

Formal Gardens

In keeping with the theme of their elaborate Mansion, Thomas and Andrew Chirnside created an equally stunning garden in a distinctly European style.

Like many notable early settlers the Chirnsides were members of the Acclimatisation Society, an organisation which introduced several European flora and fauna species to the Australian landscape. As a result the ten hectares of manicured landscape contain a variety of exotic species combined with Australian natives. The specific designer of the garden is unknown; however it is often credited to W.R. Guilfoyle, Curator of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens from 1879 to 1909.

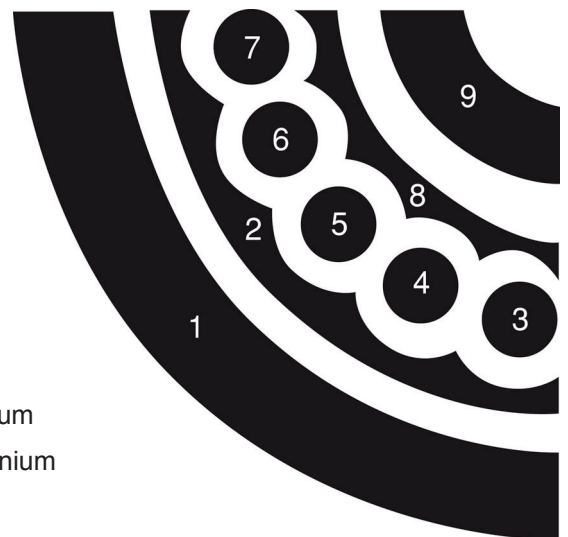
The majestic gardens feature a colourful parterre, ornamental lake and grotto, glasshouses, heritage-listed trees and expansive lawns. Relax with a picnic or explore with enthusiasm, the formal gardens are a secret oasis awaiting discovery.

Parterre

Common in early 17th century gardens, 'parterre' is a French word meaning 'on the ground'. The geometrically designed floral display is best viewed from the Mansion balcony and contains approximately 20,000 annuals planted every six months.

Following the bed layout below, flowering annuals included within the Summer/Autumn display as proudly sponsored by Werribee Nissan are:

Bed No.	Plant Variety
1	Moondance Petunia
2	Summer Sunset Petunia
3	Red Compact Salvia
4	Orange & Lemon Portulaca
5	Mixed Compact Penstemon
6	Performa Phlox
7	Blue Compact Salvia
8	Summer Sunset Petunia
9	Border – Sugar Crystal Alyssum Centre – Vogue Scarlet Geranium



Lake and Grotto

Located within an ornamental lake, the grotto is a traditional component of 18th century garden design and one of few examples known in Australia. The Chirnside family richly adorned the interior with an elaborate design of seashells, sheep knuckles, animal teeth and pebbles, which can still be seen today.

Afternoon tea was frequently served within the grotto during warm summer months, with family members and guests enjoying the cooler temperatures inside. Cross the walking bridge and explore this rare beauty.



Heritage Trees

Eight trees proudly displayed within the garden are listed on the National Trust Significant Trees Register. These trees are important because of their age, excellent condition, rarity and perfect form.

While enjoying the gardens at your leisure, look out for the following trees as marked on the map and labelled throughout the garden:

1. Ombu Tree

A South American tree of unusual shape, the Ombu is rarely seen in cultivation in Victoria. It forms a very thick trunk, from which upright limbs may originate. The large poplar like leaves are up to 18cm long and the branches are light in weight. An evergreen tree, its trunk is stout and swollen at the base with a densely textured, spreading crown. The leaves are green and elliptical.

The Ombu produces white flowers in pendant racemes (drooping spikes), after which come fleshy, yellow berries. The berry juice is used as a colouring substance in some wines and liquors.

