

THE BLOEDEL RESERVE

Self-Guided Tour



**PLEASE RETURN THIS BOOKLET TO THE GATE
HOUSE UPON COMPLETION OF YOUR TOUR SO
THAT OTHER VISITORS MAY USE IT. THANK YOU!**

WELCOME

On behalf of the staff and trustees of The Bloedel Reserve, we are pleased to welcome you. The Bloedel Reserve is a not-for-profit foundation that owns and operates the Reserve. It was established in 1974.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

In 1856, President Franklin Pierce gave the property and most of Agate Point to officials representing the Washington Territories for the purpose of developing a territorial university. Records from archives at the university indicate that the property was logged soon after that transaction, and sale of the timber paid for some of the first structures on the new campus in downtown Seattle. Some time later, the adjoining property known as Agate Point was sold. The money obtained from that sale was used to fund some of the first academic programs at the University of Washington.

In 1904, Mrs. Angela Collins bought 45 of the 67 acres at Agate Point. In 1906 she purchased the remainder to build a beach retreat for her family following the death of her husband, John Collins, Seattle's sixth mayor.

At the time, Bainbridge Island had few roads, no bridges and only limited public access by boat. Around 1928, Mrs. Collins decided to build a main residence on the property on the bluff overlooking Puget Sound. Her son, Bertrand Collins, introduced his mother to J. Lister Holmes, an up-and-coming Seattle architect. Collectively, the three collaborated on the design of the 18th century French Country style home which she used as her summer residence. The house and its 67 acres was called Collinswood.

In 1951, Virginia and Prentice Bloedel purchased Collinswood and engaged Mr. Holmes to complete the interior of the residence he had designed many years before and add a garage and shop wing. Mrs. Bloedel loved the home, and Mr. Bloedel was impressed by the forested land and open space. In 1953 the Bloedels became full-time residents on the property and renamed it Agate Point Farm.

Mr. Bloedel was born in Bellingham, Washington. His



father had come west from Wisconsin and began a lifelong relationship with the Pacific Northwest timber industry. Mrs. Bloedel's father, R. D. Merrill, who also was in the timber business, was one of the early loggers on the Olympic Peninsula. Mr. Bloedel retired in 1950 as one of the vice presidents of MacMillan Bloedel Ltd., a firm he helped establish in Canada.

Over the next thirty years, the Bloedels expanded their property to 150 acres to include space for sheep, meadows, barns, chickens, vegetables and formal gardens. In 1970, they decided to donate the property to the University of Washington. However, because of the high cost of maintenance, it eventually became impossible for the UW to continue its stewardship of the grounds. In 1974, the Arbor Fund (now The Bloedel Reserve) was established to manage the property and renamed it the Bloedel Reserve.

Mr. Bloedel often said, "Nature does not need us to survive, but we need nature in order to connect with a sense of creation."

As you walk along the meadow trail toward the distant barns, take a moment to consider the Statement of Purpose written by Mr. Bloedel on behalf of the Reserve:

The Bloedel Reserve should be regarded as a natural reserve that also possesses some of the attributes of an arboretum. Its primary purpose is the creation and maintenance of a place where people enjoy natural beauty as evidenced by plants. It will specialize in the preservation of the wildflowers, shrubs and trees native to this area and of the woods, fields and streams which are their natural environment. The impression of raw nature is often one of chaos and confusion. Accordingly, the enjoyment of natural beauty may be enhanced by introducing some organization into the primitive confusion, but that organization should not destroy a sense of naturalness. The Reserve as a whole should be an example of man working harmoniously with nature; where his power to manage is used cautiously and wisely. (06/14/1976)

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE PROPERTY

Feature #1, THE GATE HOUSE

In 1988, the Gate House was completed and the Bloedel Reserve was opened to the public. The building is designed to capture the feel and architectural character of the Bloedel's main residence. The residence now serves as our Visitor Center and is Feature # 5 on the tour.

In the breezeway is a three-dimensional model of the grounds. The 150 acres at the Reserve consist of approximately 85 acres of forest and about 65 acres committed to open space and cultivated gardens.

