Escarpment Sanctuaries
Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve is represented here by several properties forming a 110-hectare, three-kilometre ribbon along the Escarpment edge. RBG trails, and especially the Bruce Trail, link our local lands — collectively all these properties are a key part of the new Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System.

MAJOR ACCESS POINTS

Rock Chapel
Located near spectacular Borer's Falls, this is the main escarpment access point for this section of the Bruce Trail. The area is a collection of old field tablelands and forested, south-facing escarpment cliffs and talus slope. Numerous lookouts and views of Cootes Paradise dot the Bruce Trail as it tracks along the top edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

Valley Road, Berry Tract
Located at Valley Road and bisected by the Bruce Trail, the area forms the headwaters of Cootes Paradise's Hickory Brook. Limited access to the Bruce Trail and Cartwright Sanctuary is through RBG's Berry Tract property. Once pasture, the site includes old orchards and gullies cut through the clay-soil by springs and runoff from the Escarpment.

Sydenham Road
Located at the western edge of Rock Chapel, the Sydenham Road pull-off is a city of Hamilton scenic view location.

What's in a Name?
Rock Chapel is named after a clapboard church built east of Borer's Falls in 1822. The site was turned over to the Gardens in 1942, after originally being set aside in the 1920s as a potential gravel quarry. Berry Tract is named for Alfred Berry who bequeathed this former farmland to the Gardens for conservation purposes in 1965.

Early Residents
United Empire Loyalists settled Dundas and the first family to arrive, the Mordens, was granted land in the area. Morden House, located just next to Borer's Falls, was built in the 1790s next to the creek that powered their sawmill. The community of Rock Chapel sprang up along the road near the mill — it once included a buggy works, butcher, blacksmith, two general stores and its namesake church.

Vegetation and Microlclimate
Its south-facing orientation gives Rock Chapel one of the warmest areas in the area. RBG's Berry Tract property. Once pasture, the site includes old orchards and gullies cut through the clay-soil by springs and runoff from the Escarpment.

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Escarpment Flowers

Wild Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis
This late-spring flower attracts pollinators like hummingbirds. The name comes from aquila, meaning eagle-like, as the spurs on the flower resemble the talons of an eagle.

Moonseed
Menispermum canadense
This climbing vine has distinctive maple-shaped leaves. The semi-toxic fruit of this species turns bright red as it ripens in the fall. The plant's name is derived from the moon-shaped seeds.

Tall Bellflower
Campanula americana
This late summer blooming plant has light blue, star-shaped flowers with a white ring at the center. The style, in the center of the flower, is distinctive long and curves up at the tip.

Heart-leaved Aster
Symphyotrichum cordifolium
This species usually found in woodland clearings or open habitats, this species flowers in the late summer and has heart-shaped basal leaves.

Trail Destinations (See map)

Escarpment Edge Lookouts
Following along the Escarpment edge, the many lookouts along the Bruce Trail reveal the last unbroken natural connection between Lake Ontario and the Escarpment. Much of this open space is part of the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System.

Borer's Creek Gorge and the Cedars
The impressive gorge has been cut by thousands of years of erosion. Old growth cedars were studied here in the 1980s/90s with the oldest being close to 400 years old.

Borer's Falls
Located next to Rock Chapel Road, this 15-metre-high waterfall is one of more than 120 waterfalls found in Hamilton. Borer’s Creek drains from Waterdown, winding its way to Cootes Paradise Marsh.

Geology Exhibit
Located 0.75 kilometre west of the parking lot on the Armstrong Trail, a 10-metre descent on a stair system takes you past labeled layers of escarpment rock formations.

The Disappearing Brook
At the end of Armstrong Trail a small brook emerges, or in fact reappears. It flows from the meadow above and disappears some 250 metres back from the Escarpment edge. This is a karst feature, formed when water dissolves limestone bedrock and creates underground passages.

Tea Orchards
At Berry Tract, a small orchard was planted in the 1930s. It is regenerating with native Ash, Hawthorne and Black Walnut trees. Deer frequent the area in autumn to eat the pears and apples, and use Red Cedar trees to rub the velvet off their antlers. Come take a hike in spring during blossom time!

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.

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.
**RBG Properties**

- Roads
- Rail Lines
- Wide, Open Trails
- Narrow, Dirt Trails
- Lookout
- Boardwalks

**Trail Heads**

- Parking
- Pay and Display Parking (for RBG members displaying valid pass)
  
- See reverse for trail destination highlights

**Scale approximate: 500 metres (0.5 km)**

** escarpment Trails**

4.5 km of trail, 6 lookouts
4 creek crossings

**MAP KEY**

- RBG Properties
- Roads
- Rail Lines
- Wide, Open Trails
- Narrow, Dirt Trails
- Lookout
- 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 900 hectares, urban encroachment has left few true sanctuaries for sensitive species. To ensure that all species have an opportunity to thrive, 20% 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.