# Birmingham Botanical Gardens'

# Poetry Trail

**THE BIRMINGHAM**
**BOTANICAL**
**GARDENS**
AN EDUCATIONAL CHARITY

SCALE OF METRES

0   10   20   30   40   50

R O A D

W E S T B O U R N E

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

J

L

M

R

Botanical Gardens Entrance

Function Entrance

OS Grid North

John G Mansfield August 2012

Updated 6 May 2016 Gordon Hackett

2

34

LOUDON TERRACE

Car Park

32

33

22

Treetops Adventure Playground

GERARD WALK

JEKYLL WALK

DOUGLAS WAY

17

24

20

20

38

36

39

13

35

21

12

41

16

CAMERON PATH

FARRER WALK

WILSON WALK

PAXTON PROSPECT

FORREST WALK

25

26

1

28

11

8

14

29

23

31

3

5

27

40

42

15

18

9

7

4

37

30

10

19

Butterfly house open late May till early September

NURSERY

Not open to the Public

THE BIRMINGHAM
BOTANICAL GARDENS
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www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk

3

2

1

5

4

# In the Glasshouses

### 1.    Subtropical House

While you are in the Subtropical House, look at the **Spanish Moss** (also called `Old Man's Beard`) and choose the best rhyming words to complete this poem:

> *The Spanish Moss just won't behave –*
>
> *it makes the trees look old and hairy.*
>
> *You'd think that this tree needs a _____*
>
> *because it looks so rough and _____.*

This type of poem is called a quatrain. This means each verse has four lines and they usually rhyme as follows:

- the first and third lines rhyme with each other
- the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other.

Does your poem above rhyme like that? If it doesn't, you could try some different words to complete it.

Here is another quatrain poem (but with a different rhyming pattern):

> *I wish I was a little grub*
> *with whiskers round my tummy.*
> *I'd climb into a honey pot*
> *and make my tummy gummy.*
>
> (Anon)

That is a bit like the poem below about the Pitcher Plants, which can also be found in the Subtropical House:

> *A Pitcher Plant's one long green tummy*
>
> *and thinks that bugs and flies are yummy.*
>
> *To stop it's tummy getting thinner,*
>
> *it tells them all, 'Drop in for dinner!'*

This is really two rhyming couplets, rather than a quatrain. Can you see the difference in the way it rhymes?

## 2. <u>Arid House</u>

While you are in the Arid House, find the plant called the Century Plant. Here is a poem about it:

> *The Century Plant*
>
> *is not a very adventury plant.*
>
> *It takes thirty years to flower,*
>
> *so please don't ask it to grow any slower,*
>
> *because it can't.*

Which of the words in the poem is made-up? Put a ring round it.

Try making up a word that would suit the plants in the Arid House. 'Shlurjy' would not be a good word, because it sounds too wet and soft. Think of a better one. Use letters that sound sharp and dry, like t, c, or k.

"The cacti looked very _____."

# In the Gardens

## 3.   Redwood Tree

You have now moved away from the jungles and the deserts to the trees of the American North-West. Giant Redwoods can grow to become the tallest trees in the world. Find the Redwood tree and read the poem:

*We are the red, who share our land*

*with the Yurok and the Karok,*

*with the Hupa and Tolowa,*

*more tribes than a man can know.*

*From the mountains to the sea, we stand*

*thick as the fur on a beaver's back.*

*We grow taller than the sky,*

*bigger than a bull elk, older*

*than the white man, older*

*than the red man, older*

*than the eagle or the bear, older.*

*When one of us falls, a thousand years die.*

*We are the red.*

*We eat our dead.*

Why do you think the poem ends with, "We eat our dead"?

_____

_____

An animal that eats plants and other animals is called an omnivore. What is an animal called if it only eats plants?

_____

Most plants on Earth have at least one creature that will eat them. Even trees have insects and animals that eat the leaves and fruit, and some insects like nothing better than chewing up the wood of the trunks and branches. Some of the best at this are called termites, which can make a tree hollow while leaving the outside looking untouched.

Australian Aborigines found hollow branches after the termites had eaten them and blew down them to make music. These instruments are called: d_____.

4.   The Bandstand

Go onto the Bandstand (if it is available) and read this poem:

> *The band-stand is unmanned –*
> *they're off to have their teas,*
> *no trumpets, drums, euphoniums,*
> *no oom-pah melodies –*
> *so I'm standing where the band stands*
> *and listening to the trees,*
> *listening to the woodwind*
> *whispering in the breeze.*

Alliteration is using the same letter to start several words in a poem. In this poem which letter gives some alliteration? _____

What sort of word do you think 'oom-pah' is? What is special about it? It sounds like what it means (the sort of music played by brass bands, with a big drum thumping and tubas going oom-pah, oom-pah). When you use a word like this it is called onomatopoeia.

Here is another poem that has lots of onomatopoeia:

> *Who am I? You guess.*
>    *No, I'm not a question mark.*
>       *No, I'm not an S.*
>       *I don't coo or mew or bark.*
>    *Who am I? You guess.*
>  *Yes!*
> *I'm a snake*
>    *and no mistake*
>       *and this*
>          *Sssssss*
>             *is my hiss.*
>
>             *What sort of snake? You say.*
>             *No, I'm not an adder,*
>          *still less an asp, no way!*
>       *No, I'm much badder!*
>    *What sort of snake? You say.*
>       *Okay!*
>          *A rattlesnake*
>             *and no mistake*
>                *and this*
>             *Sssssss*
>          *is my hiss*
>             *and that'll*
>                *Trrrrrr*
>                   *be my rattle.*

There is lots of alliteration with all those `S` sounds and it is a concrete poem too (where things other than the words, such as the shape of the writing, create a visual image). Had you spotted that?

Which of these words do you think are onomatopoeic? Put a ring round them…

cuckoo        grumble        splash        engine        redwood        whisper

## 5.   Japanese Garden and National Bonsai Collection

Bonsai are trees that have been grown to remain very small, by trimming them and keeping them in small pots. This is a skill that developed in Japan and China. So, if we are going to have a poem about a Bonsai, it should be a small one.

Can you find the four poems displayed in the Japanese Garden? These are all examples of a Japanese form of poetry called *haiku.* (Three are written in Japanese and the fourth is in English on the initial information board.) A haiku doesn't have to rhyme, but you have to count the syllables carefully, so that there are five in the first line, seven in the second and five again in the third.

Here is a haiku:

> *Rasdeep was silent,*
> *not because she had no tongue –*
> *just nothing to say.*

Count the syllables to make sure it is right. Can you hear how the words 'Rasdeep', 'silent', 'because' and 'nothing' all have two parts (syllables)? All the other words have one syllable each. How many syllables does the word 'syllable' have?

Answer: _____

Perhaps you can write a haiku about the wind chimes hanging in the tree in the Japanese Garden, or a funny one about what you like to eat? Remember to count the syllables and start a new line when you need to. If you find that this would come in the middle of a word, try taking a word out of the line or adding one in so that the break comes at the end of a word. Remember, it doesn't have to rhyme.

*Haiku*, by _____ (your name)

(Line 1, five syllables)

_____

(Line 2, seven syllables)

_____

(Line 3, five syllables)

_____