2. Bunya Bunya Pine

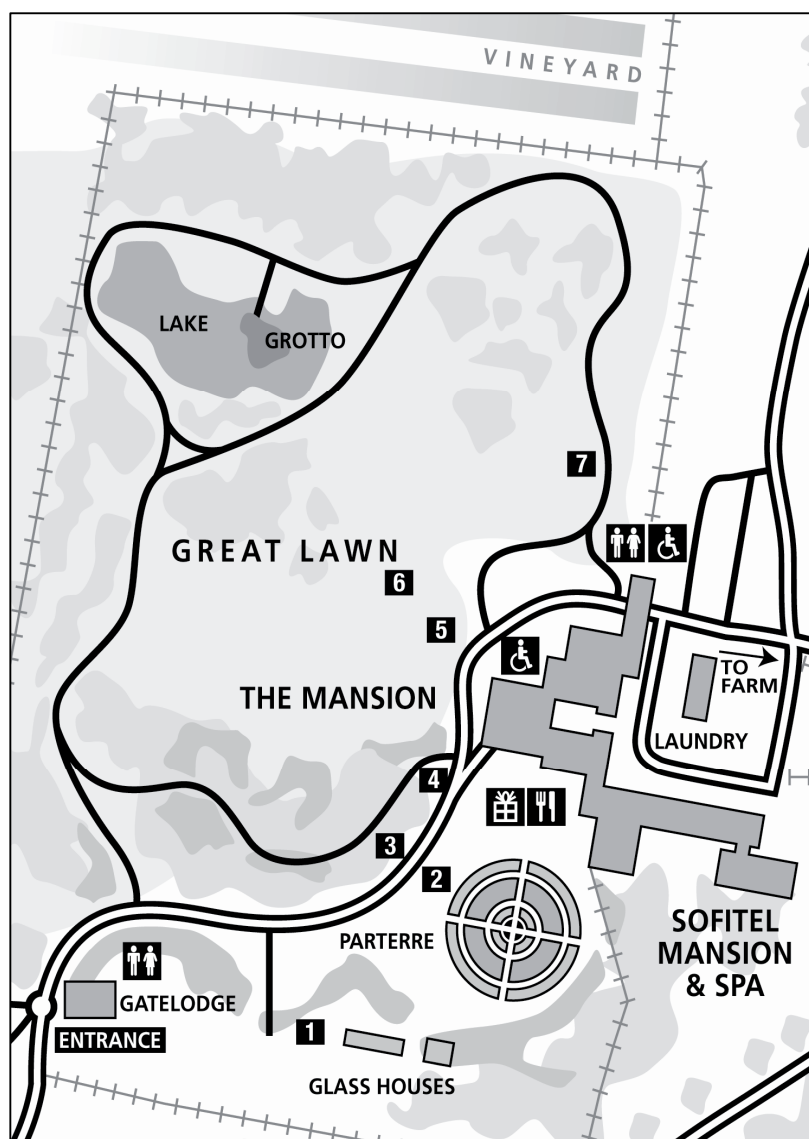
The mature Bunya Bunya Pine displays branches almost in whorls around a large erect trunk. These species were commonly planted in Victorian gardens in the late 1880s for their structural effect in the landscape, large size and dark green foliage.

The Bunya Bunya Pine is found in coastal ranges in two widely separated localities in south-eastern Queensland and north of Cairns. It grows as individuals scattered through rainforests. The tree bears large cones almost the size of a pineapple and produces tasty and highly nutritious seeds, which were either eaten raw or roasted by the Wurundjeri people.

3. Canary Island Pine

Widely planted throughout the grounds of Werribee Park, this unusual tree is a native of the Canary Islands. The Canary Island Pine is distinguished from the other three leaved pines by its yellow shoots, fringed bud scales and long slender leaves. The drooping branchlets give the tree a weeping form.

This particular tree is one of its largest type in Australia. Due to the size of its branches it was found necessary to reinforce it with steel cables.



4. African Holly

African Holly is listed as one of the World's Rare and Endangered Plants. A medium sized spreading tree rare in cultivation in Victoria, this species has a compact, dense canopy of dark green foliage. The cream flowers are small and the fruits are not edible. The trees are often multi-stemmed and the trunks stout and gnarled. This tree occurs naturally along the east coast of Southern Africa.

5. Bhutan Cypress

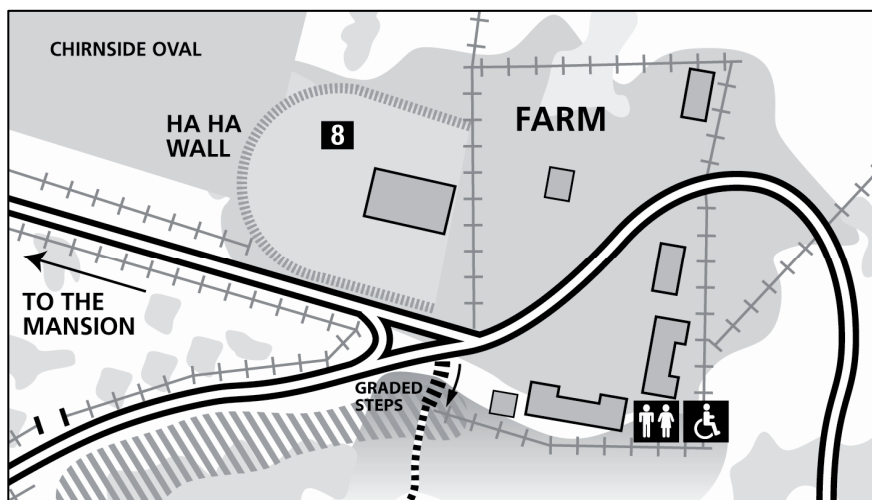
The Bhutan Cypress is found in the outer ranges of West Himalaya and West Szechan, China. This particular tree with its characteristic pyramidal shaped crown and dangling branchlets displays almost perfect form, being the best specimen known in Victoria. A fast grower, it prefers mild, moist climates. The leaves are bright green, soft and scale like pressed to the stem and overlapping. It produces catkin like flowers and small purple cones which turn brown with maturity.

