



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



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Hours

- RBG Centre – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (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. or at dusk, regular admission charges apply during spring bloom festivals.

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?

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

RBG Centre, 680 Plains Road West, Hamilton/Burlington
905-527-1158 • www.rbg.ca

ALSO IN THIS MAP SERIES:

- Cootes Paradise
- Hendrie Valley



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's Rock Chapel and Berry Tract are linked with those of the Conservation Authority and Hamilton Naturalists' Club. The Bruce Trail is the predominant feature here.

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 table lands against a forested south-facing escarpment 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 bisecting the Bruce Trail just below the Escarpment face, 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. The site is characterized by clay soil gullied by small Escarpment springs and has an abandoned orchard.

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 by early settlers in 1822. The site was turned over to the Gardens in 1942, after originally being set aside as quarry lands for gravel extraction. Berry Tract is named for Alfred Berry who bequeathed this former orchard property to the Gardens in 1965 for conservation purposes.

Early Residents

Formerly part of the Native American travel routes, the Mordens arrived in the early 1780s and built a small community called Rock Chapel next to Borer's Creek. Rock Chapel had a sawmill, butcher shop, wagon and buggy works, blacksmith shop, chapel and two general stores. Morden House, built in the 1790s, is a residence still located next to Borer's Falls, along with a number of historical homes.

Vegetation and Microclimate

The south-facing orientation makes Rock Chapel the warmest location along the Niagara Escarpment. The shallow soils and rock outcrops combined with the numerous springs create a diverse mixture of environments. Many unusual southern plant species grow here. The most common are berry-producing plants left by migratory bird droppings, while the most famous are the ancient white cedars that cling to the face of the gorge.

Habitat Restoration

Natural succession of the old fields and orchard has been allowed to take its course, lead by trees like black walnut and white ash. Plantations of black locust and poplar trees occurred in the 1980s.



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Trail Destinations

1. 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.

2. Borer's Creek Gorge and the Cedars

The impressive gorge has been carved by thousands of years of erosion. This locale is also noteworthy as the discovery of the ancient escarpment-face cedars occurred here in the 1980s.

3. Borer's Falls

Located next to Rock Chapel Road, this 15-metre-high scenic waterfall is one of more than a hundred waterfalls in the region. Borer's Creek drains from Waterdown, winding its way to Cootes Paradise Marsh.

4. Geology Exhibit

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

5. The Disappearing Brook

At the end of Armstrong Trail a small brook emerges, or in fact reappears. It was in the meadow above and disappeared some 200 metres back from the escarpment edge. Locations where creeks dissolved the limestone into underground channels are called karst topography.

6. The Orchards

At Berry Tract, a small orchard was planted in the 1930s. It is now regenerating with native ash trees. This orchard of scattered pear and apple trees makes for a good place to see deer. Visit in May for a dazzling display of white-flowered pear and apple blossoms.

Escarpment Flowers



Wild columbine

(Aquilegia canadensis)

This late-spring flower attracts pollinators like hummingbirds. The name comes from *aquilinum*, 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 plants 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 centre of the flower, is distinctively long and curves up at the tip.



Heart-leaved aster

(Symphyotrichum cordifolium)

Typically found in woodland clearings or open habitats, this species flowers in the late summer and has heart-shaped basal leaves.



Royal Botanical Gardens

Mission

To be a living museum which serves local, regional and global communities while developing and promoting public understanding of the relationship between the plant world, humanity and the rest of nature.

Vision

Royal Botanical Gardens is to be recognized and supported as Canada's most effective change agent in promoting environmentally appropriate lifestyle choices that enable Canadians to sustain, conserve and enjoy the highest quality of life on Earth.

Canada's Biodiversity Hot Spot

Royal Botanical Gardens' 900 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). 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. Ice build-up on hills during winter can make trails slippery. During spring thaws and after rains earthen trails become muddy.

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 Royal Botanical Gardens 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 for details.

Learn More

Guided educational outings are offered year-round. Seasonal programs include everything from spring wildflower walks to stories of the Escarpment. For information call 905-527-1158, ext. 270. External groups **charging** for independently guided tours must register with the Gardens.

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
- P Trail Heads
- P Parking
- P Pay and Display Parking (free for RBG members displaying valid pass)



Trail Code

These lands are Canada's biodiversity hot spot, open to **passive recreation** — leave only footprints, take only pictures. Restrictions (per RBG's bylaws):

- Pets must remain leashed at all times
- Runners are not permitted
- Bicycles are not permitted
- Motorized vehicles are not permitted
- Feeding the wildlife is not permitted

Garbage receptacles located at trailheads.

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 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.

