



Practice Note No 14

MAINTAINING HISTORIC PLANTINGS

WHAT IS A HISTORIC PLANTING?

Any mature plant, tree, shrub, avenue, hedgerow, group planting, landscape planting, memorial planting, rare species or cultural landscape can be of natural or cultural heritage significance.

It can be on public or private land.

The planting may be significant in its own right, be listed in the Tasmanian Heritage Register or the National Trust Significant Tree Register. Alternatively, it may be part of a heritage property listing, which covers the whole title of that property. If a historic planting such as a group of trees, single mature tree, hedge or garden plot falls on this title then a decision should be made about its significance before major works or removal is considered.

Because of fashions in the 19th and early 20th centuries, historic plantings are more commonly introduced than native. Native plantings can, however, have historic heritage significance, particularly where they have landmark qualities or contribute to views to and from heritage places valued by communities.

For further information contact

TASMANIAN HERITAGE COUNCIL

103 Macquarie Street, HOBART TAS 7000
GPO Box 618, HOBART TAS 7001

TEL: 1300 850 332 (local call cost) | 6233 2037

FAX: 6233 3186

EMAIL: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au

WEB: www.heritage.tas.gov.au

Or contact The Australian Garden History Society, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Garden, National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), J nurseries dedicated to the propagation and selling of early plant varieties, or your local landscape architect, horticulturalist or arborists.

WHAT IS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?

A cultural landscape is a landscape that results from the interaction of plants, animals and people over time.¹ Cultural landscapes fall into three main categories:²

- a designed landscape that is created intentionally by people, eg gardens, cemeteries, parks, and may also extend to landscape elements such as individual, groups or avenues of trees³
- an organically evolved landscape demonstrating layers of changing land use and occupation.⁴ Many of Tasmania's landscapes fall into this category, with numerous layers of Aboriginal and European land use
- associative cultural landscapes, which appear to be natural and show no obvious evidence of human occupation or use, but have been shaped by ancient land management practices (such as: seasonal hunting and burning) developed and applied by humans.

More information can be found in the Tasmanian Heritage Council's Brochure on Cultural Landscapes.

¹ Rackham Oliver (2001) *Lecture at Clarendon House, Tasmania*, 24th July 2001, unpublished papers, Tasmanian Heritage Council.

² UNESCO (1999) *Operational Guidelines* in Macinnes L (ed.) *ICOMOS UK Gardens and Landscapes Committee - Assessing Cultural Landscapes: Progress and Potential: Proceedings of a Seminar held in Longmore House, Edinburgh, February 1998*, p.1.

³ Heritage Victoria (1997) *Protecting Historic Designed Landscapes*. Published by Heritage Victoria, Melbourne.

⁴ Read Stuart M (2000) *Statement of Evidence*, Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, No. 10331 of 1999. *Winten Property Group (Applicant) v Campbelltown City Council (Respondent)* p.6.

WHAT IS A HISTORIC GARDEN?

Gardens tend to be designed cultural landscapes. The heritage value will include its overall plan, views and vistas and the individual elements within it such as paths, fences, built structures, individual trees, collections, avenues and water. The plantings may be a rare or good example of a particular design, eg gardenesque, picturesque. A garden can be part of a wider cultural landscape.

WHAT ARE THE PRESSURES FOR CHANGE TO HERITAGE PLANTINGS?

Historic plants, gardens and landscapes are in a continuous process of change, growth and decay and need to be managed with this in mind.

External pressures like changes to the local environment or insensitive building developments can have an impact on the environment in which a plant grows. Storm damage, bush fires, drought and vandalism can damage the planting and its environment. In cases of natural disasters professional advice should be sought for possible rehabilitation before deciding to remove the plant.

Disease, inappropriate pruning and old age affect the plant directly.

Trends and fashion can affect the character of an historic planting and its setting. The use of professionals for condition assessments is recommended.

APPROVALS TO CHANGE / REMOVE HISTORIC PLANTINGS

Approval to change or remove historic plantings may be required where the plant is protected by listing on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

For more information see Tasmanian Heritage Council's Practice Note 13 on the approval process for historic plantings.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO REMOVAL OR REPLACEMENT?

Conservation measures: Managing and protecting a historic planting and its environment can be achieved by, for example, site planning, fencing, traffic restrictions, soil aeration, weeding, and tree surgery.

