



Australian Government
National Capital Authority



OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE GARDENS

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR

Time: 1 hour | Distance: 1.1 kilometres

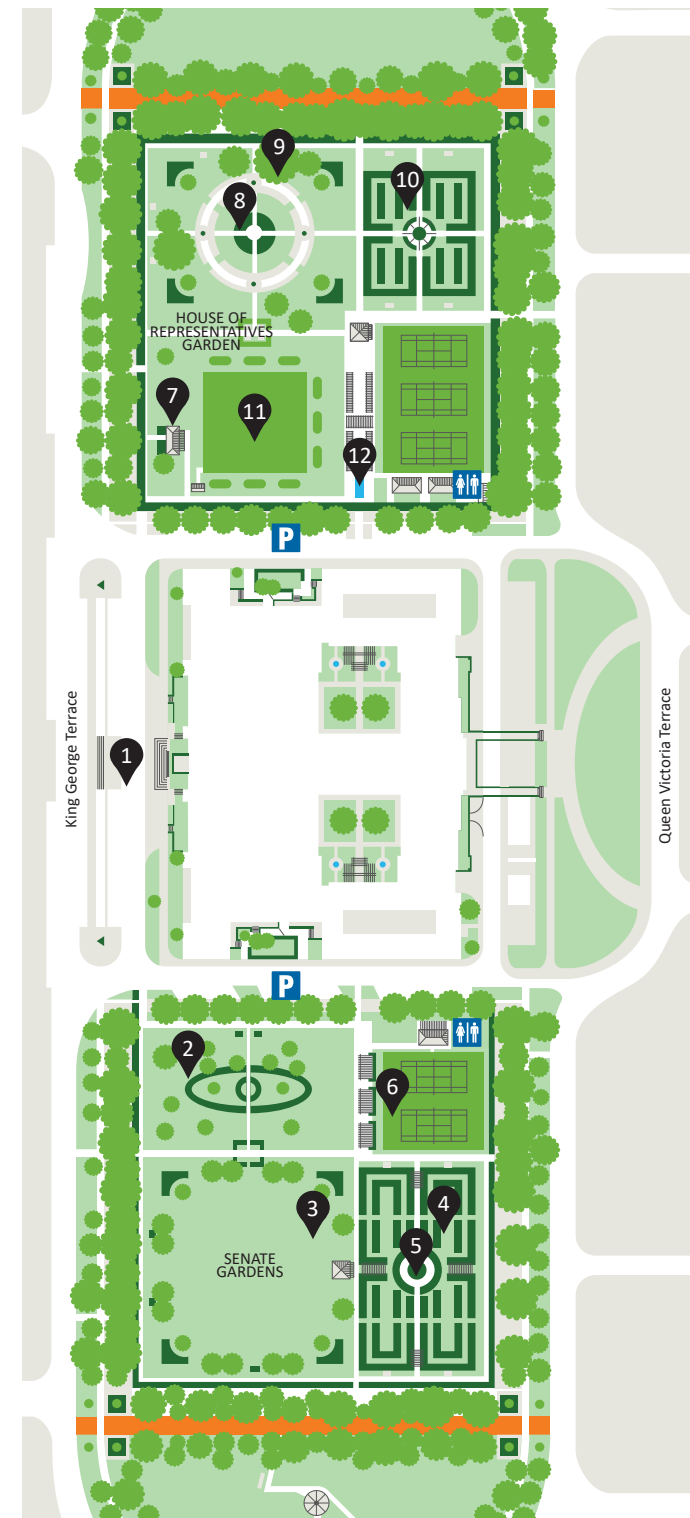
OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE GARDENS

Enjoy a self-guided walking tour exploring the Old Parliament House Gardens, Canberra's most significant public garden.

The Australian Parliament first met in the provisional Parliament House on 9 May 1927, in a landscape very different to what they were accustomed to in Melbourne, where parliament had met since 1901. The Treasury Gardens had provided the parliamentarians with delightful surroundings in which to stroll and escape from the business of the House.

