

# DAYLESFORD BOTANIC GARDENS



View north from Wombat Hill  
\_ Daylesford Botanic  
Gardens\_01/09/08\_WD



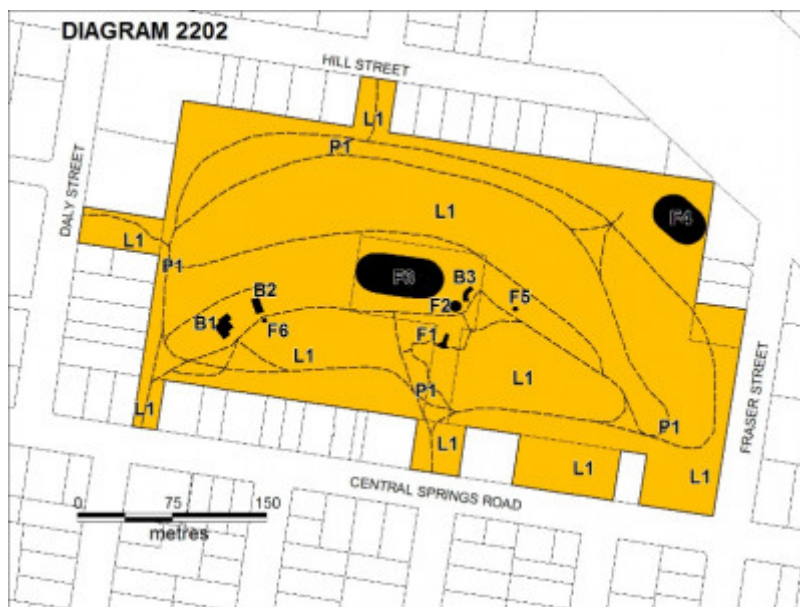
Fern gully overhead watering  
system\_Daylesford Botanic  
Gardens\_01/09/08\_WD



Horse chestnut and garden  
beds\_Daylesford Botanic  
Gardens\_01/09/08\_WD



Pioneers' Memorial Tower  
views \_ Daylesford Botanic  
Gardens\_01/09/08\_WD



H2202 revised hermes map

## Location

CENTRAL SPRINGS ROAD AND FRASER STREET AND HILL STREET AND DALY STREET DAYLESFORD,  
HEPBURN SHIRE

## **Municipality**

HEPBURN SHIRE

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H2202

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO697

## **VHR Registration**

April 6, 2009

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens cover an area of 10.4 hectares and are bounded by Daley Street, Hill Street, Frazer Street and Central Springs Road. The site on the summit of the extinct volcano of Wombat Hill at an elevation of 667.8 metres, provides a rich soil, cool climate growing conditions, a favourable aspect and excellent views to the surrounding countryside and over the Daylesford township.

The land was first set aside in 1854, reserved as public garden in 1862, and developed from c.1865. The Gardens were extended slightly in 1870 and 1883 and developed with input from noted nineteenth century landscape designer, William Sangster, in 1884-85 whose original plan survives.

Due to the Daylesford Botanic Gardens being sited on top of a hill, the layout of the Gardens is not immediately apparent but several distinct areas can be determined. The central lawn area on the south side has display garden beds, the Alf Headland Conservatory constructed in 1988 to house the annual display of tuberous begonias, and a replica rotunda erected in 1993. The works depot area consists of the curator's residence built in 1948, large sheds, glass houses and two open nurseries. The Pioneers' Memorial Tower built in 1938 offers the opportunity for views across the Gardens and distant landscape, and a place to picnic on the north east side. Adjacent is the Circular Day Basin dating from 1882 which is the earliest known structure to remain in the gardens, although no longer in use. To the west is the large Oval Reservoir constructed in 1888-89 which holds some of Daylesford's water supply with the smaller Lower Service Basin c.1969 to the north, both of which were roofed in the 1990s. One of the main features of the gardens is the extant fernery with cascade, (not operational) designed by Sangster in 1884-85, located on the southern side of the hill. A circuit path meanders through this area . and leads back to the road and into the formal garden area from the Pioneers' Memorial Tower. Much of the existing path layout, including the carriage driveway lined with an avenue of Dutch Elms, have been retained

from the nineteenth century, together with the extensive tree planting including many species of conifers, other mature trees and cool climate plants.

How is it significant?

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are of historic, scientific (botanic), and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are historically significant as a fine example of a regional botanic garden demonstrating the typical characteristics of a carriage drive, informal park layout, decorative structures and works such as the memorial tower, conservatory, rotunda, cascade and fernery, which contrasts with the open lawns planted with specimen trees, areas of intensive horticultural interest and close proximity to a township developed during the mid to late nineteenth century.

