

The Friends of the McKay Gardens Oak Tree Walk

The hybrid Algerian Oak trees (*Quercus canariensis* x *Q. robur*) in the McKay Gardens provide a link between the past and the present. Planted in 1910, they were part of the original design of the Gardens. Five remain. Although the gardens have seen many changes in the 100 years these trees have existed, the trees are reminders of the historical significance and ongoing cultural importance of the Gardens to the community.

1. Hybrid Algerian Oak trees. 2. The Bowling Green Lawn. Was reinstated in 2009 after the closure and demolition of the Sunshine Bowling Club. 3. The building behind the oaks is the Presbyterian Church manse built in the 1960s. A bandstand originally stood here and bands played most weekends. 4. Recent welcome sign and the original 1920s cast iron gates, together with the bluestone pillars built by HV McKay's father. Both restored in 2009. 5. McKay Memorial rose gardens. Planted in the 1980s. 6. Memorial mosaic donated by the Sunshine and District Historical Society in the 1990s. Created by local artists Libby McKinnon and Ronald Purdy, based on a historic photo. 7. 'Straight Six' path. Named after the six furlong straight at Flemington. Sunshine Harvester workers had to bolt down this path before the whistle blew at the start of a shift, to avoid being shut out and forfeiting pay. Chrysanthemums, famously once grown in the Gardens, were a regular feature here. 8. Remains of a bluestone path system, based on an old path alignment. Built in the 1970s as part of a Regional Employment Development Scheme. 9. Sign outlining a brief history of the Gardens. 10. Canary Island Palms. This species was prominent in the original design of the Gardens. A tennis court and glass houses once stood in this general area. 11. A young Norfolk Island Pine, a species originally used to produce masts for sailing boats. The trees behind it are a Norway Spruce and a Spotted Gum where small native hawks sometimes nest. 12. Southern Magnolia tree. Planted during the 1940s, this tree has since suffered damage due to fire. 13. The plant with the broad, banana-type leaves is a Giant White Bird of Paradise plant. Nearby you can also see a Macadamia nut tree from northern Australia. 14. Sign notes the contributions of early curators to the Gardens. The garden bed to the right, containing Catmint, Hebes and Roses, was once the location of the curators' house. 15. The Bunya Pine. This tree was planted in 2009 as part of the Garden's 100th birthday celebrations by descendants of H.V. McKay. A large evergreen coniferous tree, notable for its distinctive thorny 'leaves' and interesting bark, it can grow up to 50 m and can live for more than 100 years. A relative of the recently discovered Wollemi Pine, it has an ancient lineage. The Friends hope that the community is still appreciating the Gardens when this pine is 100 years old. 16. HV McKay footbridge. The new pedestrian bridge, spanning 66 metres, was built in 2014 as part of the Regional Rail Link project. It replaces an earlier footbridge dating from 1911. 17. South Walk. This is a more formal path system which features a large Cedar tree and number of old Cypress trees planted in the early days of the Gardens. 18. Sunshine Presbyterian Church. It is a significant presence in the Gardens, the Edwardian church dating from 1926. 19. HV McKay Memorial Gardens tribute sign.

Friends of the McKay Memorial Gardens' contribution to the National Trust's Heritage Week celebrations, 2015.
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