# Late Winter Highlights Walkround at RBGE

This is the text version of the Late Winter highlights walkround taster activity.

One of the joys of studying at RBGE is seeing all the wonderful plants growing in the garden. We’d love you to share that experience, so we’re going to take you on some walks round the garden throughout the year to show you some of the highlights.

There’s a surprising amount to see walking round the Garden on a cold January morning. Winter ﬂowering shrubs are at their best, suffusing the air around them with sweet fragrance. Red berries shine out from glossy, green foliage and early rhododendrons make unexpected splashes of colour. Snowdrops demand closer inspection to show off their pure white ﬂowers with bright green markings. Hellebores are in full ﬂower and gently lifting their bowed heads reveals hidden beauty. If you know where to look, exquisite little pale blue and yellow irises can be found nestling in the shelter of the rock garden.

## Daphne bholua

This evergreen ***Daphne bholua*** brings sweet fragrance to the ‘Fossil Lawn’. It should be ﬂowering well into February. Daphnes resent being moved so plant them in the right place from the start. They prefer a sheltered, sunny spot.

Cultivation notes <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/5311/Daphne-bholua/Details>

## Hamamelis mollis

Although ***Hamamelis*** will grow in partial shade, they’ll reward you with more ﬂowers if grown in an open, sunny spot. This ***Hamamelis mollis*** is growing in full sun and it’s been in ﬂower for nearly a month. Cultivated varieties of *Hamamelis* have a range of ﬂower colour from pale yellow to dark red. The species tends to hold on to its ﬂowers for longer though.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/8246/Hamamelis-mollis/Details>

## Viburnum x bodnantense

The various cultivars of ***Viburnum* x *bodnantense*** are strong performers in winter. The long-lasting ﬂowers are fragrant and are unaffected by winter weather. Flowers start to appear in September when the plants are still in leaf and continue through to spring. They’re at their best in mid-winter. **This *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* ‘Charles Lamont’** seems to enjoy the shelter of the alpine house and is particularly ﬂoriferous.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/96182/Viburnum-x-bodnantense-Charles-Lamont/Details>

## Ruscus aculeatus

Some large holly trees have been removed creating more planting space. ***Ruscus aculeatus*** plants have been moved to ﬁll the gap.

*Ruscus aculeatus* is a truly underrated evergreen shrub. It will grow well in dry shade and produces large shiny red berries which last throughout the winter and spring. Having very sharp spines, it makes an effective barrier. The plant is native to the UK, found mainly in the South. The common name is Butcher’s Broom from the time when butchers used the spiny branches to scrub their blocks and to deter rats.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/16177/Ruscus-aculeatus/Details>

## Cornus mas

Previously a winter garden, the Queen Mother’s garden has retained some ﬁne winter ﬂowering shrubs.

*Cornus mas* puts on a spectacular display of small, fragrant yellow ﬂowers throughout January.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/4399/Cornus-mas/Details>

## Praecox Hedge

The ‘Praecox Hedge’ at RBGE is a harbinger of spring and starts its display in January. *Rhododendron praecox* is a very reliable, weather resistant species and is an excellent choice of rhododendron for the smaller garden.

Cultivation notes:<https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/93846/Rhododendron-Praecox/Details>

## Evergreen combination in the Biodeiversity Garden

This very effective evergreen combination is in the Biodiversity Garden (close to the John Hope Gateway). The yellow and green leaves of the ***Acorus gramineus*** are beautifully offset by the black leaves of the ***Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Nigrescens**’. The ***Sarcococca confusa*** shrubs add height and fragrance. The *Acorus* and the *Ophipogon* are best in full sun, but the *Sarcococca* prefers more shade, so put it towards the back of a bed where it will get shade from other shrubs.

Cultivation notes:

*Acorus*: [https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/83905/Acorus-gramineus-Ogon-(v)/Details](https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/83905/Acorus-gramineus-Ogon-%28v%29/Details)

*Sarcococca*: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/16452/sarcococca-confusa/details>

*Ophiopogon*: grow in full sun to maintain the leaf colour and it prefers moist, well drained, slightly acidic soil.
It enjoys growing in the leaf litter from deciduous plants which seems to maintain the right level of moisture and acidity.

## Galanthus alpinus

***Galanthus alpinus*** is growing in the biodiversity garden. This species is quite unusual in cultivation, but you can get it from specialist nurseries. Grow it in a cool, shady spot in humus rich soil.

## Rhododendron moupinense

These early ﬂowering ***Rhododendron moupinense*** are at the foot of the Chinese Hillside and really brighten up a dull January day. You’ll struggle to get hold of the species, but you might ﬁnd cultivated varieties in specialist nurseries.

## Helleborus orientalis

The ***Helleborus orientalis*** at the edge of the lower woodland garden have been in ﬂower for a couple of weeks. The white ﬂowers are complemented by the fresh new foliage. Cut back and remove last year’s foliage before the ﬂowers and new leaves come through so that the fresh growth can be seen and appreciated.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/popular/hellebore/growing-guide>

## Iris unguicularis ‘Walter Butt’

***Iris unguicularis*** ‘Walter Butt’ in the rock garden takes the air in winter, sometimes as early as December. The free draining soil and the shelter provided by the rocks make the rock garden an ideal spot for this lovely little winter ﬂowering bulb.

Cultivation notes: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/24998/Iris-unguicularis/Details>

## Rhododendron dauricum

***Rhododendron dauricum*** really catches the eye. It ﬂowers earlier than *Rhododendron praecox* and has deeper coloured ﬂowers.

Our resident badgers like to help out by cultivating the lawns in their nightly forays looking for worms!

## Acer griseum (paperbark maple)

***Acer griseum*** (paperbark maple) is a lovely little tree looking particularly ﬁne in winter when it shows off its peeling coppery coloured bark. Best grown in a sheltered spot away from cold winds. The specimen on the herbarium lawn is over 80 years old.