The Rose Garden is unique in several ways when compared to many other public rose gardens. The plantings are laid out in an informal design with large, curving beds as an alternative to the geometric patterns found in many other rose gardens. Instead of focusing on hybrid tea roses, many different classes of roses are represented. A good number of the more popular David Austin English Roses are part of the collection.

Near the northwest corner of the garden, close to the fire hydrant, you will be able to recognize the yellow flowered and almost continuously blooming ‘Graham Thomas’. This Austin English Rose was released in 1983 and it has become one of the most popular landscape roses in North America.

You will find several other Austin English roses growing near the yellow ‘Graham Thomas’. Many of these roses have the flower form and the typical pink or pale pink colour of antique shrub roses (e.g., ‘Gertrude Jekyll’, ‘Eglantyne’, ‘St. Swithun’) but are improved with a re-blooming growth habit. You will also see that the shape of the flowers is quite different from most modern roses. The flowers on some Austin English Roses are cup-shaped, others open flat, while others are “quartered” -- they appear to be divided into four sections.

The fragrance of each of these roses reflects their antique heritage and is quite different. Can you detect the differences in the tea fragrance, fruit fragrance, and perfume fragrance of these roses?

The arbor leading from the parking lot north of the Rose Garden is covered with the climber ‘Henry Kelsey’. This Canadian introduction is becoming well known across Canada for its ease of care, prolific blooms and winter hardiness. It can be grown as a shrub (SH) or as a climber (CL).

As you stroll around the garden you will find examples of hybrid tea roses (HT). These are among the most popular roses for their flower form and continuous blooming habit. The hybrid tea roses usually have from 1 to 3 buds per stem and the buds develop a tall pointed centre of petals. Unfortunately they lack winter hardiness and die back after severe winters.

The floribunda roses (FL) have large clusters of many blooms and slightly better winter hardiness. The buds tend to be slightly flatter than those of the hybrid teas. Grandiflora roses (GR) develop tall canes and a flower form close to the hybrid tea ideal. They are descended from floribundas and hybrid teas and the grandifloras are an attempt to combine the best of both classes of roses.

There are examples of groundcover roses (GC) (‘Alba Meidiland’, ‘Royal Bassino’, ‘Knockout’) that have a low, spreading growth habit. Many groundcover roses are good re-bloomers and have been selected to be very disease resistant.

The garden was established in 1998, by the graduating Horticulture class of 1999, when a local grower donated over 50 different types of roses. The collection has been expanded since that time to include over 135 plants.
**Informal Water Garden**

The informal water garden is located in a quiet, secluded area of the Arboretum south of the Brien House. Each spring the pond is home to hundreds of tadpoles. During the summer, goldfish dart among the water lilies, irises, and other aquatic plants. The clear water is maintained by using a biological filter and by finding a proper balance between plants and fish.

Some of the most prominent plants near the water garden are the very large clumps of Variegated Chinese Silver Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Variegatus’), and Zebra Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Strictus’). These grasses develop into imposing specimens by August and in September the flowers will rise on tall stems above the foliage.

The heart-shaped leaves of Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) are easy to identify near the south side of the water garden. Eastern Redbud provides a good display of pink flowers in mid-May, blue-green leaves through the summer, and yellow fall colour in September and October.

If you follow the stepping stone pathway over the watercourse and between the large clumps of Grass, to the west side of the pond, on your left you will see a small tree with unusually large leaves called Umbrella Magnolia (*Magnolia tripetala*). Umbrella Magnolia has large white blooms in early June just as the leaves emerge. It is native to mountainous areas of Pennsylvania where it occurs in humid, shady ravines.

In the shade of the Paper Birches (*Betula papyrifera*) you will find two Hoptrees (*Ptelea trifoliata*). Hoptree has three leaflets on each leaf. This small tree is native to the Carolinian forest region although it is not common. Large natural stands can be found growing in Point Pelee National Park.

The pond was donated and installed in 1998 by Aquascape. The surrounding gardens were designed and planted by Horticulture Diploma class of 2000.

When you are finished exploring the water garden take a short walk up the slope, past the birch trees, to the HERB GARDEN. You will see a collection of different herbs and other plants displayed around a formal brick walkway. Many of the plants have flowers that will attract butterflies and other plants have fragrant foliage.