Feature #2, THE MEADOW, BARN AND BIRD MARSH

The meadow once contained sheep and cattle. The barn on your right once housed Mrs. Bloedel's sheep. The barn straight ahead was built to protect a supply of old growth cedar logs that Mr. Bloedel gathered from areas around Olympic National Park and various other timberlands that had been cut and left to rot. The logs have since been split and used as rails for a fence that runs along West Port Madison Road.

Continue through the meadow and beyond the barns. This area is intended to be quiet and serene; a place to begin the transition from the active Gate House area to the quiet forest beyond.

Follow the bark-covered trail down a descending slope, through a wooded area that leads to the Bird Marsh.

The original circular pond was built in 1954 to provide irrigation for Mr. Bloedel's forest nursery that was once located outside the main entrance. In 1979 and 1980, the pond was enlarged to increase its irrigation capacity.

The pond gets its water from both surface runoff and from subsurface springs that were discovered during the excavation.



The decision to enhance the original pond not only provided additional irrigation capacity, it also provided an opportunity to create an environment that would attract wildlife, particularly birds. As part of the larger pond's design, islands of undisturbed soil were left to provide a safe habitat for waterfowl and other birds. Around the islands, the water was dredged deeply enough to prohibit predators such as dogs, cats and raccoons from wading toward the nesting birds. In some places, the pond is 14 feet deep. Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) were introduced to serve as a nesting place for redwing blackbirds.

Note the red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) and Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), a heavy fruiting holly species with small orange-red berries in winter. Other plantings include native pink spiraea (*Spiraea douglasii*) at the south end of the pond, and native viburnum or moosewood (*Viburnum ellipticum*), which is almost never used in Northwest gardens but is attractive for its bright red color in the fall, and a few perennials planted around the border to add interest.

The pond took about one year to construct. It was then left to settle for about four years to see what nature would do with it. It is now a man-made Bird Marsh in a natural wetlands setting. The goal now is to continue gentle but necessary maintenance that will enable the habitat to prosper, and to impart a sense of naturalness - not too ornamental nor too highly maintained.



Feature #3, THE TRESTLE BRIDGE AND BOARDWALK
From the Bird Marsh, the trail takes you to a unique landscape feature—the trestle footbridge. Built by hand in 1991, the bridge provides a special spot for viewing the forest canopy below. The railings and benches along the bridge are made from Jarrah wood (*Eucalyptus marginata*), which is noted for its resistance to rot and insect damage.

From the bridge, the trail winds into the heart of the second-growth forest, past old stumps and logs and near a small forest wetland. This wetland or bog forms the headwaters of a year-round flowing stream that discharges its flow into Puget Sound on the east side of the Reserve.

The boardwalk was designed to permit close-up viewing of the wetland without disturbing it. Notice the craftsmanship in the bracketing beneath the boardwalk.

From the center of the boardwalk you will see an unusually large planting of skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) which reaches its peak display in late summer. The bog also contains a carnivorous plant commonly called cobra lily (*Darlingtonia californica*), native to southern Oregon and northern California. The cobra lilies provide their own nitrogen by consuming insects, in an environment that is typically deficient in nitrogen.

As you continue to walk, notice the native cedar, fir and hemlock trees, sword ferns, lady ferns, deer ferns, salal, Oregon grape and salmonberry. Follow the trail until you intersect the paved path, then turn right and proceed toward the Visitor Center.

Feature #4, THE MID POND

As you exit the forest trail you come upon the Mid Pond. Built in 1954, this was the first water feature created on the property. It was designed by Mr. Bloedel in collaboration with his friend and advisor Thomas Church, a landscape architect from California. Mr. Bloedel personally guided local general contractors in its excavation. Originally, the pond extended through what is now the Japanese garden.

