over 80,000 seedlings. The floral displays are timed to be at their peak in March and October.
The Robert Clark Centre comprises a state of the art walk-through floral conservatory and a resource centre. It provides a meeting venue for Ballarat's horticultural groups, a small exhibition space and contains ***The Garden Shop.*** The centre is available for seminars, exhibitions and small events. The Conservatory not only showcases Ballarat's world famous tuberous begonia collection, but provides five additional contrasting floral displays each year with their unique landscaping. ***The Conservatory*** is open to the public daily from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Outside these hours photographic sessions, private functions and entertainment can be accommodated.

Craft Cottage displays and is a point of sale for locally produced crafts by the Members of the Ballarat Craft Council. The cottage, formerly Adam Lindsay Gordon's abode, was relocated to the Gardens in 1934.

The Ballarat Childrens Adventure Playground is a free community playground located in the heart of the Botanic Gardens.

The Sensory Garden contains a collection of plants that appeal to the senses of touch, smell and taste. Nestled around a fountain in raised beds it is accessible to the disabled and provides a tranquil setting ideal for wedding ceremonies and photographic sessions.

The Ballarat Tramways Museum is open to the public on weekends and Public Holidays. Tram rides are available along Wendouree Parade providing views of picturesque Lake Wendouree.

Come face to face with John Howard, Paul Keating and Bob Hawke in the Prime Ministers Avenue. A collection of bronze portraits of all 25 Australian Prime Ministers set within the magnificent Horse Chestnut Avenue.

The Sequoiadendron Avenue is listed on the National Trust Significant Trees Register. Planted from 1863 to 1874 the enormous trees are a dominant landscape feature. Note the long arching low branches which show signs of generations of children's play. Other landmark trees include the Turkey Oak at the entrance to the Prime Ministers Avenue, The Druids Oak at the rear of the Craft Cottage, The Huge Bluegum dominating the Sensory Garden and the Weeping Elms near the wishing well.

The Statue Pavilion houses Ballarat's finest collection of marble statuary, the result of the Thompson Bequest. Charles Summer's Flight from Pompeii, Ruth, Modesty, Rebeka and Susannah are elegant reminders of Ballarat's wealth of the 1880s. The pavilion is popular for wedding ceremonies and performances by artists particularly during the Annual "Arts in The Park" program.

The Historic Lake Pavilion Restaurant and Kiosk are located on the Lake Foreshore immediately opposite the Morey Gates. Providing light lunches, scones and cakes and 35 varieties of teas and coffees.

The Claxton Monument with its fountains provides an appealing and welcoming entry to the fernery which is a tranquil haven in summer and shelter from the elements in winter.

The Floral Clock, formerly located in Sturt Street, a gift from the Begonia Festival Association, was relocated to the gardens in 1980.

The Morey Gates located at the main entrance, display intricate cast ironwork and frame the pair of century old marble lions that greet visitors as they approach The Conservatory.

The Dahlia Garden displays a large collection of hybrid dahlias annually from March to Easter.

History

The discovery of gold at Clunes and Ballarat in 1853 changed forever the future of this district from an isolated squatter settlement to, at one stage, the richest urban area in the world. In 1858, two years after the municipality was formed, a decision was made to convert the Ballarat Police Horse Paddock into a botanical garden, and at the same time construct a road on the west side of Yuille's Swamp (Lake Wendouree) to be known as Wendouree Parade.

A competition for a design for the garden was won by Messrs Wright and Anderson who received a prize of 10 guineas ($21.00). George Longley, trained in horticulture at Lowther Castle, England was appointed at a salary of three pounds ($6) per week to convert Wright and Anderson's design into a reality. Contractors were employed to clear trees from the site at 1/- (10 cents) per tree and soil was carted from Yuille's Swamp at 7½ pence (6 cents) per dray load. Longley's first abode was a tent pitched approximately on the site of The Robert Clark Centre. Under the guidance of the Committee of Management established in 1858 works progressed and the 1860's saw the establishment of the principal tree plantings that still give The Gardens their unique character. Plants and seeds were received from the Melbourne and Geelong Botanical Gardens and Longley set about a substantial propagation program in a nursery ground that he laid out in 1859.

The 1870's saw the establishment of the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society, the construction of a simple zoo and the commencement of a large timber batten fernery. The fernery was extended in stages until its completion in 1898, when it became a "uniquely Ballarat" structure with its outstanding fern collection, cool grottos and fish ponds. Remnant footings remain exposed in the gardens west of the current fernery.
Thomas Rooney and John Lingham succeeded George Longley in 1898 who in turn were succeeded by Thomas Toop an English trained gardener who controlled The Gardens for over 30 years. The Thomas Beaumont Lawn is named in recognition of the fifty four years of service given by Tom Beaumont who having worked from boyhood in the gardens became Curator in 1947, a position he held until his retirement in 1978. He won world fame for his ability to grow tuberous begonias.

The Floral Clock was presented to the citizens of Ballarat in 1954 by the Ballarat Begonia Festival Committee and was moved to its present site from Sturt Street Gardens in 1980. **The Adam Lindsay Gordon Cottage** was relocated to its present position from Bath Street near Craig's hotel in 1934. After falling into disrepair the Ballarat Y's Men's Club undertook its restoration in the early 1990's. In 1992 the cottage was opened by the Ballarat Crafts Council as an outlet for locally produced crafts. The Sensory Garden was developed in 1992 with the assistance of the Zonta Club of Ballarat. In the period 1994 to 1995 a detailed conservation analysis and masterplan was undertaken to ensure that future management and development within The Gardens would be in accord with the shared objectives of the community, National Trust, Council and the Historic Buildings Council. The Robert Clark Centre, the result of a $2million bequest, comprises The Conservatory and the Resource Centre which opened in 1995.

Events Not To be Missed

The Ballarat Begonia Festival is staged for 10 days each March. The begonia conservatory display, roving gardens entertainment, floral carpet, and parade are supplemented by a program of events for all ages and interests.

Six uniquely different Conservatory displays are presented each year necessitating total relandscaping of the interior. Ballarat's world famous tuberous begonia collection is displayed to coincide with the Begonia Festival. The Autumn display exhibits our chrysanthemum collection. Winter displays have traditionally featured cyclamen and cineraria, while the spring display showcases schizanthus and spring bulbs. The Christmas / Summer display utilises a range of flowering display crops.

The Arts in The Park program is presented on Sundays during the Months of January, February and March. Local performing artists provide free entertainment at various sites within The Gardens.

Guided Tours are conducted by the Friends of The Ballarat Botanical Gardens on the second Sunday of every month at 2pm. The Friends of The Ballarat Botanical Gardens conduct plant sales from their "Growing Friends" site at the rear of The Robert Clark Centre every Tuesday between 1 and 4pm.

For information about any of the events or features, bookings and enquires contact:

The Robert Clark Centre
P.O. Box 655 Ballarat Vic 3353
Phone: (03) 5334 3131 Facsimile: (03) 5320 7444
Free call: 1800 656374