6. Swamp White Oak

Unusual in cultivation in Victoria, the Swamp White Oak is a native of north central and north eastern USA. The deciduous tree forms a rounded crown with leaves which reach 10-25cm long and have a shiny dark green upper surface and are often slippery white beneath. The acorns appear in pairs. As suggested by the name, this drought tender Oak grows well under swampy conditions, so it was planted in a naturally low area of the gardens where water commonly gathered.

7. Variegated Smooth Leaved Elm

Possible one of the earliest plantings of this fine cultivar, it is usually located at a focal point in the landscape because of its form and particularly attractive variegated creamy leaves. It is native of western central Europe, and unlike most elms, it does not have fine hairs covering the underside of the leaf.



8. Moreton Bay Fig

The Moreton Bay Fig Tree produces an abundance of figs that turn reddish brown when ripe. They provide a prolific food source for native fauna such as fruit bats and possums. This particular tree, which shows excellent form, is notable for its large spreading canopy reaching to the ground. It is a remnant planting of the early Homestead garden in the Farm area.

The Moreton Bay Fig is common in Victoria and was described by Baron Von Mueller as "the grandest of the Australian avenue trees". A fast growing tree, it develops a thick smooth trunk strongly buttressed, with an open wide spreading crown. The leaves are thick, leathery and dark green.



Werribee Park

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Melway Map: 201 D1

Opening Hours:

November – April
10.00am – 5.00pm daily

May – October
10.00am – 4.00pm
weekdays
10.00am – 5.00pm
weekends

Closed Christmas Day.

Parking & Transport:

Free car parking is available, or for an alternative transport option the Werribee Park Shuttle service operates daily from the Victorian Arts Centre, telephone (03) 9748 5094 for reservations.



Glasshouses

The Chirnside family established six glasshouses behind the parterre, which formed part of the service area, including a vegetable and picking garden. At present there are only two remaining. The glasshouse at ground level is an early 20th century adaptation of a late 19th century structure, which incorporates the original iron brackets to the roof. The sunken glasshouse is essentially a 1976 interpretation of the original design. This sunken structure was first built in conjunction with an adjoining hothouse equipped with a boiler. Heritage Victoria supported a refurbishment of the glasshouses by providing a grant in 1997.

Annual Highlights

The formal gardens have been designed to maximise feature plants and trees all year round. The stunning parterre has two flowering displays, in Summer/Autumn and Winter/Spring. The grotto comes to life in Summer as its spectacular pink flowering groundcover, the rosea ice-plant, moves into full bloom. Flowering trees situated throughout the garden inject a new dimension of colour and height in Spring/Summer, with striking shades of mauve, yellow, pink and red in bloom at varying times.

Victoria State Rose Garden

The Victoria State Rose Garden is one of the remarkable features of Werribee Park. Rich in colour and fragrance, over 5,500 rose bushes are displayed to perfection within four uniquely shaped designs.

Designed in the shape of a Tudor Rose, the main display features Hybrid Tea, Floribunda Bush and Standard Roses within the five petals.

Recent developments have added to the original design and variety of roses on display. A 400-metre Heritage rose border, which separates the Victoria State Rose Garden from the magnificent formal gardens of Werribee Park, contains a selection of 250 types of heritage roses. An Australian Federation Leaf display celebrates the horticultural achievements of Australian rose-growers since Australia's Federation. The colourful 'Leaf' comprises 50 beds of rose bushes especially bred for Australia's sunny conditions in the last hundred years. The David Austin Bud showcases David Austin roses of 46 cultivars within a fragrant 'Bud' shaped formation.

The Victoria State Rose Garden is proudly managed by Parks Victoria and lovingly tended by the Victoria State Rose Garden Supporters, a dedicated group of over 100 volunteers.

International recognition was bestowed upon the Victoria State Rose Garden in July 2003 at the World Federation of Rose Societies Convention in Glasgow, Scotland. The Federation awarded the Rose Garden its highest Award of Merit, which considers historical, educational and visual elements in its recognition of exceptional gardens. Enjoy this full sensory experience at your leisure.