Members and Senators were greeted with bare ground and a hedge, just half a metre high, planted by the Superintendent of Parks and Gardens, Charles Weston. There were no lawns, gardens or roses. A bowling green, tennis courts and a cricket pitch were quickly established in the parliamentary gardens for the exclusive use of parliamentarians. However, work on the gardens themselves did not commence for several years. It took the perseverance of Robert Broinowski, Secretary of the Joint House Department, with the support of Sir Walter Kingsmill, President of the Senate, to get the project underway. With the assistance of the National Rose Society of New South Wales, Broinowski initiated the design and planting of an open garden based on patterned rose and annuals display beds, set in lawns and with a minimum of trees. Many of the roses were donated by rose societies, companies and individuals, including Parliament House staff. Despite the difficulties of the Depression era, Broinowski managed to complete the planting of the parliamentary gardens between 1932 and 1938.

Until 1989, the parliamentary gardens were not open to the public. They were used by Members, Senators and their staff as a place for relaxation and retreat. After their reconstruction and reopening in 2004, the Old Parliament House Gardens are now open for all Australians to enjoy their beautiful surrounds and unique history.





1 PROVISIONAL (OLD) PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The architect of Old Parliament House, John Smith Murdoch, envisaged the adjacent gardens as a continuation of the House's courtyards. The Senate and House

of Representative Gardens were once accessible through the (then) colonnaded east and west sides of the House.

Murdoch's vision was to echo, in the gardens, the architectural simplicity and formality of the building.



2 BROINOWSKI ROSE GARDEN

As Secretary of the Joint House Department, Broinowski was instrumental in developing the parliamentary gardens. One of

the first public servants to be transferred to Canberra, he was committed to the development of a great Australian federal Capital. There is an interpretive panel on Broinowski in this garden.

The roses planted in the Broinowski Rose Garden are shrub roses, including those developed by English rose breeder David Austin. Austin's roses, also referred to as English Roses, are hybrids of old roses (Gallica, Damask, Portland or Bourbon roses) with either modern Hybrid Teas or Floribundas. Companion plantings, including English Lavender, and mixed Delphinium, Digitalis (Fox Glove) and Pentstemon, evoke a strong sense of an English garden.



3 THE GARDENS LAYOUT

Both the Senate and House of Representatives Gardens are based on a simple quadrant design. The main path of the gardens aligns with the east/west

axis of the House, and is emphasised by timber pergola structures, planted with wisteria. These main paths once led to the courtyards within the House. The large grassed area in the Senate Garden were once a well used cricket pitch. This pitch was used for social games and net practice. Prime Ministers Robert Menzies and Bob Hawke were keen recreational players.



4 REX HAZLEWOOD ROSE GARDEN

In 1931, Broinowski met with members of the National Rose Society. Through the Society he was introduced to Rex Hazlewood

who worked with him on designing the original gardens. A professional photographer and First World War veteran, Hazlewood worked at his brothers' nursery in Sydney.

The present plantings in this garden portray the international history of rose cultivation. Asiatic roses are planted in the eastern half of the garden. The earliest roses are located at the open ends of each U-shaped bed and their hybrids, including Tea, Noisette, Bourbon and Rugosa roses, are located on the sides. The western half of the garden is planted with European roses, moving from the ancient Gallica, Damask and Alba roses to the later Moss and Portland roses. Towards the centre, east meets west with the culmination of cross-breeding resulting in Hybrid Tea and Floribunda roses. The mixed companion plantings including Dianthus, Violets, Iris, Peonies and Geraniums, reflect the mixed Asian and European heritage of the rose.



5 ALISTER CLARK ROSE GARDEN

This central bed, with its four semi-circular beds, is planted with roses developed by Alister Clark, Australia's first internationally

renowned rose breeder. The roses surrounding the tennis courts in both the Senate and House of Representatives Gardens are also all varieties of Alister Clark roses.

As there are no roses native to the southern hemisphere, Clark set out to breed roses particularly suited to Australian conditions which would bloom most of the year – for example his Lorraine Lee, Squatter's Dream and Nancy Haywood. Apart from rose breeding, Clark was involved with the Victorian horse racing industry. He was founding president of the Moonee Valley Racing Club and in March each year the Alister Clark Stakes is still run.



