

# Cootes Paradise Trails

18 km of trail, 10 lookouts  
5 boardwalks, 12 creek crossings



## MAP KEY

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  RBG Properties      |  Waterfront Trail  |
|  Roads               |  Wheelchair Access   |
|  Rail Lines          |  Trail Heads   |
|  Wide, Open Trails   |  Parking   |
|  Narrow, Dirt Trails |  Pay and Display Parking<br>(free for RBG members displaying valid pass) |
|  Lookout             |  See reverse for trail destination highlights                            |
|  Canoe Launch        |   |
|  Boardwalks          |   |



## Trail Code

These lands are part of Canada's biodiversity hot spot, open to **passive recreation** — leave only footprints, take only pictures. Garbage receptacles located at trailheads.

Restrictions (per RBG's bylaws):

- Pets must remain leashed at all times
- Running/jogging and cycling are not permitted
- Motorized vehicles are not permitted
- Feeding the wildlife is not permitted
- Smoking is not permitted

## Special Protection Areas

Though the property spans more than 1,100 hectares, urban encroachment has left few true sanctuaries for sensitive species. To ensure that all species have an opportunity to thrive, 20 per cent of the property is set aside as Special Protection Areas (SPA) closed to the public. There are observation points and interpretive signage adjacent to the SPAs to help visitors understand the significance of these unique spaces.



## Cootes Paradise Sanctuary

Established in 1927 for its significance as a migratory bird stopover, Cootes Paradise is RBG's largest and most diverse sanctuary at over 600 hectares. The area features a 320-hectare river-mouth marsh, 16 creeks and 25 kilometres of shoreline.

### MAJOR ACCESS POINTS

#### Princess Point

Princess Point is a natural gathering place and trail hub. It includes a canoe launch to the marsh and access for ice skating, as well as connections to six kilometres of nature trails and Hamilton's Waterfront Trail. Princess Point is undergoing restoration to return it to its pre-European roots as an oak savannah.

#### Arboretum

The Arboretum is a hub leading to more than 10 kilometres of RBG trails, as well as many horticultural collections including lilacs, magnolias, flowering dogwoods and the Avenue of Trees. It is also home to RBG's Nature Interpretive Centre and the Bruce Trail Conservancy's main office in historical Raspberry House.

#### Burlington Heights

At the eastern edge of Cootes Paradise overlooking the water, this 30-metre-high ribbon of land is actually the beach of glacial Lake Iroquois formed 13,000 years ago. The area provides some of the finest views in the region. Until the 1850s, Cootes Paradise flowed around the north end of the Heights but railway construction required the cutting of a new outlet and the Desjardins ship canal was rerouted. During construction the bones of mammoth and elk were found.

### What's in a Name?

The site is named after Captain Thomas Coote, a British army officer who enjoyed hunting the abundant waterfowl while on leave from his duties at Niagara in the 1780s. The community at the west end of the marsh was also named Cootes Paradise until the 1840s, at which time the name was changed to Dundas.

### Early Residents

People have been drawn to Cootes Paradise for centuries. From AD 500 to 1000 this area was occupied by the Princess Point people, named after archaeological discoveries which indicated they were the first to bring agriculture to the region. Europeans arrived in the 1700s, with the first houses built on the north shore plateaus. One of these sites, Raspberry House, remains today.

### Vegetation and Microclimate

Nestled between the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario, the area's flora is characteristic of the more southern deciduous forest region. Carolinian trees such as Sassafras, oaks and hickories dominate the North Shore, while northern species like Hemlock, Beech and White Cedar are found on the South Shore.

### Habitat Restoration

At the inception of *Project Paradise* in the 1990s, nearly the entire marsh ecosystem had been lost, leaving it a shallow muddy lake. With the exclusion of destructive carp at the Fishway, water lilies, cattails, frogs, fish and birds have begun to thrive again.



## Trail Destinations (See map)

### 1 Burial Grounds

Located on Burlington Heights along York Blvd., the area provides the best views of Cootes Paradise. A memorial marks this site's historic connections — the War of 1812, immigrants who died arriving by ship in the 1840s and those who died in a cholera epidemic in 1854.

### 2 Westdale Ravine

Located on the south shore of Cootes Paradise, this deeply incised sand-plain ravine features a spring-fed creek, exposed glacial beach rocks and some of the tallest trees on the property. It is a forest-birding hotspot.