The large multi-stemmed tree you see on the left of the path is a Persian ironwood tree (*Parrotia persica*), which comes from Iran and which Mrs. Bloedel acquired as a one-gallon size shrub, sometime in the 1960s. It belongs to the witch hazel family and has spectacular fall color, with leaves turning yellow with touches of red, pink and orange. The tree is named for Dr. F.W. Parrot (pronounced pear-oh), a German naturalist, traveler



same attractive fall colored foliage.

As you continue toward the house you will pass a very large atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) on your left. The atlas cedar was a gift to Mrs. Collins from Mr. Jim Eddy of the Port Blakely Tree Farm. We believe he also may have given her the empress tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) to the right of the Visitor Center's front door. The two very large trees on the lawn are English elms (*Ulmus procera*) and have attractive, brilliant golden fall color.

We are often asked if we worry about Dutch elm disease, which is spread by beetles and inter-root contact with infected trees. Since there are so few elms in this area and we have not yet found any of the beetles here, we feel our trees are still reasonably free from this threat. We do watch for the beetles, though, as they have been reported in King County.

Feature #5, THE VISITOR CENTER

The ground floor of the main residence, now the Visitor Center, is open to the public. It contains public rest rooms and a reading library. The ground floor has some of the furnishings owned by the Bloedels. The upper floors are offices for administrative staff. The docent in the house can give you a guided tour, or answer any questions.

To resume your tour, walk around the house to its east side for views of Puget Sound over a space that was once a sheep pasture and orchard for Mrs. Collins. The patio at the edge of the lawn was designed by Mr. Bloedel's friend, landscape architect Thomas Church. Between 1978 and 1985, at the recommendation of landscape architect Richard Haag,

and physician. In winter, without its leaves, one can see its very handsome trunks exhibiting exfoliating bark—bark that peels off in flakes and chips, revealing attractive patterns and colors.

Across the pond is a weeping willow (*Salix alba* var. *tristis*) and a group of Young's weeping birch (*Betula pendula* CV. *Youngii*).

To the right of the willow, beyond the outlet of the pond, you can see a collection of Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) planted on a mossy slope along with a few birches.

Continuing along the path, you will pass some shrubs on the right (planted among the salal), which resemble the leaves of the Parrot tree. They are called leather leaf (*Fothergilla monticola*). Like the Parrot tree, the leather leaf is a relative of witch hazel and has the



the bluff was lowered 15 feet and the material moved to the Japanese Garden to create landscape features there.

Two noteworthy plants at either side of the overlook are weeping Camperdown elm trees (*Ulmus glabra* CV. *Camperdownii*). They were planted by Mrs. Collins, probably in the 1940s. Normally, Camperdown elms of this age would be much larger. We believe that graft incompatibility between the Camperdown elm on top of English elm trunks (*Ulmus glabra*) prevents the trees from getting much larger.

On the bank below the small patio is a large planting of Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*).

There are a few cherry trees remaining near the house, but most have died over the years. The boxwood hedge (*Buxus sempervirens* CV. *Suffruticosa*) framing the lawn came from the original Collins homestead at Second Avenue and James Street in Seattle. While the “Great Seattle Fire” in 1889 destroyed the house, the hedge surrounding the home survived. Mrs. Collins eventually had the hedge dug up and brought to Bainbridge Island where she had it planted around the edge of the lawn.

Beyond the boxwood hedge are some large specimens of *Stranvaesia davidiana* var. *salicifolia*, a plant closely related to *Photinia*.

There is a large copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* CV. *Atropurpurea*) on the north side of the lawn.

Feature #6, THE WATERFALL OVERLOOK

Proceed down the steps to the Waterfall Overlook. This area is planted with rhododendrons, *Viburnum davidii*, *Skimmia japonica* and several Japanese maples. Just below the overlook is a group of *Edgeworthia papyrifera*, a small shrub from China

