

Cootes Paradise



Pileated Woodpecker Bald Eagle Great Blue Heron

Part of the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve
Links to the Bruce and Waterfront trails



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 – 8 a.m. to dusk. Metered parking at trailhead lots. Parking is free to RBG members (display Parking Pass).
- Arboretum – 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; regular admission fees 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

ALSO IN THIS 2023

MAP SERIES:

- Hendrie Valley
- Escarpment Properties

Cootes Paradise Nature 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. Spencer Creek is the largest entry at the western end. Large Red and White Oak trees dominate the surround forest canopy.

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 roots as mixed prairie and 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.

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 Marsh 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. The Attawandaron Nation existed into the 1600s, followed by Haudenosaunee and Anishinabek. Europeans arrived in the 1700s and one of the first homesteads, 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 —

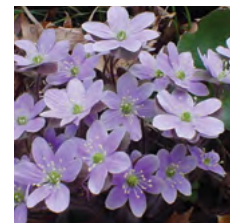
At the inception of *Project Paradise* in the 1990s, nearly the entire marsh ecosystem had been lost, leaving it a shallow muddy lake. With the exclusion of destructive carp at the Fishway, water lilies, cattails, frogs, fish and birds have begun to thrive again.



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.

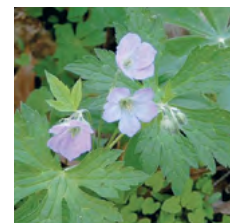
Cootes Paradise Flowers



Round-lobed Hepatica

(*Anemone americana*)

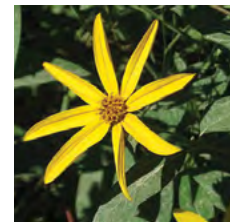
This spring ephemeral is one of the first flowers to bloom. This small forest species can be found throughout the property and is one of two hepatica species present within the sanctuaries.



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

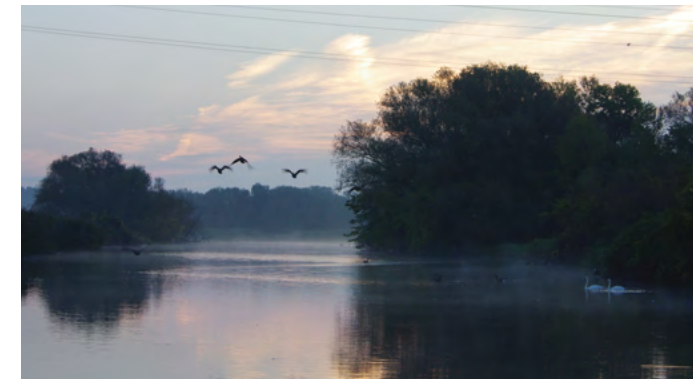
(*Helianthus strumosus*)

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.



Royal Botanical Gardens

Mission

We dedicate our expertise in horticulture, conservation, science and education to connect people, plants and place for the purpose of nurturing and preserving healthy growing life on our planet.

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 (AODA)

Nature trails are classed as Wilderness Trails. Trails defined as "hilly" have elevation changes of 20 metres with 20% grades in sections. Trails are generally 2-metres wide, expect for "narrow" trails that are 1-metre wide, and have cross slopes of less than 5% for drainage. Trails are not plowed or sanded during the winter. During spring thaws and after rains earthen trails become muddy. Please take appropriate caution.

LIABILITY RBG 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

Volunteers help us on our trails and in our natural lands in a wide variety of ways. If you're interested in learning more about our conservation, trail ambassadors, TrailWatchers or bird census teams, we'd love to hear from you. rbg.ca/volunteer

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.

Cootes Paradise Trails

17 km of trail, 13 lookouts
6 boardwalks, 8 creek crossings

North Trails

- Anishinaabe waadiziwin – 1.1 km, 2 m wide, hilly
 - North Shore Landing – 0.6 km, 2 m wide, hilly
 - Captain Cootes – 0.4 km, 2 m wide, hilly
 - Bull's Point – 1.5 km, 2 m wide, flat
 - Homestead – 2.0 km, 2 m wide, flat
 - Hickory Valley – 0.7 km, 2 m wide, hilly
 - Grey Doe – 1.0 km, 1 m wide, hilly
 - Hopkins Loop – 1.3 km, 2 m wide, flat
 - Marsh Walk – 0.7 km, 1 m wide, hilly
 - Native Trees – 1.0 km, 1 m wide, hilly
- See Trail Conditions (AODA) note

Royal Botanical Gardens is within the Traditional Territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat Nations, on land covered by a Treaty between the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Crown.

Les Jardins botaniques royaux se trouvent à l'intérieur des territoires traditionnels des nations Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe et Huronne-Wendat, sur des terres couvertes par un traité entre la Première Nation des Mississaugas de Credit et la Couronne.

Scale approximate: 1 km



- ## South Trails
- Desjardins Trail – 1 km, flat, paved, accessible
 - Churchill Park – 2 km, flat, gravel, accessible
 - Princess Point Trail – 2 km, 1-2 m wide sections, hilly
 - Ginger Valley Trail – 1 km, 1 m wide, hilly
 - Ravine Road Trail – 1.5 km, 3 m wide, hilly
 - Sassafras Point Trail – 1 km, 1 m wide, hilly
 - Caleb's Walk – 0.5 km, 1 m wide, hilly
- See Trail Conditions (AODA) note

MAP KEY LÉGENDE

- RBG Properties
Propriétés des JBR
- Roads Routes
- Rail Lines
Voies ferrées
- Gravel or Paved Trails
Sentiers en gravier ou revêtus
- Dirt Trails
Sentiers en terre battue
- Boardwalks
Promenades de bois

- Washrooms
Toilettes
- Wheelchair Access
Accès en fauteuil roulant
- Parking
Stationnement
- Pay and Display Parking
(free for RBG members displaying valid pass)
Stationnement payer et afficher
(gratuit pour les membres des JBR qui affichent leur laissez-passer en règle)

- Trailhead
Début de sentier
- Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail
Sentier du bord du lac Ontario
- Lookout
Belvédère
- Cootes Paradise Fishway
Passe à poissons
- Canoe Launch
Mise à l'eau des canots

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.