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are historically significant for the design input by noted landscape designer William Sangster, and for the survival of his 1884 plan, which is a rare example of a plan from this prolific garden designer.

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are of scientific (botanic) significance for the extensive conifer collection and cool climate plants. The Gardens contain an outstanding collection of conifers and other mature trees, many of which were donated by renowned botanist Ferdinand von Mueller. Significant trees include *Pinus ponderosa* (Western Yellow Pine), *Pinus coulteri* (Big Cone Pine), two *Abies nordmanniana* (Caucasian Fir), *Abies pinsapo*, (Spanish Fir) and a *Cedrus atlantica f. glauca* (Blue Atlas Cedar), *Pinus wallichiana* (Bhutan Pine), *Pinus pinaster* (Maritime Pine), *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Giant Redwood), (Monkey Puzzle) and *Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse Chestnut), many the largest or finest examples in Victoria. Other outstanding trees include a *Tilia cordata* (Small-leaved European Linden), a row of *Cupressus lusitanica* (Mexican cypress), a *Quercus robur* (English Oak) planted in 1863, avenues of Dutch Elms and a rare *Quercus leucotrichophora* (Himalayan Oak).

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are of aesthetic significance as a rare example of a botanic garden spectacularly sited on an extinct volcanic cone which allows a panoramic view, aided by the 1938 Pioneers' Memorial Tower, as well as vistas within and out of the gardens and from the township to the gardens. As the most prominent local landmark, the Garden's vertical dominance in the landscape provides a dark contrast to the elms avenues, oaks and other deciduous species.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions

prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

### **Building Exterior:**

- \* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- \* Painting of previously painted surfaces (but not signs), walls, posts, and roofing in the same colour.
- \* Treatments to stabilise and protect timber, masonry and metal structures.

### **Building Interior:**

- \* Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- \* Removal of paint from originally unpainted masonry.
- \* Refurbishment of toilets including removal, installation or replacement of fixtures and fittings.

### **Landscape:**

- \* The process of gardening, mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety works and landscaping in accordance with the original concept.
- \* The replanting of plant species to conserve the landscape character, conifer, elm, oak, and shrub plantings.
- \* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of amenity trees AS 4373.
- \* Vegetation protection and management of pests and diseases.
- \* Removal of plants listed as Prohibited and Controlled Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.
- \* Repairs, conservation and maintenance to hard landscape elements, memorial plaques, asphalt and gravel paths and roadways, stone and concrete edging, fences and gates, including the roof and cyclone wire fencing of the oval reservoir.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems beyond the canopy edge of significant trees, including watering system and the fernery.

### **Objects:**

The temporary relocation, movement or external loan of a registered heritage object does not require permit approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995* where the activity is performed in accordance with the accepted standards, policies and procedures of the organisation concerned.

The conservation, research or analysis of a registered heritage object does not require approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995*, where the activity is performed in accordance with the accepted standards, policies and procedures of the organisation concerned.

### **Minor Works:**

Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted

Construction dates 1935,  
Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,  
Other Names DAYLESFORD BOTANICAL GARDENS, WOMBAT HILL BOTANIC GARDENS,  
Hermes Number 1803  
Property Number

---

## History

### HISTORY

#### References:

The history draws largely on the recent report by Lee Andrews and early work by Jill Orr-Young.

*Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens, Daylesford Conservation Management Plan*" by Lee Andrews and Associates, December 2007.

*Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens Daylesford Conservation and Development Plan*' prepared by Jill Orr-Young October 1995, revised October 1997.

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

From the mid nineteenth century, fuelled by the gold rush and colonial government policies, Victoria developed a tradition of regional botanic gardens in many country towns of any size. This resulted in Victoria having the finest collection of regional botanical gardens of all Australian states. The earliest was Melbourne Botanic Gardens established in 1846

Most of the regional botanic gardens developed as landscaped gardens, although there was a sharp contrast between these sites and the various municipal parks and gardens where an emphasis on floral displays and ornamentation tended to dominate, especially in the twentieth century.

### HISTORY OF PLACE:

#### 1854-1900

The township of Daylesford was created after the discovery of gold on Wombat Flat in 1851. In 1854, the township was surveyed and approximately 50 acres on Wombat Hill was set aside as a Camp and Police Reserve.

Daylesford became a municipality in 1859, and in 1860 the Councillors petitioned the government for land to provide the community with a Botanic Garden and recreation ground. At the end of 1862, the government agreed and nine hectares (23 acres), encompassing the police paddock, and Wombat Hill, were set-aside as public gardens under the control of the Municipal Council. Despite the Councillors' enthusiasm for a botanic garden, other than the planting in 1863 of two oaks to commemorate the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark, there was little other activity to further the development of the Gardens.