Maintenance: To achieve good maintenance you must understand what is significant about the planting and work to conserve those values.

Maintenance should benefit the plant's health, respecting the original intent behind the planting scheme. Plants change seasonally, can become diseased and will ultimately die. They need attention according to circumstance, location and other variables. Maintenance includes gardening, mowing, weeding and planting renewal, pruning⁵, hedge trimming and tree surgery which are all vital to a garden or cultural landscape's welfare and generally will not require a works application.

Selective removal: In certain circumstances, and on professional advice, it may be appropriate to remove plantings of lower significance to save plantings of higher significance.

An arboriculture survey may determine that a hazard can be removed, or that pruning or surgery may restore a plant's health.

WHEN AND WHY WOULD I REMOVE A PLANT?

The Tasmanian Heritage Council will only approve removal of a historic planting protected by a listing on the Tasmanian Heritage Register where it can be shown there is no prudent and feasible alternative to its removal. In many cases the Heritage Council may also require a replacement planting.

In terms of safety, if the planting is considered to be a hazard, dying or dead, then it should be assessed by a qualified arborist. They will advise as to whether the planting can be restored, or hazards to its growth removed.

⁵ Refer to **Australian Standard AS4373** for information on pruning. A professional should be used to carry out any maintenance pruning of a significant planting. Pruning should be in the favour of the significant planting and its processes.

WHAT SHOULD I REPLANT WITH?

Replanting depends on the degree of intactness of the planting and its setting. You need to assess whether a gap formed as the result of removal will make a significant impact and also the best time of year in which to replant.

Replanting cannot have an instant impact in terms of maturity. It may take 10-20 years to regain the height of an existing plant. One option might be to plant a young or advanced plant adjacent to the old one before it is removed or to stagger the replanting and to soften the impact. Another option is to replace the whole group of plantings at the same time, rather than one by one. In gardens you need to understand the significance of the planting and its setting will help in determining how and when to replant.

Various factors should be assessed when choosing a replacement:

The significance of the planting and its setting needs to be understood before taking action to conserve its significance.

Form and character: The overall form and character of the plantings and the pattern of planting should be retained wherever possible. The replacements do not necessarily have to be the same species as long as they reflect the original design or cultural pattern.

Species: Carefully consider the choice of species. There is often a good case for growing cuttings from the original material.

Advanced plantings: Mature trees are often important in defining the historic garden or landscape. Mature trees planted in order to retain the height of a border or avenue will have a limited life, and in many cases it is better to plant young trees, which will invigorate the landscape and extend its life considerably.

Replanting conditions: Make sure that there is adequate space around the roots of the new planting, that it will receive the required light, and other advantageous conditions.

Space above the ground: Many conifers when mature need a lot of space in which to spread. Provide sensible distances from other plants, fences and buildings.

Views and vistas may have been altered or obscured over the years due to the maturing of plantings or inappropriately placed new ones. Any replacement plantings should attempt to

retain significant views and vistas. Thinning or pruning may be necessary from time to time to reinstate views and vistas.

STEPS FOR REPLACEMENT

1. **Seek advice from a qualified arborist, botanist, horticulturist or landscape architect** prior to any work to determine the health and life expectancy of the planting, advice on replacement plantings, and other issues to take into consideration.
2. **Research the historical background and past alterations** to the planting, garden and/or landscape to make sure you understand its heritage significance, including in the case of designed plantings the original intent.
3. **Stabilise any plantings that are a hazard.** The whole area around the planting needs to be made safe until partial or whole removal can take place. An arborist can advise whether the hazard can be removed by pruning or lopping and the historic plant saved.
4. **Apply for approval** where major works, removal or replacement are being proposed from the Tasmanian Heritage Council and/or other statutory body as required, ideally attaching an arborist's or horticulturalist's report.
5. **Record any plantings** that are to be removed, so that the form, date and action is available to inform future changes.
6. **A conservation plan** written by a landscape conservation expert is recommended for any extensive work, removal and replacement within a highly significant cultural landscape or garden.

ILLEGAL PLANTINGS

Some historic plantings that have been introduced to Australia are now considered to be weeds or invasive species, visit: <http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au> for a list of these or contact Heritage Tasmania.

In certain situations some species, such as hawthorn hedges, are recognised as historic plantings. These should be properly maintained so that they do not become pests. When replacement plantings are required there may be new hybrids that do not self-sow.