

# Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha

## The Mt Coot-tha story

This land on which you are standing was once an ancient forest. Close your eyes and imagine tall shady trees, creeping vines and many creeks trickling down from the mountain. It was known to the Traditional Landowners, the first Australians who lived here, as Kuta – meaning place of the honey. The trees that grew at Kuta, now known as Mt Coot-tha, provided the perfect conditions for native stingless bees and their sweet honey homes.

Look for stingless bees on the seat. Smile for a photo here.

### 1 Where would we be without bees?

Bees and other insects have an important role to play in pollination. These Australian stingless bees are a pollinator of Australian rainforest plants, visiting flowers high in the canopy. On cold days they will sleep in until it warms up and then get busy foraging for nectar to make their tangy honey.

### 2 Crikey!

What's hiding in the water? Now you see it, now you don't. Camouflage helps these ancient creatures survive and surprise their prey. Chomp!

### 3 Bamboo bear

Bamboo (China and Japan)

Bamboo is actually a type of giant grass. This plant is useful for many things – food, fences, furniture, toys and instruments to name a few. It is also a favourite food plant of an endangered animal. Can you see it among the bamboo?

### 4 Monkey-no-climb

Floss silk tree (Brazil and Argentina)

In its native country this tree has the nickname 'monkey-no-climb'. Can you see why? This tree produces pods with fluffy white fibre, once used to stuff pillows. Imagine such a spiky tree producing something so soft!

### 5 Giant umbrellas

Palm trees

Can you see the very tall palm trees that look like giant umbrellas? These long, thin trees stretch up to the top of the forest canopy where there is lots of sunshine.

### 6 Spot the dragons

Dragon Bridge

Water dragons will eat almost anything – fruit, flowers, insects. They look ferocious, but if threatened they will jump in the water and hide for up to 90 minutes! Count how many you see around this bridge.

Look for giant dragonflies flying over the water below. Dragonflies have lived in the forests for up to 300 million years. Stretch out your arms – this is how big they once grew. Imagine that!

### 7 We're all connected

Weeping fig (Australia)

Look up into the branches of this large and beautiful fig tree, which provides us (and many other creatures) with shade and shelter. What nocturnal animals living in this tree have woken up to play you a tune on their leaf-shaped violins? We are all connected to plants and depend on them for food and oxygen.

### 8 Battle stations

These insects are munching machines! Their job is to clean up the forest floor and recycle nutrients to the plants by eating everything in their path. Jump on for the ride!

### 9 Find some feathered friends

How many rainforest birds can you count in the bandstand mosaic? Some birds have flown out of the forest...maybe it is chasing insects on the wing. Walk around the bandstand to find them.

### 10 Lovely leaves

Rainforests are home to about half the world's plant species. How many differently shaped leaves can you see?

Hopscotch your way down the leaf trail, moving on when you find each leaf shape in the forest.

Have a rest or play some notes on the magical king fern seat at the end of the hopscotch.

### 11 King fern (Australia)

King ferns shared the forests with dinosaurs. They are ancient plants that need moist, shaded environments to thrive – beside a creek is the perfect spot. Match the fern frond on the fossil rock to the living king fern near the creek.

All ferns grow in a similar way, their new fronds uncurling from tight spirals called fiddleheads. Can you find some?



## 12 Funky fungi

Fungi and lichen are excellent recyclers. They decompose dead and dying matter back to the soil, so plants can benefit from the nutrients. Can you see any fungi or lichen decomposing the old tree stump?

## 13 Frogs forever

Most of the world's frogs need the damp conditions of rainforests to survive. Their skin is very thin and absorbs water easily. Keeping their habitat intact and unpolluted may help frogs to resist disease and climate change.

## 14 Make a wish

Bo or bodhi tree (India)

The bo tree is a rainforest fig tree with beautiful heart-shaped leaves. In Buddhist religion the bo tree is important because it is the tree that Buddha sat under when he became enlightened. He then taught people to live in compassion and kindness. Pick up a bo leaf and make a wish, and do something wonderful for someone today (remember to return the leaf to the forest).

## 15 Sleepy leaf eaters

Tallowwood (Australia)

This tree is a koala food tree. Can you see any koalas? They may be asleep in the high branches, tired from so much eating! Koalas need to eat about two buckets of leaves a day to get enough goodness from the oil-rich, nutrient-poor gum leaves. They sleep and rest up to 20 hours a day to conserve energy needed to digest their meal.

## 16 Logs alive!

What's hiding here? Fallen logs provide homes for many rainforest creatures. They are a dry place to escape the rain and a ready source of bug snacks!

## 17 Slippery ssSSS sssSSS sssSSSSS sss

Snakes find plenty to eat in food-rich rainforests. This snake has just eaten but might enjoy seconds. Watch out!

# Checklist:

## Did you see some of these along the way?

- native stingless bees
- crocodile
- bamboo
- a cockatoo with boots (look up!)
- a spiky tree
-  shaped leaf
- water dragon
- dragonflies
- flying foxes
- hungry birds in a nest
- a giant cockroach
-  fern fiddlehead
- real brush turkey
- funky fungi
- a very shiny crayfish
- bandicoot
- snake

# What do you think?

## Rainforests make great homes for:

- (a) snakes, birds and insects
- (b) polar bears
- (c) feral pigs and cats.