6 SENATE TENNIS COURTS

An original feature of the Old Parliament House Gardens, the Senate tennis courts previously had a clay surface – the red colour reflecting the

colour of the Senate Chamber. The same is true of the green surface, formerly grass, of the House of Representatives courts. The first roses planted in the gardens (in April 1931) were climbers on the tennis court fences, including Black Boy and Countess Stradbroke.

Although popular with Senators and Members, access to the tennis courts on Sundays was denied until 1938 for fear of alienating the God-fearing residents of Canberra. Wives and families of parliamentarians had to wait until 1976 to use the courts and then only when Parliament was not sitting.

The timber for the pergolas and arbours in both this and the House of Representatives Gardens was salvaged from the demolition of the Woolloongabba Pub, formerly across the road from the 'Gabba Cricket Ground in Brisbane.



7 THE BOWLING GREEN CLUBHOUSE AND ROSE BED

The clubhouse was erected in 1937 and was the only structure in the gardens for many years.

Until 1985, the clubhouse stood

the other side of the green but was moved to its current location when a two-storey annexe to the House was built. The annexe was removed in 1999.

The garden bed behind the clubhouse is planted with roses retained after the reconstruction of the gardens in 2004. These roses are a reflection of those previously grown in the gardens.



8 MACARTHUR ROSE GARDEN

Named in honour of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, founders of the Australian merino wool industry, this garden was the

last to be constructed under the direction of Robert Broinowski. The central planting of red Étoile de Hollande roses has been reinstated in the reconstruction, reflecting

the original gift in 1937 of 100 roses by Miss Rosa Sibella Macarthur-Onslow, great-granddaughter of John and Elizabeth. The original roses came from the Macarthurs' Camden property. In 1938, Miss Macarthur-Onslow donated a further 50 Shot Silk roses in recognition of Elizabeth Macarthur's role in developing the Australian wool industry.

The roses planted in the Macarthur garden reflect the European passion for anything 'Oriental' during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Tea roses, hybrids of the Chinese rose species *R. gigantea* and *R. chinensis*, are so named because their fragrance is similar to that of green tea. Noisette roses, the third type of rose in this garden, resulted from a chance hybrid of a China and Moss rose.

9 TREES

The Old Parliament House Gardens are formal gardens in an open design, set in lawns with a minimum of trees. The original trees were pairs of Silver Maples

(*Acer saccharinum*), Honey Locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), Southern Nettles (*Celtis australis*) and Desert Ash (*Fraxinus oxycarpa*). The Silver Maples were a gift from the Canadian Government to the people of Australia; one of several Canadian gifts in the National Capital. These plantings are repeated in the Senate Gardens.

10 LADIES ROSE GARDEN

This garden was named in honour of the women who donated roses to create the original garden.

In 1933, Broinowski approached Dame Mary Hughes, wife of

the former Prime Minister, William (Billy) Hughes, to be the project patron. She in turn approached other parliamentary wives to support the project. At that time, roses cost one shilling and four pence per bush.

The Ladies Garden has had a chequered history. Soon after it was planted, a quarter of the rose bushes were removed and the area converted into a rubbish tip.

In 1965, squash courts were constructed in the south-west corner. Fortunately, these courts were removed during the reconstruction and the beds planted according to their original layout.

Many of the original roses planted in the Ladies Rose Garden were Hybrid Teas and their smaller cousins, the Floribundas. This combination has been maintained in the current planting in quadrants of colour — red, pink, yellow and white.

11 BOWLING GREEN

One of the original facilities of the gardens, the bowling green was popular with parliamentarians. The kiosks and tennis pavilions in both the House of

Representatives and Senate Gardens are new inclusions. They are based on original designs for shelter pavilions and the architectural detailing of both reflects that of Old Parliament House.

12 CENTENARY OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE COMMEMORATIVE ARTWORK AND FOUNTAIN

Located on the parliamentary

axis (Constitution Place through Old Parliament House to Magna Carta Place), this artwork celebrates the centenary of Australian women's suffrage. With the passage of the Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902, women were able to vote and, a world first, to stand for parliament, which they did in the election of 1903.

The artwork comprises a fountain and timeline, both of which feature a glass mosaic inspired by wisteria in flower, in the women's movement colours of green, purple and white. The timeline records the milestones and significant achievements of Australian women in Federal Parliament.

