

Cootes Paradise Trails

18 km of trail, 10 lookouts
5 boardwalks, 12 creek crossings



MAP KEY

- RBG Properties
- Roads
- Rail Lines
- Wide, Open Trails
- Narrow, Dirt Trails
- Lookout
- Canoe Launch
- Boardwalks
- Waterfront Trail
- Wheelchair Access
- Trail Heads
- Parking
- Pay and Display Parking (free for RBG members displaying valid pass)



Trail Code

These lands are Canada's biodiversity hot spot, open to **passive recreation** — leave only footprints, take only pictures.

Restrictions (per RBG's bylaws):

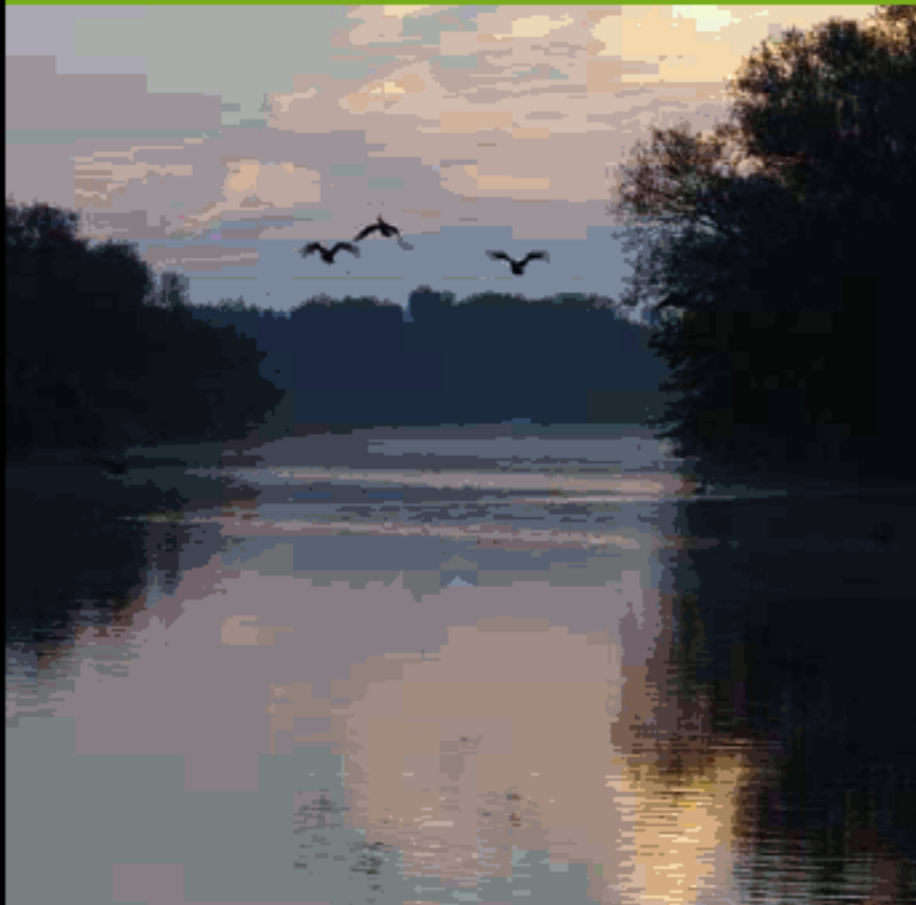
- Pets must remain leashed at all times
 - Runners are not permitted
 - Bicycles are not permitted
 - Motorized vehicles are not permitted
 - Feeding the wildlife is not permitted
- Garbage receptacles located at trailheads.

Special Protection Areas

Though the property spans more than 900 hectares, urban encroachment has left few true sanctuaries for sensitive species. To ensure that all species have an opportunity to thrive, 20 per cent of the property is set aside as Special Protection Areas (SPA) closed to the public. There are observation points and interpretive signage adjacent to the SPAs to help visitors understand the significance of these unique spaces.



Cootes Paradise



Part of the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve
Links to the Bruce and Waterfront trails



Hours

- RBG Centre – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (680 Plains Rd.)
- Trailheads – dawn to dusk. Metered parking at trailhead lots. Parking is free to RBG members (display Members' Parking Pass).
- Arboretum – 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. or at dusk, regular admission charges apply during spring bloom festivals.

Membership – Passport to Paradise

Membership is one of many ways to support RBG's sanctuaries. Nearly half of the operational funding of the Gardens is raised through memberships, donations and admissions. How much is a nature sanctuary in your backyard worth to you?

Charitable registration #133500850 RR 0001

A private landowning agency providing public access to the environment.

RBG Centre, 680 Plains Road West, Hamilton/Burlington
905-527-1158 • www.rbg.ca

ALSO IN THIS MAP SERIES:

- Hendrie Valley
- Escarpment Properties



Cootes Paradise Sanctuary

Established in 1927 for its significance as a migratory bird stopover, it's RBG's largest and most diverse sanctuary at over 600 hectares. The area features a 320-hectare river-mouth marsh, glacial plateaus, 16 creeks and 25 kilometres of shoreline.

MAJOR ACCESS POINTS

Princess Point

Princess Point is a natural gathering place and trail hub. It includes a canoe launch to the marsh, access to six kilometres of nature trails, and connects to Hamilton's Waterfront Trail. Princess Point is undergoing restoration to return it to its pre-European roots as an oak savannah.

Arboretum

The Arboretum is a hub leading to more than 10 kilometres of RBG trails, as well as many horticultural collections including lilacs, magnolias, flowering dogwoods and the Avenue of Trees. It is also home to RBG's outdoor education centre and the Bruce Trail Conservancy's main office in historical Raspberry House.

