

# Melrose Garden Walk



Surrounding historic Melrose House is a charming public garden and historic woodland. The house was built for Charles Watts who arrived in Nelson in 1841. Eventually his daughter Frances and her husband Percy Bolland Adams took up residence after Charles' death in 1881. Many fine trees in the garden planted at this time endure today. The house exterior and garden are maintained by Nelson City Council who have added to the attractive setting, which is now popular for weddings and garden parties.

The impressive **Moreton Bay Fig** **1**, planted in 1890, is best viewed from Brougham Street. Although the tree does not produce an edible fruit, its glossy leaves form a lovely canopy above the distinctive buttress roots. Take the pedestrian entry to your right. The multi-stemmed **Lawson Cypress** **2** towers around 30 metres high on your left and a stately **Totara** **3** is on your right. Both are of a similar age, and are found as you follow the path towards the house. Māori prized the durable heartwood of Totara for carving.

On the lower lawn to your left a large **Redwood** **4** planted around 1890 dominates the garden and is by far the tallest tree. Around the verandah of Melrose House are a selection of **Old English roses**. **5** One bed is devoted to red roses and includes the bright red *Dark Lady* with large fragrant flowers like tree peonies. The deep crimson blooms of *William Shakespeare* turn purple as they age and are found near the steps.

To the left of the house a **Camphor tree** **6** planted in 1890 would have been used for medicinal and household uses. Crush a leaf in your hands to recall the smell of a chest rub for respiratory ailments.

Famous for its moth repellent properties, the wood was often used in Victorian times for carved chests to store linen in.

Close by is a **Persimmon tree** **7** which is estimated to be about 70 years old. It bears a delicious orange skinned fruit in early autumn which is much loved by both possums and people who race to get to them first. It has an attractive form with a central straight trunk and extraordinarily angled branches.

Walk up on the lawn to the land at the back of the house, which is likely to have been the orchard in earlier times. A few old fruit trees remain and have been added to with recent plantings by Council, along with Azaleas, Camellias and natives such as Totara and Karaka.

A well established **Puriri** **8** with its salmon pink flowers attracts birds after its berries and nectar. Cross the drive to reach the main lawn. On the left side of the lawn, past new rhododendron plantings, is a large **Common Lime tree** **9**. These were fashionable to plant in Victorian times as a reminder of Europe. Hyacinths and daffodils, planted at its base, flower in spring.

A large **Magnolia** **10** nearby is on the pathway through native bush. **Karaka** **11** are very noticeable in the woodland here, particularly in autumn when their berries ripen from green through to yellow and red. When in numbers like this it often denotes previous Māori occupation of an area. Māori ate the berries but only after extensive soaking and cooking as they can be extremely poisonous. Enjoy the song of native birds and follow the boardwalk and path to return to the Brougham Street gate.

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Nelson is blessed with many attractive parks and gardens. The sheltered gardens of historic Melrose House are open to the public and are an ideal spot for a relaxed walk in tranquil surroundings. The house is available for hire and is popular for a variety of community uses as well as private events such as weddings.

For information about hiring Melrose House go to [www.melrosehouse.co.nz](http://www.melrosehouse.co.nz) and for other heritage walks and information go to [www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz](http://www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz) (search phrase *heritage walks*).