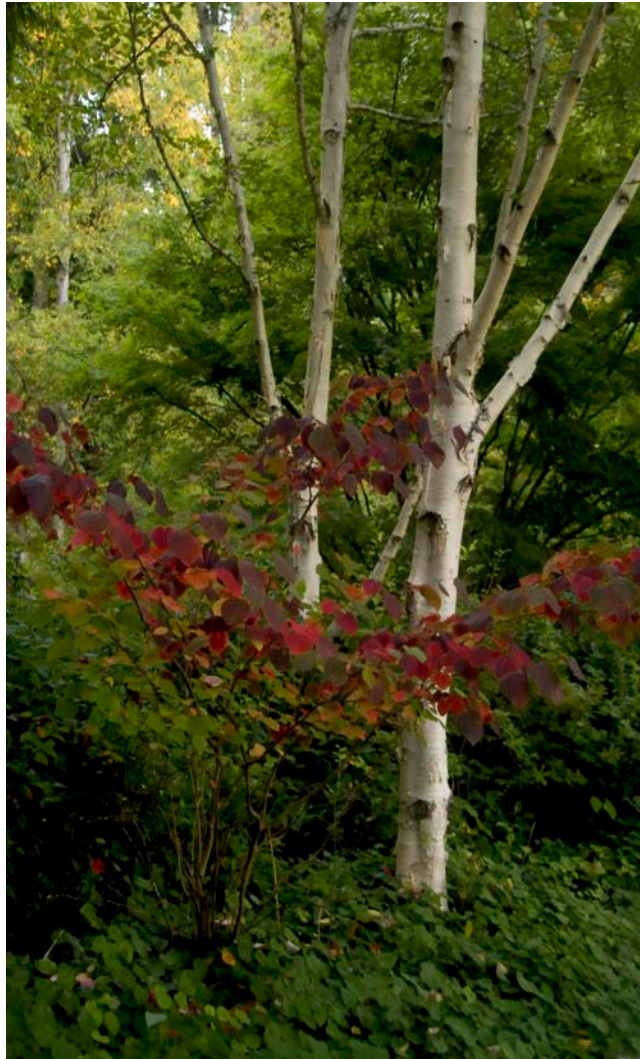
also called paperbush. Related to daphne, it bears clusters of very fragrant yellow flowers in the spring.

Feature #7, TRAIL FROM THE WATERFALL TO THE BIRCH GARDEN

On the right side of the walkway, leading away from the waterfall, is native oxalis (*Oxalis oregana*), often called wood sorrel. It is an edible plant with a peppery flavor that comes from oxalic acid in the plant tissues.

As you continue you will pass a number of other notable plants: periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), native or false Solomon's Seal (*Smilacina racemosa*), true Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), hardy cyclamen (*Cyclamen hederifolium*), ferns and shrubs.

Near the trail, note the Himalayan white birch (*Betula jacquemontii*) under planted with salal, and the conifers that extend the forest cover farther along this trail.



Around the grassy area are rhododendrons, hydrangeas, Japanese maples, creating a garden area with year-round color and bloom.

Mrs. Bloedel particularly enjoyed the lace cap hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) often drying them for display on her dining room table.

As you reenter the native forest, a chain-link fence marking the northeast corner of the property is visible on the right.

Feature #8, THE CHRISTMAS POND

Winding down the trail, note the old, big leaf maple tree (*Acer macrophyllum*), which frames the view of the Christmas Pond. Its present character is the result of having survived many abuses of both man and nature. The design and installation of pond was a Christmas gift from Mr. Bloedel to Mrs. Bloedel in 1970.

On the bank below the Japanese maples is a display of soft yellow primroses (*Primula veris*) that start flowering in March. As they fade, a large planting of candelabra primroses (*Primula pulverulenta*), located upstream from the bridge, begins flowering in late April and continues through May. In June, another primrose (*Primula frondosa*) starts to flower with blooms lasting into July or perhaps early August. White azaleas (*Rhododendron*

mucronatum), London pride (*Saxifraga x. urbinum*), hosta (*Hosta sieboldiana*), birch (*Betula pendula*), and native deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*) line the trail and spaces in this garden.

