

National Rhododendron Gardens



Visitor Guide

The National Rhododendron Gardens is a unique setting for cool climate plants with breathtaking views over the Yarra Valley. Seasonal changes ensure these Gardens are an all-year-round delight. When not in full bloom you can still soak in the beauty of rich bark textures, seed capsules, foliage shapes and beautiful fragrance as you stroll.

History

The National Rhododendron Gardens was developed by the Australian Rhododendron Society when the State Government issued them a lease of land next to Olinda township in 1960. An enthusiastic team of people cleared land and started to plant around the southern end of the garden.

In 1962 a large bushfire burnt the area to the ground. While this destroyed much of the original plantings it also saved much work by clearing the bush for the garden.

Many of the early plantings were propagated by members of the Society from their own collections and from seed and plant material sent from other international and national rhododendron societies. Collectors from the society made trips to New Guinea, India and Nepal to collect some of the specimens which are in the gardens.

Imagine the great stories from these early expeditions of adventure, exploration and romance, of travelling in remote foreign countries to discover new species.

The natural surrounds

On a misty morning there is a surreal atmosphere as the giant Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) tower out of the ground disappearing into the white fog. Most of these magnificent trees have grown since the fires in 1962. They are the tallest flowering plant in the world only outgrown by the Californian Redwoods.

The Garden is 104 acres (40 hectares) in a long linear shape. The soil is deep, slightly acid, volcanic clay loam. The nature of the soil allows free drainage while it still retains good moisture levels on the clay particles. The average rain fall is around 1400mm (56 inches). Temperatures are on average 5 degrees cooler than off the mountain.

Things to do and see

A Garden for all seasons

Whatever time of year you visit there is always something to see.

In early spring you can walk the golden mile of daffodils and see many of our camellias and magnolias in flower. By mid spring the Cherry Grove is in full flower. This time is also the peak season of flowering for the azaleas and rhododendrons and it is a pleasure to wander through the sprays of extravagant colour.

Summer is a great time to walk the nature trail in the cool rainforest atmosphere or picnic in the cool shade on the Cherry Lawn and wander through the collection of conifers. The brilliant blue and white hydrangeas can be seen in full flower with many large banks of them planted around the garden.

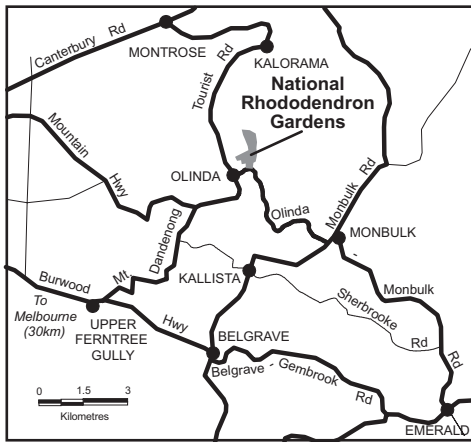
Autumn is ablaze with colour as the deciduous trees and shrubs turn every shade of yellow, red and orange. The views by the lake are spectacular as many of the hydrangeas take on rustic colours and are reflected in the cool calm waters.

Winter is a season of contrast. The mists create an aura of mystery amongst the Mountain Ash and the air is always fresh and cool. Bare tree trunks and branches reflect in the mountain lake and in late winter hellebore and cyclamen flowers carpet the ground. The vireya collection can be seen flowering at all times throughout the year.

How to get there

The National Rhododendron Garden is located 500 metres from the Olinda township along the Olinda - Monbulk Rd. Turn into The Georgian Rd. The car park entrance is 50 metres on the right. (Melways Ref 66 K6)





National Rhododendron Gardens

- Garden Area
- Water Body
- Car Park
- Sealed Road
- Unsealed Road
- Main Walking Trail (sealed)
- Walking Track (unsealed)
- Disabled Access
- Parking for the disabled
- Park Information
- Toilets
- Gazebo
- Lookout
- Walking Track
- Picnic table
- Gate

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Cartography by Spatial Vision & Parks Victoria 2007 M/7188

