

Identification and location

Name of place: **Canary Island date palm rows and oak,
Johnson Reserve**

Other Name `Phoenix canariensis', `Quercus' sp.

Address off **Essex Street**
Maidstone

Place Identifier **2309**

Heritage Significance **City**

Creation date(s) **1935-40c** **Map (Melway)** **41H2**

Boundary description The trees and sufficient land around each to allow for root zone and canopy protection, nominally 1m beyond the drip line, root zone or canopy perimeter which ever is the greatest.

Local Government Area **City of Maribyrnong**

Ownership Type **Public**

Description

Site Type: **Tree(s), specimen**

Physical Description

Long rows of mature Canary Island palms as border to grassed open reserve. There are also oak (large), elm and ash trees. There are 6 palms on the north side, 21 on the west side, and 7 on the south, a total of 34 palms.

This massive palm from the Canary Islands grows to 50 ft (15 m) tall with a spread of 30 ft (9 m), and has a sturdy trunk up to 3 ft (1 m) across and arching, deep green fronds up to 12 ft (3.5 m) long. Small yellow flowers in drooping clusters in summer are succeeded by inedible, orange-yellow, acorn-like fruit. This palm needs plenty of room to show off its dramatic symmetrical shape. In areas prone to frosts, plant an advanced specimen when the danger of frost has passed {Botanica}.

Condition

good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

Context

Located around an open grassed reserve with little detailed landscape otherwise, inter-war and Edwardian-era housing in area, with some basalt kerb and channel in View St.

Threats:

Pruning for added and existing service lines, removal with maturity, carparking, root compaction, adjoining development or activity.

History

In 1935 the Curator of Parks & Gardens, Matthews, reported that the Essex Street reserve was being used for cattle grazing and was subject to vehicle crossing. It had to be fenced. This and the acquisition by Council of 300 Canary Island date palms in 1934 probably mean the start of landscaping in this park. Councils were also providing projects for the unemployed in this era which in Footscray's case included landscape { VPRO}. A 1934 city plan showed the site as a blank in the street grid and, in 1945, a city publication noted that the six acres of land there had been purchased by Council for £3325 and that the playground was yet to be equipped.

In the late 1950s this 5 acre reserve was still described as 'partly constructed' but was used for tennis and field games with more to come {FFOY}. The 1945 aerial view however shows young palms around the perimeter but no oak, elm or ash. The planting probably occurred in the late 1930s under the direction of David Matthews. Matthews joined the Footscray Council as a 'working landscape gardener' in 1916 and within 6 years he had gained the confidence of the Council and local interest groups, working with them to beautify many public reserves { Lack, 1991, 209}. Aided by sustenance labour he was able to achieve many ambitious schemes in the inter-war period. He retired in 1964 with an MBE in 1965. Footscray park is considered to be his showpiece { Lack, 1991}.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

Developing cultural institutions and ways of life

 PAHT Subtheme

Creating landscape

 Local Theme(s)

Reserves and parks

Cultural Significance

Canary Island date palm rows and the oak, Johnson Reserve, are significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- as distinctive and mature trees which are uncommon within the general planted context of the City, judged by their maturity, type and numbers (Criterion B2) ;
- for their contribution to this distinctive inter-war public landscape created within the City under the noted Footscray municipal parks and gardens Curator David Matthews (Criterion A4, H1).

Comparative Examples:

Compares well with other similar palm rows in the City (Cuming, Railway Reserve, Whitten Oval Barkly St) in terms of consistency, numbers and maturity, and in the region there is a comparable

row in the Williamstown Botanical Gardens and specimens in the Williamstown Cemetery. Elsewhere in the region there is the row in Mt Alexander Rd, Essendon of 119 trees which is on the National Trust of Australia Register of Significant Trees.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate:

National Trust Register:

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?:

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:

Tree Controls Apply?:

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted

Recommendations:

The following management objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance:

- to conserve and enhance the listed trees and the planting pattern at the place where enhancement includes replacement of missing original components in the planting scheme;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between trees at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these trees;
- to conserve and enhance the amenity of the place to aid in its heritage conservation;
- to ensure that new plantings or elements adjoining or within the place are visually recessive and related to the trees;
- to ensure that replacement trees in the row are similar species; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the reserve and the trees and maintain a link with their history, via promotion and publication of the findings.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

for their contribution to this distinctive inter-war public landscape created within the City

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

distinctive and mature trees which are uncommon within the general planted context of the City, judged by their maturity, type

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

and numbers

HI Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

created within the City under the noted Footscray municipal parks and gardens curator Matthews

historical significant architectural significant social significance scientific significant

Documentation

References

Butler, 1989. City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study;
Lack, 1991, 'A History of Footscray': 209, 257, 268, 296, 343, 373, 374;
'Botanica' CD Rom 1997 (Beaver Multimedia P/L, Random House Australia)
'Footscray's first 100 Years', n.p (FFOY)
Landinfo aerial 1945 view;
Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337;
City of Footscray, 1945. 'Facts about Footscray City', n.p.;

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

