

Identification and location

Name of place: Elm, Irish strawberry, pepper trees and silky oak at Footscray Primary School 1912

Other Name 'Ulmus' sp. 'Arbutus unedo' 'Schinus molle' var. 'areira' 'Grevillea robusta'

Address 010B Hyde Street
Footscray

Place Identifier 22590

Heritage Significance City

Creation date(s) 1880-1900c **Map (Melway)** 42B4

Boundary description The cited 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

A large elm specimen located in the school reserve at the north east corner, next to an 'Arbutus unedo' or Irish strawberry tree. There are also semi-mature pepper trees on the south boundary, along Bristow St, and a silky oak in the grounds at the rear of the stone wing.

The Ulmus genus of 20 or so species of trees and shrubs occur naturally in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. During the 1920s and 1930s, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, elm trees in Europe and North America were devastated by Dutch elm disease, caused by the fungus *Ophiostoma ulmi*, which is transmitted by the elm bark beetle. Except for a few East Asian species, they are deciduous, turning yellow in fall (autumn). The leaves are usually alternate, one-sided at the base, with prominent, parallel, lateral veins and regularly toothed margins; the small, disc-like fruits have a membranous wing and are carried in clusters. Most elms are large limbed with furrowed grey bark and high, domed crowns { Botanica }.

Condition

good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

Context

Set within a historic public building precinct, and perhaps the only tree of a comparable age with the early buildings is the elm.

Threats:

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

History

In 1873 the Napier Street Anglican reserve was offered for use as a public school site by the trustees, only to be overruled in the following year by the Anglican Dean. Instead, the Education Department investigated the present site, then between the 'public reserve' (Parker Street) and the Wesleyans, coinciding with a request from the local Board of Advice for accommodation of at least 1000 students. Ten tenders were received in late 1876 for the school's construction. However, the new school only held 400 when completed in mid-1877 and enrolments were already at 550 (typically average attendances were well short of this).

Extensions to hold 150 students were approved in 1878 but two years later extra accommodation was leased from the Mechanics Institute hall. The schoolyard itself was fenced in 1881 providing for any potential garden or tree planting.

The accommodation matter reached another crisis point early this century, when a deputation was sent to the Minister. By 1907 the old police station site, across Parker Street, had been acquired and a new infant school was underway after a tender for £3956 was accepted in 1909: it opened in July 1910 (now gone).

In spite of the improvements made, an article in 'The Age' in 1922 described the school as the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' (referring to the 18th century Calcutta cellblock). This inspired further remodelling estimates in 1924, including two new classrooms at the main building (£7205) and a new senior school for 200, with science rooms (£8415) {VPRS 795/1181}. After more accusations of 'death trap school' in 'The Herald' of 1925, Lord Somers (governor) opened a revitalised school in November 1926 {VPRS 795/1181}.

William Dargie, a Footscray native and later a renowned painter, taught as a temporary assistant, in 1934, at this school (along with Errol Street, North Melbourne and Williamstown North) where his teaching style won some praise. It is probable that he also was a student at the school.

A number of trees are shown on this site in the 1931 aerial view. The trees are likely to date from c1870-1920.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme
PAHT Subtheme Local Theme(s)

Cultural Significance

The mature elm, Irish strawberry, pepper trees and silky oak at the Footscray Primary School 1912 are significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- as mature specimens of their type in the City and, in the case of the elm, among the oldest in the City (Criterion B2);
- for their association over a long period with the development of landscape within this 19th century public reserve (Criterion A4).

Comparative Examples:

Elms of this size can also be seen at 31-33 Somerville Rd and of a lesser size in Stephen St and Ballarat Rd, as street trees. Pepper trees were planted in the Edwardian-era around public reserves, with the railway reserve at Seddon station being another example in the City. There are almost no Irish strawberry trees of this age and size in the City of Maribyrnong.

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 at the place where enhancement includes replacement of missing original components in the planting scheme;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between trees and buildings at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these trees;

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- to ensure that new plantings or elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the trees; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the elm and pepper tree rows and maintain the 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 association over a long period with the development of landscape within this 19th century public reserve

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.

as mature specimens of their type in the City and, in the case of the elm, among the oldest in the City

historical significant architectural significant social significance scientific significant

Documentation

References

Public Records Office (PRO) VPRS 795/1181
Footscray Advertiser
Melbourne University Architects Index Compiled by M. Lewis (MUAI)
Burchell, 'Victorian Schools'
'Botanica' CD Rom 1997 (Beaver Multimedia P/L, Random House Australia)
City of Maribyrnong collection - 1931 aerial view
Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

