

# Garden Highlights, March 2016

1. Visit the **Curiosity Cabinet** to see a display of plants from arid lands. Where water is scarce, plants often have succulent stems to store water with spines to deter animals from eating them. These features immediately make us think of Cactus plants. While the display shows some



plants in the Cactus family, look out for other hardy plants that use these, and other ways, to survive in dry environments. 1.

1. The **Elephant's Foot Yam** *Dioscorea elephantipes* is not only a curiosity because of its large tessellated tuber. This and other *Dioscorea* species are used for food in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. However, because they all contain poisons, they must be carefully prepared before they are safe to eat. In 1942, Russell Marker, the chemist who invented the octane rating system for petrol, found that in the poisons of *Dioscorea mexicana* is a chemical that can easily be transformed into progesterone. Thus began the development of the contraceptive pill. *Dioscorea mexicana* looks similar to the plant in the Curiosity Cabinet. Can you see the tiny yellow-green flowers of this male plant?

2. The **Agave** is a member of the Asparagus family, as you can see by the similarity of its giant flower-head to the small flower-heads of the asparagus we eat. An Agave may be available in the Friends' Nursery.

3. In April last year several of the succulents here were vandalised. You can see how these hardy plants from arid lands, including the **Pale Euphorbia** *Euphorbia ammak*, are recovering from their trauma. Other Euphorbia plants may be available in the Friends' Nursery.

4. **Ochagavia carnea** is a member of the Bromeliad or Pineapple family. Many members of this family live high up in trees with no access to constant moist soil. They have succulent leaves to store water collected when it comes in rain showers.

## What's on in March 2016

Visit **Arundel garden**, Weekend 5 and 6 March, 10:00 - 4:30. 478 Ryrie St., EAST GEELONG Entry: \$8. Funds to Friends GBG and Headspace.

Discovery Walk: **'Capturing Storm Water'**, Sunday 13 March 2:00. Gold coin donation.

Ask your guide about the special offer from the teahouse.

**Friends' Plant Nursery Sale**, Weekend 19 and 20 March 10:00 - 4:00 and on Wednesdays 9:30 - 12:30.

**Discovery Table**, Sunday 20 March 1:00 - 3:00 pm.

**Free Guided Walks**, each Sunday 2:00 pm, Wednesday 11:00 am.

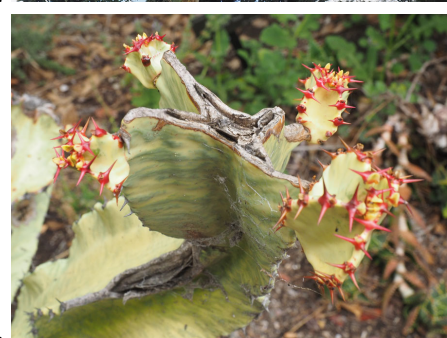
The **Tea House** is open every day.



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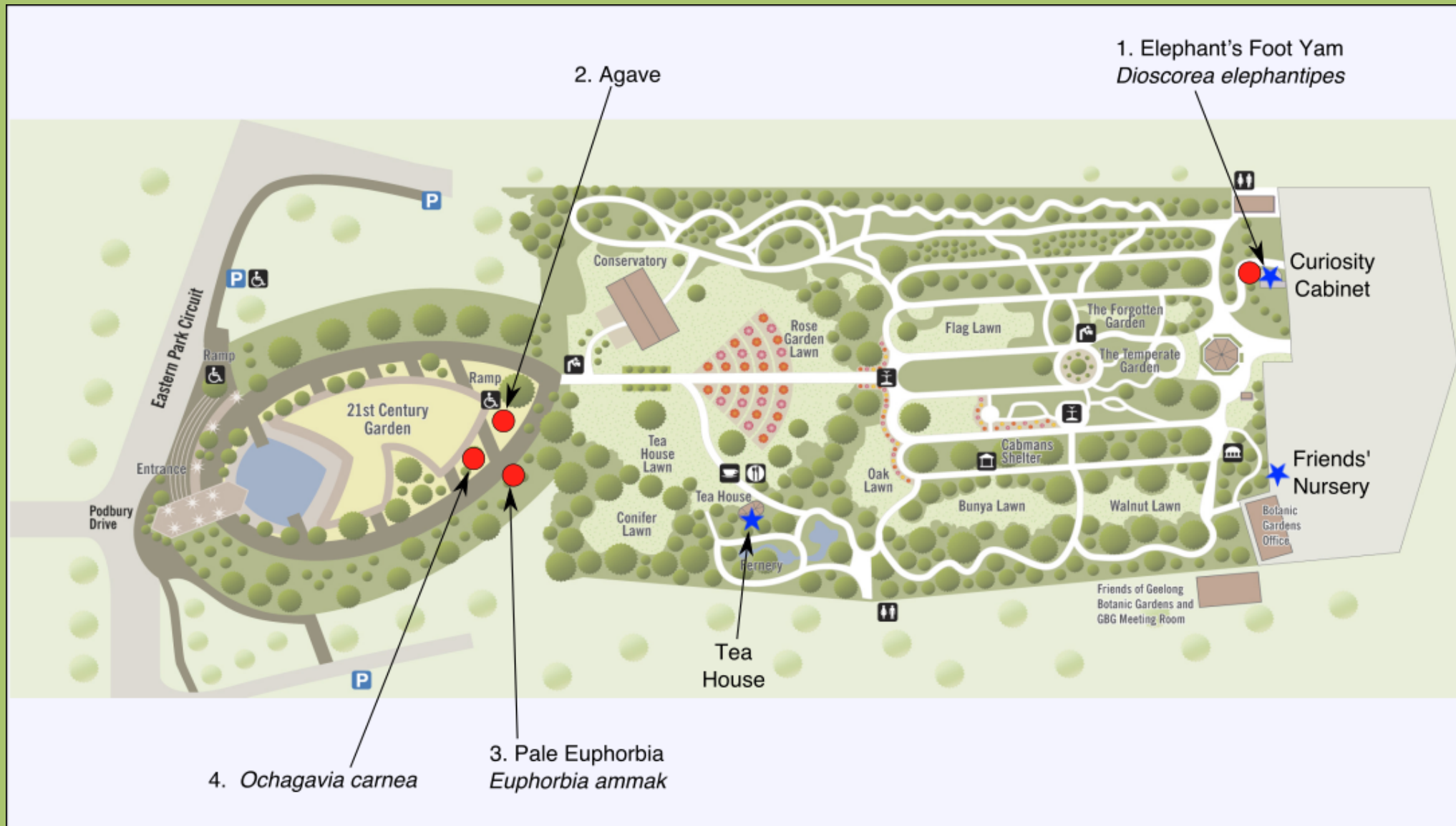
3.



4.

Over page: Map showing these plants

# Geelong Botanic Gardens Map



This information was developed by the Volunteer Guides  
Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens

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