

Winter Wonders



In winter, the Garden completely transforms as many of its trees lose all of their leaves – trees that shed their leaves are called **deciduous**. Despite these trees looking bare, if you look closely, you will spot signs of life. In the Garden at winter, you will also see plants that brave the cold and frost to bring us a welcome splash of colour during those long dark days. Explore the Garden to seek out its winter wonders.

Brilliant Buds

Although nothing appears to grow on trees during winter, this is not the case. Find a tree that appears to be bare. Look very closely at its branches. **Can you spot little buds growing on them?** Buds are groups of small leaves or flowers, wrapped up in cosy protective parcels. We call the protective outside layers the **sepals**. Many buds open in spring as the frost disappears and weather gets warmer, revealing their leaves and flowers.



Stand under the **magnolia tree**, *Magnolia X soulangeana* and take a close look at its buds. **How would you describe their appearance? How do they feel?** In spring and summer, the buds on the magnolia tree burst open to reveal large star-shaped flowers. Most magnolia flowers are white, though they come in a variety of other colours such as pink, peach, yellow, lavender and purple.



Fascinating Fact

The magnolia flower is extremely old. Scientists have found fossils dating back 20 million years showing that the flower was gracing the Earth long before we humans evolved.

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Find a tree in the Garden that has red buds which look like crab claws.



Beautiful Blooms

It may seem a bit early to explore the Garden for blooms, but some plants make an early start, flowering just after Christmas.

Find the **witch hazel tree, *Hamamelis mollis*** which has bright yellow spidery flowers. **Smell the flowers. Do they smell of spices?** The sap from the witch hazel tree is used to make medicine and beauty products such as creams and oils to treat spots, bruises, itches and other skin irritations because of its effective healing abilities.

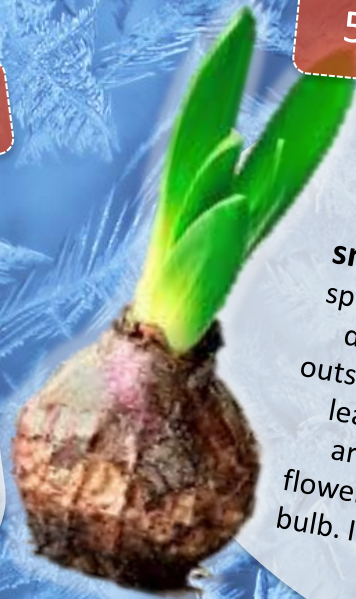


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Find the **persian ironwood tree, *Parrotia persica*** near the fountain whose flowers are pink pom-poms nestling inside furry sepals.



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Beloved Bulbs

As winter takes hold, there are a few tough little winter flowering bulbs that brave the cold to bloom. These winter bulbs can produce flowers which are bright, cheerful and often fragrant. Find the **snowdrops, *Galanthus nivalis***. Snowdrop bulbs spend the hot summer **dormant** (a bit like being in a deep sleep) underground. Although quiet on the outside, inside, the bulb is active and busy, developing leaves and flowers. As the rainy autumn weather arrives, the bulb starts to grow new roots and a flowering shoot starts to emerge from the neck of the bulb. In late winter or early spring, the flower blooms.



Can you spot the pointy-shaped leaf tips which help the flower break through the frozen soil?

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In January go to the Conservatory to find a feast of flowers! The flowers here have been grown indoors during the winter in order to make them flower earlier than they would outside. Gardener's call this process 'forcing'. Also, look out for our citrus fruits in here, including the giant lemon!