Feature #9, THROUGH THE GLEN

The Glen features more flowers than any other part of the Reserve. Planted to appeal to Mrs. Bloedel, it contains lungworts (*Pulmonaria* spp.), rhododendrons, trillium, and hardy cyclamen (*Cyclamen hederifolium*). Cyclamen flower from late August through September. The flowers are followed by mottled foliage and then, in late spring, the leaves drop and the bulbs go completely dormant until the fall when the flowers again emerge.



The plants on the right of the trail with the mottled leaves are lungworts (*Pulmonaria saccharata*), also called boy-girl plants because they flower with pink and blue blossoms at the same time.

Note the large-leafed Himalayan rhododendrons. The Douglas fir stump with the old spring-board notches is reminiscent of logging practices long past. Below it is a form of comfrey (*Symphytum grandiflorum*), which is similar to lungwort except that the leaves aren't mottled. Between April and May its flowers are a pale yellow.

To your right at the top of the Glen is native wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*). It was once used by Native Americans as a flavoring for cooking, but is not the ginger of the grocery store, which is a South American tropical herb. In bloom, its unusual brownish-purple triangular flowers lie very close to the earth. The flowers are pollinated by beetles and the seeds are distributed by ants.

Feature #10, THE ORCHID TRAIL

You are now at the top of the Glen and about to cross the paved road to the path that leads to the Orchid Trail. The route of the trail was proposed by Tommy Church around 1974.

Look to the right to see a big-leaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) and beyond it, up the road, a dawn redwood tree (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). Notice its deeply furrowed trunk. The dawn redwood was a well-known fossil long before living specimens

of it were found. Living trees were discovered in China in 1947 and introduced to horticulture about 1949. It is a deciduous conifer—that is, it will lose all of its needles in the winter.

As you first cross the paved path, look to the left beyond the azalea plantings to a small garden designed by landscape architect, Geoffrey Rausch. This garden was a birthday gift from Mr. Bloedel to Mrs. Bloedel. It consists of a little viewing area of a pond where Mrs. Bloedel once kept a pet swan, a teak bench, and plantings of hardy cyclamen, trillium, native fragrant azaleas, skimmia, and native Western rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) — all favorites of Mrs. Bloedel.

Along the path on the left side, note the very large old stump of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). We preserve this old stump by keeping the bark intact by wrapping it with wires. It is a striking example of the large size of first-growth forest trees. In front of it is a young western yew (*Taxus brevifolia*), a very slow growing tree with exceptionally



hard wood, used by Native Americans for making digging sticks and bows. Its bark was once used to make a drug used in the treatment of cancer.

Further along the trail, several species of Japanese maple are planted in an opening through the trees and are particularly beautiful in the fall. It is worth noting that the whole group of Douglas fir trees along the Orchid Trail was planted in 1956 to replace a number of trees removed in 1954 when the clearing took place for the Mid Pond, the entry drive and Guest House meadow.

At one time, this was the only place on the property where you could see a fair number of native coral root orchids (*Corallorhiza maculata*). These terrestrial orchids exist by means of a mycorrhizal (fungal) association with the rotting roots of the evergreen trees and get their “food” from this

interdependency, allowing them to grow and thrive in the absence of sunlight. Unfortunately, only a few remain today. The environment has changed over time and the orchids are gradually disappearing from this particular location.

Feature #11, THE JAPANESE GARDEN, GUEST HOUSE AND ZEN GARDEN

Leaving the Orchid Trail, you enter the Japanese Garden. The gate (*torii*) and the stone (dry) garden were designed by Dr. Koichi Kawana. Situated so that it can be viewed while seated in the living room or outside on the deck, the stone garden is fairly monochromatic and simple. By design, the visitor is invited to play an active role in

completing it as an art form by contemplating the setting and imagining the addition of features such as water, mountains or colors within the mind.

The Guest House was designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, a Seattle architect recommended to the Bloedels by Tommy Church, and completed in 1964. The structure is made of vertical grain, clear, Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), supported by Douglas fir posts that came from Mr. Bloedel's timber property in Bellingham. The rest of the wood came from MacMillan-Bloedel Ltd. in Canada. The floor inside is teak from the battleship U.S.S. New Jersey, acquired from a government surplus property disposal sale. The chairs and coffee tables were hand-made by master furniture maker George Nakashima of New Hope, Pennsylvania, and were a gift to the Bloedels from the architect. Mr. Nakashima was a classmate of Mr. Kirk at the University of Washington. Paul Kirk once commented in an interview that this building attempts to combine a Japanese style with Northwest Native American.