**Brien House (former principal’s residence)**
**The Principal’s Walk**

From 1922 to 1986 the Brien House served as the Principal’s residence. The long walkway south of the house had a mixed border planted on both sides. In the early years of the College the walk provided a place to relax and reflect. In later years the Principal’s office was located in the Reek building at the extreme south end of the walkway. At that time the Principal’s walk became the daily path to, and from the office.

During the 1990s the east border was removed. To mark 50 years of diploma education at Ridgetown College in 2002, the east border was replanted by the Horticulture graduating class of 2003. The borders are 64 meters (210 feet) long and the plantings showcase a wide variety of small flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, bulbs and annuals.

Low maintenance plants such as Daylily *Hemerocallis*, Lance-leaved Hosta (*Hosta lancifolia*), Lamb’s Ears (*Stachys byzantina*) and Bloodred Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*) have been used repeatedly along the border to provide a sense of cohesion in the varied collection of plants on display.

In May the tulips and daffodils are among the most colourful flowers in the borders. Small trees like Japanese Flowering Cherry (*Prunus serrulata* cv.) and Red Jade Weeping Crabapple (*Malus ‘Red Jade’*) have beautiful flowers and attractive growth habits too. The Columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*) blooms and new plants find their way around the border from the seeds that are allowed to develop later.

During the month of June the bearded irises and peonies are among the most prominent flowers. There are several old clumps of False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*) that provide blue flowers and blue-green foliage. Annual bedding plants are set out in places that are not yet filled by perennials or shrubs.

During July many of the Daylilies bloom. There are several very old cultivars of daylily in the border. Their colours are more muted and the petals more slender than many of the modern hybrids. Near the south end of the border there are several clumps of Sunflower *Heliopsis helianthoides var. scabra* that provide a brilliant splash of yellow in the month of July. By August the annual bedding plants are fully developed and blooming well. The Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) grow tall as they continue their display. Some of the early-blooming perennials may be blooming a second time during this month.

As autumn approaches the Persian Parrot Trees (*Parrotia persica*), Burningbush (*Euonymus alatus*) and Dwarf Burningbush (*E. alatus ‘Compactus’*) capture attention with their brilliant fall colour. Visitors may notice the native Common Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) midway along the east side. Common Witchhazel is a native shrub or small tree that blooms from mid-October to late November. On calm, clear fall days the fresh scent of the small yellow flowers is discernable.
**Picnic Shelter**
The Picnic Shelter was constructed in 1997 to mark the 75th Anniversary of Ridgetown College. The timber frame construction is a reminder of the technique used for agricultural buildings on farms established in this region about 150 years ago.

Just east of the Picnic Shelter there are two large Sycamores (*Platanus occidentalis*). They are easy to identify because of the large, maple-like leaves and the mottled bark. Sycamore is one of our largest growing, native deciduous trees.

**Conifer Collection**
On the west side of the Picnic Shelter, as you cross the roadway to the north side of the Reek Building, you will find the conifer collection with various evergreen groups and specimens, such as Scots, White and Austrian Pines (*Pinus spp.*), Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Balsam and White Firs (*Abies spp.*), Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), Larch (*Larix laricina*) and Spruces (*Picea spp.*), along with several noteworthy deciduous and native trees.

Locate a clump of many small trees, with large, drooping leaves, surrounding one larger tree and you have found the Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*). Suckers from the roots were allowed to develop by no longer mowing the turf. In the wild, Pawpaw spreads by root suckers to cover large areas. This small native tree normally grows in the shade of larger trees where it will be taller and more open growing than our trees that are located in full sun.

Another native Carolinian tree that will develop into a spreading colony if permitted is Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*). The Sassafras is growing just south of the Pawpaw and it can be recognized by the “mitten-shaped” leaves. At one time bark from the roots was used as one of the ingredients in root beer. The leaves develop orange and red colours in autumn.

Across the lawn, toward Cathcart Street there is a large European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). It has a very thick, sturdy trunk with smooth “elephant hide” bark. The leaves are very leathery and glossy.

As you look northeast you will see the two storey, brown-sided Shipping & Receiving building.

Osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*) is growing on the south side of the Shipping & Receiving Building. The tree can be recognized easily by the glossy, dark green leaves during summer and orange inner bark. In the autumn the tree develops unusual fruit that resemble large, bumpy grapefruit. This tree is female and since there is no male tree nearby, the fruit develop but most lack seeds. This species is native to Texas and Arkansas but it was commonly used by early settlers in southwestern Ontario in hedgerows to enclose pastures for livestock.