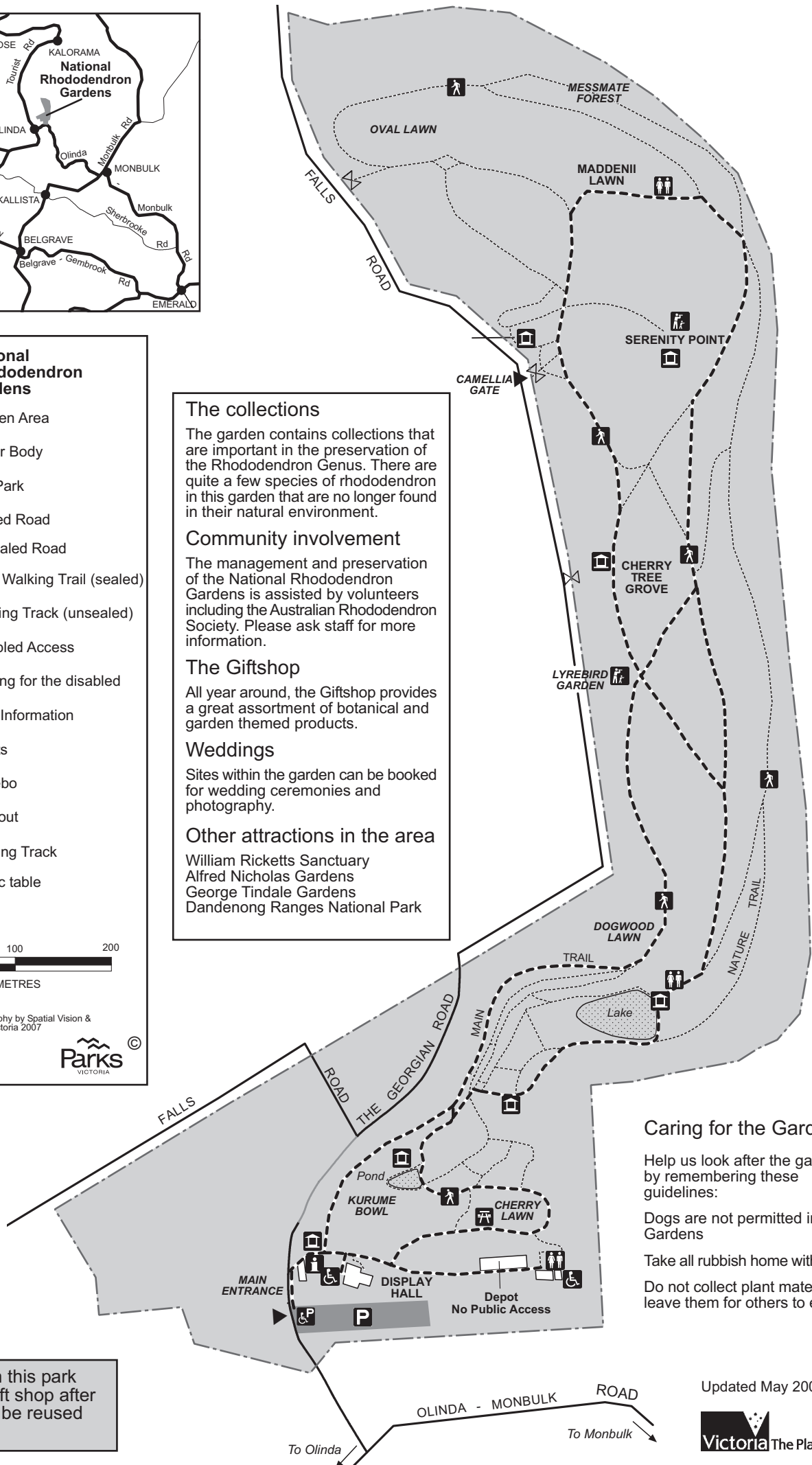
The collections
The garden contains collections that are important in the preservation of the Rhododendron Genus. There are quite a few species of rhododendron in this garden that are no longer found in their natural environment.

Community involvement
The management and preservation of the National Rhododendron Gardens is assisted by volunteers including the Australian Rhododendron Society. Please ask staff for more information.

The Giftshop
All year around, the Giftshop provides a great assortment of botanical and garden themed products.

Weddings
Sites within the garden can be booked for wedding ceremonies and photography.

Other attractions in the area
William Ricketts Sanctuary
Alfred Nicholas Gardens
George Tindale Gardens
Dandenong Ranges National Park



Caring for the Garden

Help us look after the garden by remembering these guidelines:

- Dogs are not permitted in the Gardens
- Take all rubbish home with you
- Do not collect plant material – leave them for others to enjoy

Please return this park note to the gift shop after use so it can be reused
Thank you.

Updated May 2007