Walk around the deck to view the Japanese stroll garden which was designed and built in the period 1960-61 by Fujitaro Kubota of Seattle. Most of the key conifers and maples came from Mr. Kubota's collection. The garden contains a very old lace leaf maple (just below the deck), Japanese red, black and white pines. Apparently, the black pines represent the male element of the garden and the red pines represent the female element. To the left of the deck is a large Korean dogwood (*Cornus kousa*).

The stone walkway beyond the second torii is flanked by black lily turf (*Ophiopogon planescapens* CV. Arabicus), one of a very small number of plants known to have black leaves. Black has some cultural significance in Japan. Black dyes were very difficult to obtain from natural sources and those who could afford black-dyed fabrics or other materials were considered to be of a higher class. Notice the fence that has been hand-tied with black twine.

To the right of the walkway is a Katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*). It may be one of the larger specimens of the species in the Seattle area. It is a handsome tree known for its yellow fall color and leaves that emit a very sweet fragrance, almost like butterscotch or cotton candy, after they have fallen.

Cross the paved pathway and follow the bark trail into the Moss Garden.

Feature #12, THE MOSS GARDEN

This area was never successfully defined until 1982, when Richard Haag (the Reserve's landscape architect at the time) and Richard Brown (the Reserve's executive director) brought an idea to Mr. Bloedel after attending a meeting of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta in Vancouver, Canada, where they had seen a small display of deciduous huckleberries growing out of moss.

The project began with grubbing out all of the salmonberry and other understory plants, leaving just a few sword ferns, deer ferns, salal, and the huckleberries (*Vaccinium parvifolium*). A number of alders were cut down to provide light, but several tall remnants were left as a source of food and habitat for woodpeckers.

To create the moss cover, 2200 flats of Irish moss (*Sagina subulata*) were brought in. Those flats were cut into little cubes, amounting to 275,000 plugs, and planted about six inches apart, creating a temporary "moss" floor for the garden. The native true mosses then colonized the Irish moss and crowded most of it out over time, resulting in the beautiful green carpet before you. There are at least 12 species of native mosses in this garden.

You can see an understory of thriving huckleberries and a few tall *Aralia spinosa* trees, or Hercules' walking stick. To the left of the path are several *Decaisnea fargesii*, a plant





from western China that resembles the Aralias, which produces beautiful, dark blue seed pods in late fall. Large-leafed skunk cabbage plants flank the little drainage way through the garden.

Follow the bark path to the Reflection Pool.

Feature #13, THE REFLECTION POOL AND THE CAMELLIA WALK

As you enter this garden, notice the clipped English yews (*Taxus baccata*) that line the perimeter of the Reflection Pool. Behind them on the right are a half-dozen or so devils' club (*Oplopanax horridus*) plants, a Northwest native, interesting because of their large maple-like leaves and spiny trunks.

In 1970, after two years spent studying the water table of the area and following the advice of Tommy Church, the Reflection Pool was built. Once the level of the natural groundwater was determined, the pool was designed so the water surface was at that level. The concrete curb merely holds back the turf.

Natural springs in the sandy soils maintain the water's depth. The pool is approximately 200 feet long and about 6 feet deep at the center of its "V"-shaped bottom. Pit run gravel was added to allow for natural recharge without erosion of the pond bottom. Surplus water exits the pool through openings in the retaining edge and flows into the Japanese garden pond.

Many people have commented about the stark simplicity of this feature and some have expressed the opinion that it should have sculpture or artwork to complete the overall design. In fact, the Bloedels considered many variations of artwork and design before settling on this simple concept. It was their preference that the beauty of nature, as it was reflected in the pool, be the focus of this garden feature, not the handiwork of man. The effect is that the pool provides the "frame" for nature's "painting."