Next to the Osage Orange stands a very tall White Ash (*Fraxinus Americana*) susceptible to the devastation of the Emerald Ash Borer. It may not be with us much longer.

The weed garden is located behind the Shipping & Receiving building. It is one of the largest weed gardens in Canada with over 100 farm and garden weeds. Test your knowledge to see how many you can identify.

Start walking south, past the row of mature Norway Spruces (*Picea abies*) on your left. Then turn left and go past the row of Red Oaks (*Quercus rubrum*) on your left and an English Oak (*Quercus rubra*) on your right.

The landscaping around most of the campus buildings were designed constructed and planted by the Horticulture classes as parts of their course curriculums. Every fall semester group projects are completed by the students of the Landscape Design and Construction classes.
At the stop sign turn right and head to the campus sign on the front lawn. This will bring you to the **Woody Plant collection.**

Near the Ridgetown Campus main sign The Woody Plant Collection contains a wide range of shrubs and trees. Some of these are common in landscapes while many others are very uncommon. Here are highlights of a few trees in the collection.

If you follow the broad, grassed pathway toward the centre of the original planting you will see one small tree with purple leaves. This is Rivers’ European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* ‘Riversii’). The smooth, silvery bark and the dark purple leaves will make this tree a focal point of the planting as it continues to mature.

On the left (west) of this Beech you will see a very tall Gold-tipped Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘Elegantissima’). This cultivar of our native White Cedar or Arborvitae has golden tips on the new growth in June and it retains a strong central stem so that it keeps a more pyramidal shape than the species.

The small deciduous tree growing near the Gold-tipped Arborvitae is the native Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*). This is the only dogwood with alternate leaves. The branches grow in layers reminiscent of the roofs on the Asian ornamental buildings called pagodas. Pagoda Dogwood has clusters of creamy-white flowers in June. In fall the leaves develop a beautiful orange-red colour before they drop.

On the right (east) of the Rivers’ European Beech you will see a Chinese Chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*). The leaves are elongated, shiny, leathery and have sharp teeth along the edges. This tree bears creamy coloured flowers in July and will produce edible chestnuts in the fall. The Chinese Chestnut is resistant to the chestnut blight that has killed most of the native Sweet Chestnut (*C. dentata*) in eastern North America.

South (toward Main Street) of the Chinese Chestnut, there is a large Pyramidal English Oak (*Quercus robur* var. *fastigiata*). It is easy to identify by its tall, narrow growth habit and small, lobed leaves typical for oak.

Southeast of the Pyramidal English Oak there is a Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioicus*). This tree can be identified by the very large, bipinnate, blue-green leaves. This native tree is associated with the Carolinian forest region. It is very stress tolerant and may become more commonly used in urban areas. In July and August you will see large pods at the ends of some branches. The seeds are poisonous unless properly prepared. It is reported that early settlers used the roasted seeds as a coffee substitute.

As you walk south toward Main Street and west across the front of the plantings you will find the J.J. Neilson Arboretum sign in the southwest corner. Behind this sign, in the shade of other trees you will see a Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*). This small tree has dull green, trifoliate leaves and very distinctive bark. The bark is cinnamon brown in colour and peels away from the trunk in thin, papery layers. This native tree is associated with the Carolinian forest region. It is very stress tolerant and may become more commonly used in urban areas. In July and August you will see large pods at the ends of some branches. The seeds are poisonous unless properly prepared. It is reported that early settlers used the roasted seeds as a coffee substitute.

The Junior Hort. Landscape Management class plants a number of trees throughout the arboretum every fall semester.
Along with design and planting, the Arboriculture and tree care classes are involved in the maintenance of the arboretum. The campus specializes in teaching safe tree climbing techniques, and pruning of the trees.

The annuals flowers are started by the Greenhouse Management class, then planted and maintained by the Summer Students under the supervision of the grounds staff.

The Campus arboretum and gardens are open dawn till dusk, and admission is free.

For further information you can call us at: 519-674-1500
Kennedy Moulton, ext: 63609 Arborist/groundskeeper
Steve Loewen, ext: 63629 (Arboretum Curator)
Mike Gladstone, ext: 63687 (Greenhouse/nursery manager)