## Colourful seeds are important:

- (a) to make beautiful necklaces
- (b) to attract birds and animals so they spread through the forest
- (c) for putting on top of bread rolls.

## Water dragons love to eat:

- (a) flowers and fruit
- (b) meat pies with tomato sauce
- (c) old plastic bags.

## Koalas need:

- (a) a nice, soft pillow to lie on
- (b) an alarm clock to help them wake up
- (c) their favourite eucalypt trees so they have just the right leaves to eat.

## Frogs like:

- (a) to hang out in toilet bowls
- (b) to have sparkling clean waterways to live in
- (c) to share their homes with cane toads.

## Rainforests are great places to:

- (a) stay cool and relax
- (b) enjoy time out with family and friends
- (c) learn about plants and animals
- (d) all of the above.

The Children's Trail is providing nature-based education opportunities for young minds and is another way Brisbane City Council is achieving a clean, green city.

Answers: (a), (b), (a), (c), (b), (d)




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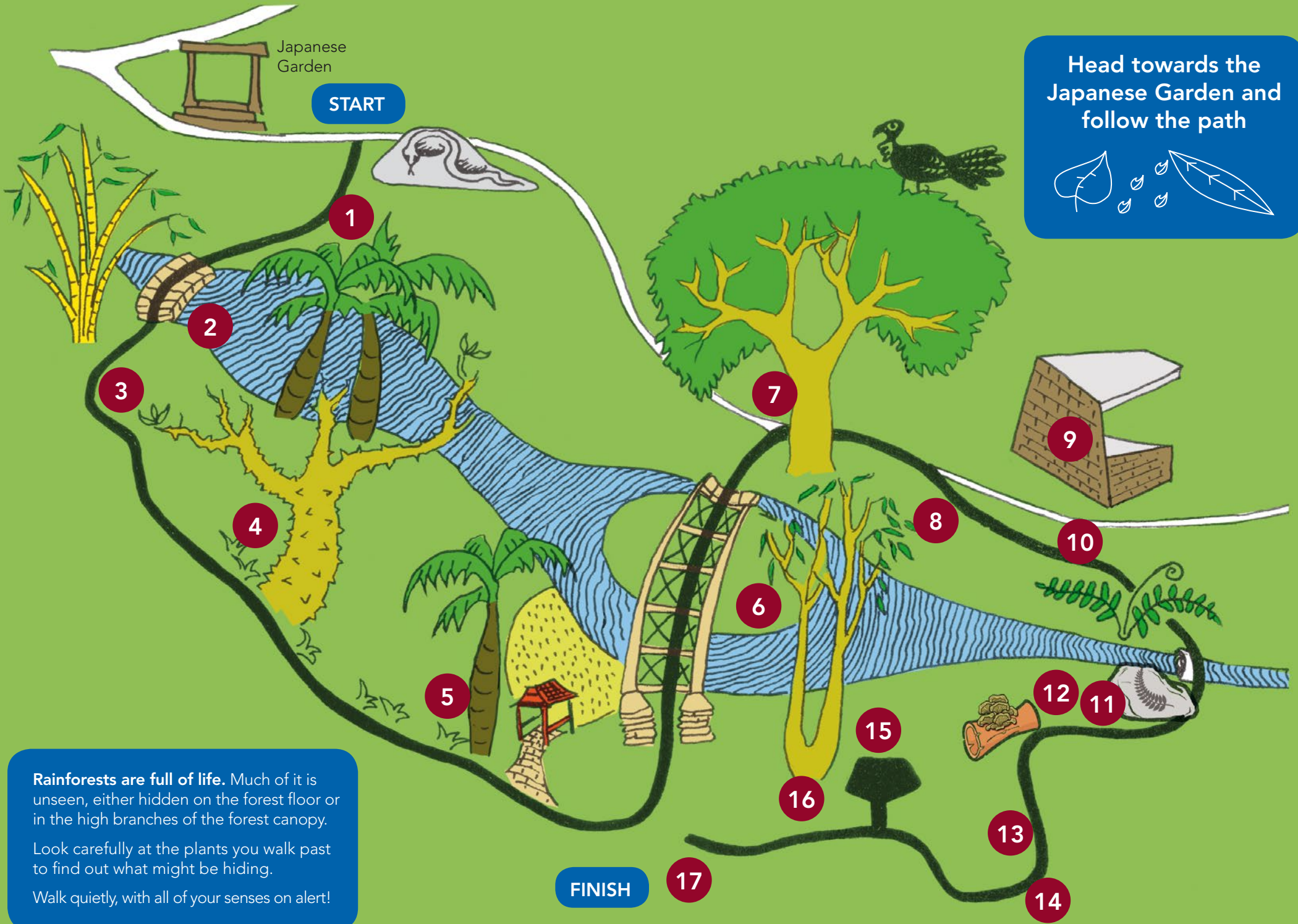
Colour in



Japanese Garden

START

Head towards the Japanese Garden and follow the path



**Rainforests are full of life.** Much of it is unseen, either hidden on the forest floor or in the high branches of the forest canopy.

Look carefully at the plants you walk past to find out what might be hiding.

Walk quietly, with all of your senses on alert!

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