Burlington Heights

At the eastern edge of Cootes Paradise overlooking the water, this 30-metre-high ribbon of land is actually the beach of glacial Lake Iroquois formed 13,000 years ago. The area provides the finest views in the region. Until the 1850s, Cootes Paradise flowed around the north end of the Heights but railway construction centered the outflow. During the construction, post-glacial bones of mammoth, giant sloth and beaver were uncovered.

What's in a Name?

The site is named after Captain Thomas Coote, a British naval officer who enjoyed the abundant waterfowl while on leave from his army duties in the 1780s. The community at the west end of the marsh was also named Cootes Paradise until the 1840s, at which time the name was changed to Dundas.

Early Residents

People have been drawn to Cootes Paradise for centuries. From AD 500 to 1000 this area was occupied by the Princess Point people, named after archaeological discoveries which indicated they were the first to bring agriculture to the region. Europeans arrived in the 1700s, with the first houses built on the north shore plateaus. One of these sites, Raspberry House, remains today.

Vegetation and Microclimate

Nestled between the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario, the area's flora is characteristic of the more southern deciduous forest region. Carolinian trees such as sassafras, oak, and hickory dominate the uplands, while northern species like hemlock, sugar maple, and white cedar are found in the many spring-fed shady ravines.

Habitat Restoration

At the inception of *Project Paradise* in the 1990s, nearly the entire marsh ecosystem had been lost, leaving it a shallow muddy lake. With the exclusion of destructive carp at the Fishway, water lilies, cattails, frogs, fish and birds have begun to thrive again.



Trail Destinations

1. Burial Grounds

Located on Burlington Heights along York Blvd., the area provides the best views in the region. A memorial marks this site's historic connections — the War of 1812, immigrants who died arriving by ship in the 1840s and those who died in the cholera epidemic in the 1860s.

2. Westdale Ravine

Located on the south shore of Cootes Paradise, this deeply incised sand-plain ravine features a spring-fed creek, exposed glacial beach rocks and some of the tallest trees on the property. It is a forest-birding hotspot.

3. Native Trees Walk

Starting at the Nature Centre, these trails travel through a labeled native tree collection — a perfect way to learn how to identify the trees of the Carolinian forest region.

4. Pine Point Lookout

Below the Lilac Dell and looking out towards Hickory Island, this is one of the few locations where white pines dominate, evoking images of the forests that once covered the area.

5. The Fishway

Located at the outlet of Cootes Paradise Marsh, this seasonally operated structure blocks the entrance of more than 10,000 non-native carp annually, while ensuring the spring migration of native Lake Ontario fish to and from this critical spawning area.

6. Marsh Boardwalk/Spencer Creek Delta

The most isolated point in the sanctuaries, the boardwalk provides an up-close look at one of the largest creek deltas on Lake Ontario. This area is favoured by migratory waterfowl and is home to our bald eagles. Rat Island is directly across the creek to the south of the platform.

Cootes Paradise Flowers



Round lobed hepatica

(*Anemone americana*)

This spring ephemeral is one of the first flowers to bloom. This small forest species can be found throughout the property and is one of two *hepatica* species present within the sanctuaries.



Wild geranium

(*Geranium maculatum*)

This woodland flower blooms spring through mid-summer. It is sometimes called cranesbill, in reference to the long beak in the centre of the flower and the shape of the seedpod.



Pale-leaved sunflower

(*Helianthus strumosus*)

This mid-summer, brightly-coloured sunflower prefers dry sandy soils on sunny open slopes. It is one of three species of native sunflower found on the property.



Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)

Look for this plant in wet areas along Captain Cootes Trail in the late summer. The upper segment of the flower curves over the lower segment making it look like the head of a turtle.



Royal Botanical Gardens

Mission

To be a living museum which serves local, regional and global communities while developing and promoting public understanding of the relationship between the plant world, humanity and the rest of nature.

Vision

Royal Botanical Gardens is to be recognized and supported as Canada's most effective change agent in promoting environmentally appropriate lifestyle choices that enable Canadians to sustain, conserve and enjoy the highest quality of life on Earth.

Canada's Biodiversity Hot Spot

Royal Botanical Gardens' 900 hectares is dominated by nature sanctuaries enveloping the western end of Lake Ontario. These form a Nodal Park within the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO). With more than 750 native plant species, 277 types of migratory birds, 37 mammal species, 14 reptile species, 9 amphibian species and 68 species of Lake Ontario fish, the area is an important contributor to ecosystems that span international borders.

Trail Conditions

The 27 kilometres of trail includes packed earth, crushed stone, asphalt and boardwalks; some sections are steep and hilly. Ice build-up on hills during winter can make trails slippery. During spring thaws and after rains earthen trails become muddy.

LIABILITY

Royal Botanical Gardens assumes no responsibility for loss of or damage to property, personal injury or mishap. All activities are at the risk of the participant. Our parking lots are not monitored. Do not leave any valuables in your car.

Volunteer

TrailWatchers

Join our volunteer trail monitors and help us inform fellow visitors about our trail code, work on trail projects and learn more about the local environment. For more information pick up a TrailWatcher brochure or call Royal Botanical Gardens Auxiliary office at 905-577-7771.

PlantWatch

Join a national volunteer effort to help monitor our changing climate. The PlantWatch program enables *citizen scientists* to get involved by recording flowering times and reporting these dates to researchers. Visit www.plantwatch.ca for details.

Learn More

Guided educational outings are offered year-round. Seasonal programs include everything from spring wildflower walks to stories of the Escarpment. For information call 905-527-1158, ext. 270. External groups **charging** for independently guided tours must register with the Gardens.