### 3 Native Trees Walk

Starting at the Nature Centre, these trails travel through a labeled native tree collection — a perfect way to learn how to identify the trees of the Carolinian forest region.

### 4 Pine Point Lookout

Below the Lilac Dell and looking out towards Hickory Island, this is one of the few locations where White Pine dominates, evoking images of the forests that once covered the area.

### 5 The Fishway

Located at the outlet of Cootes Paradise Marsh, this seasonally operated structure blocks the entrance of more than 10,000 non-native carp annually, while ensuring the spring migration of native Lake Ontario fish to and from this critical spawning area.

### 6 Marsh Boardwalk/Spencer Creek Delta

The boardwalk provides an up-close look at one of the largest creek deltas on Lake Ontario. This area is favoured by migratory waterfowl and is the best place to view our Bald Eagles. Rat Island is directly across the creek to the south of the platform.

## Cootes Paradise Flowers



### Round-lobed Hepatica

*(Anemone americana)*  
This spring ephemeral is one of the first flowers to bloom. This small forest species can be found throughout the property and is one of two hepatica species present within the sanctuaries.



### Wild Geranium

*(Geranium maculatum)*  
Blooming from spring to mid-summer, this flower is sometimes called Cranes-bill because of a long column that protrudes from the flower — a part of the plant's explosive seed capsule.



### Pale-leaved Sunflower *(Helianthus strumosus)*

This mid-summer, brightly-coloured sunflower prefers dry sandy soils on sunny open slopes. It is one of three species of native sunflower found on the property.



### Turtlehead *(Chelone glabra)*

Look for this plant in wet areas along Captain Cootes Trail in the late summer. The upper segment of the flower curves over the lower segment making it look like the head of a turtle.



## Hours

- RBG Centre – 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., late April to Thanksgiving; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thanksgiving to late April (680 Plains Rd.)
- Trailheads – dawn to dusk. Metered parking at trailhead lots. Parking is free to RBG members (display Members' Parking Pass).
- Arboretum – 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; regular admission charges apply during spring bloom festivals and open hours may be extended.

## Membership – Passport to Paradise

Membership is one of many ways to support RBG's sanctuaries. Nearly half of the operational funding of the Gardens is raised through memberships, donations and admissions. How much is a nature sanctuary in your backyard worth to you? Purchase your membership today and receive free parking at our trail heads.

Charitable registration #133500850 RR 0001  
A private landowning agency providing public access to the environment.

RBG Centre, 680 Plains Road West  
Burlington, ON L7T 4H4  
905-527-1158 • [www.rbg.ca](http://www.rbg.ca)

ALSO IN THIS 2018  
MAP SERIES:  
• Hendrie Valley  
• Escarpment Properties



## Royal Botanical Gardens

### Mission

Royal Botanical Gardens' mission is to promote the public's understanding of the relationship between the plant world, society and the environment.

### Canada's Biodiversity Hot Spot

Royal Botanical Gardens' 1,100 hectares is dominated by nature sanctuaries enveloping the western end of Lake Ontario. These form a Nodal Park within the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO) and the heart of the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System. With more than 750 native plant species, 277 types of migratory birds, 37 mammal species, 14 reptile species, 9 amphibian species and 68 species of Lake Ontario fish, the area is an important contributor to ecosystems that span international borders.

## Trail Conditions

The 27 kilometres of trail includes packed earth, crushed stone, asphalt and boardwalks; some sections are steep and hilly. Trails are not plowed or sandy during the winter. During spring thaws and after rains earthen trails become muddy. Please take appropriate caution.

**LIABILITY** Royal Botanical Gardens assumes no responsibility for loss of or damage to property, personal injury or mishap. All activities are at the risk of the participant. Our parking lots are not monitored. Do not leave any valuables in your car.

## Volunteer

**TrailWatchers** Join our volunteer trail monitors and help us inform fellow visitors about our trail code, work on trail projects and learn more about the local environment. For more information pick up a TrailWatcher brochure or call RBG's Auxiliary office at 905-577-7771.

**PlantWatch** Join a national volunteer effort to help monitor our changing climate. The PlantWatch program enables *citizen scientists* to get involved by recording flowering times and reporting these dates to researchers. Visit [www.plantwatch.ca](http://www.plantwatch.ca).

## Learn More

Guided educational outings are offered year-round and include everything from wildflower walks to birdwatching and photography workshops. External groups **charging** for independently guided tours must register with RBG and are subject to our self-guided admission rate. For information call 905-527-1158, ext. 270.