At one time, there were benches placed around the pool constructed from timbers that served as the buttress support beams of the old Hall Brothers Shipyard in Winslow where tall sailing schooners were once built.

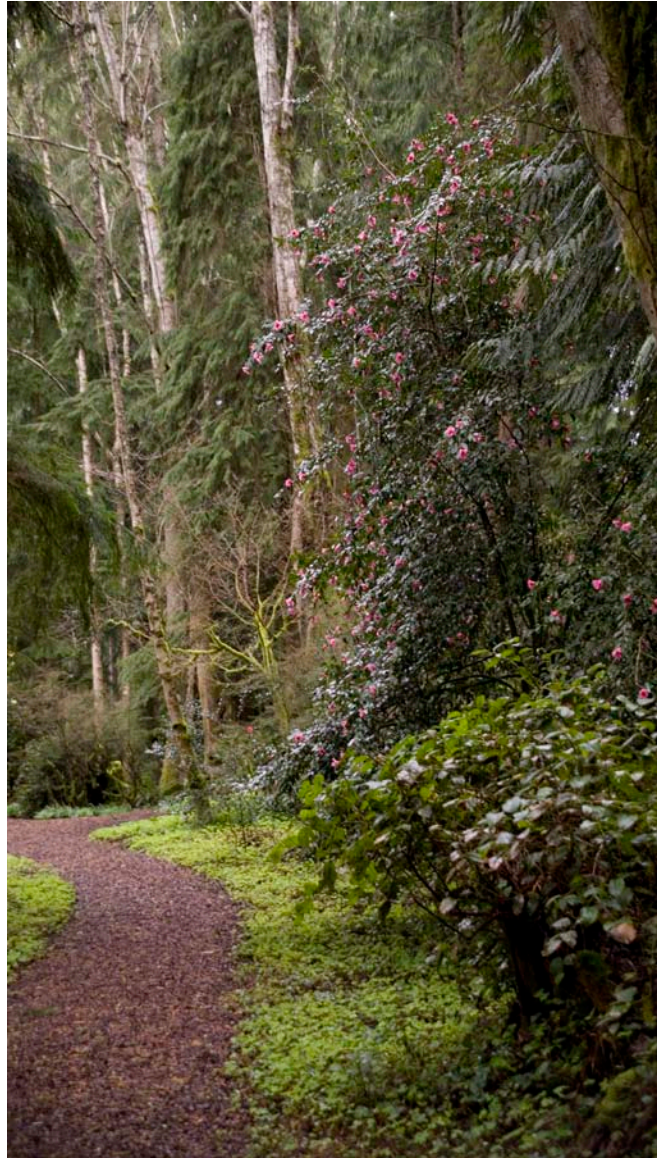
The Reflection Pool was a favorite place of the Bloedels. Their ashes are buried below the hedge at the south end of the pool. A simple stone marker indicates the site. The marker is engraved with two lines from Mrs. Bloedel's favorite poem, *Sympathy*, by English author Emily Brontë. Here is the poem in its entirety:

SYMPATHY

There should be no despair for you
While nightly stars are burning;
While evening pours its silent dew
And sunshine gilds the morning.
There should be no despair —
though tears
May flow down like a river:
Are not the best beloved of years
Around your heart for ever?

They weep, you weep, it must be so;
Winds sigh as you are sighing,
And Winter sheds his grief in snow
Where Autumn's leaves are lying:
Yet, these revive, and from their fate
Your fate cannot be parted:
Then, journey on, if not elate,
Still, never broken-hearted!

As you leave the Reflection Pool, descend the short set of stairs, and follow the path called the Camellia Walk. This woodland trail will return you to the parking area and the Gate House. On the way you will pass a number of perennials -- trilliums, wood poppies, white violets, Grecian windflowers and ferns. Despite the shade, the old camellias bloom well in early spring.



We hope that you have found quiet and tranquility on your walk through the Bloedel Reserve and that soon you will be inspired to return to see the gardens in every season.