By 1863, gold mining was at its height and the Wombat Hill Company applied for a mining lease which incorporated the Gardens Reserve. In 1864 a tunnel was dug under the hill and a shaft sunk in the north-east corner of the Gardens Reserve. In 1867, an area just less than a hectare on the crown of Wombat Hill in the centre of the proposed Garden, was set aside to accommodate a service reservoir and pipe track.

Effective layout and planting of the garden commenced in March 1869 with the appointment of Michael Kennedy as "labouring gardener." Earlier potato farmers had cleared the scrub in exchange for the right to grow a crop. During 1869 and in following years, Kennedy received numerous plants from Ferdinand von Mueller, Director of the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, who had already sent the Daylesford Borough Council 100 forest trees and 12 seeds. In 1870 the Council received a further 264 plants specifically for the Gardens. Further donations were received later. The majority of these plants were conifers, which laid the foundation for the unique character of the tree collection in the Gardens today.

In 1869, it was reported on 2 December 1869, in the *Daylesford Mercury and Express* that "fresh walks are now being formed, that will extend and improve the space available for promenading" and "the conifers already planted on Wombat Hill number about 250". There were also sizeable plantings of oaks, ash, elms, poplars, cypress, and blue gums in the Gardens by this time.

In 1880, the railway between Daylesford and Carlsruhe opened connecting Daylesford with Melbourne and providing access for tourists. In January 1881 a building which occupied land required for the railway station was purchased and erected in the Gardens as residence for the curator. It was later removed in 1948, with the construction of a new residence. A triangular fillet of the gardens was sliced off the north-east corner in 1885 as a railway reserve to serve the newly constructed branch line.

In February 1882 the Circular Day Basin reservoir was built on the crown of Wombat Hill. It was designed to store a day's water for the township so as to secure supply in the event of an interruption to the main supply. It also presented an attractive water feature, common in most botanic gardens, with a fountain in the centre and banks planted out with bright flowers.

In May 1883, the Council, not entirely happy with the state of the Gardens, decided that a layout plan should be prepared by a competent landscape gardener. The firm of Taylor and Sangster accepted the commission and after two site visits submitted a plan. The Council accepted the plan on 29th August 1884, by which time development was well underway.

William Sangster, one of Victoria's leading landscape designers at the time, developed a plan for the Public Gardens Daylesford which was never fully implemented. A description of the Gardens at the end of the century indicates that many of the species listed on Sangster's plan had been planted. Of the 50 different types of trees noted on Sangster's plan approximately half are conifers, the remaining are European and deciduous trees

In 1885, Sangster described the gardens in several newspaper articles indicating that the centre of the hill was laid out in flower beds, paths were laid out in all directions, a rotunda was on the eastern slope of the Hill, there were numerous seats under trees, a fountain played in the centre of a small reservoir edged with flowers on the summit and that alterations were in progress to construct a fern gully by diverting overflow water in to a channel to wind down the southern slope of the hill.

In 1888 the Council decided to construct a large Oval Reservoir at the summit which would hold one million gallons and take over from the smaller Circular Day Basin. The Oval Reservoir, still in use today, necessitated a redesign of much of the crown of Wombat Hill and also a fountain common in nineteenth century gardens designs.

In 1884 Kennedy resigned and a new curator, W. Gascoigne, a Frenchman, was appointed. Gascoigne, an experienced horticulturist, had arrived in the district in 1857 with previous experience in fruit growing, and he specialized in bulbs.

In the years up to 1900 a number of structures were built in the Gardens. A rotunda first described in 1885, was built and used for band recitals in the 1890's. A conservatory largely stocked with tuberous begonias, which were a hobby of Gascoigne's, and a plant house made of timber slats, were erected in 1896. The plant house was a gift from ex-mayor Deakin and was stocked with azaleas, rhododendrons, ferns and clematis.

Prior to the turn of the century, the extensive collection of trees was beginning to obstruct views and some were removed.

1901 - 1949

After Gascoigne's retirement in 1900, two more curators, Robert Bowsie and Mr. Allan, followed in quick succession.

In 1902 the fern gully was renovated using stone from Mount Franklin. The beautiful "picturesque views" from Wombat Hill were described at much greater length than the Gardens themselves, in publications of the time.

Cooper took over in 1905 and stayed in the position until 1932. During this period a picnic shelter from former Mayor Trehwella was built in 1911 in the northern area of the Gardens but no longer remains. The rotunda was moved to Mineral Springs Reserve in the late 1920's, and the plant house stocked with rhododendrons was dismantled.

The Pioneers' Memorial Tower was built at the eastern end of the reservoir. Designed by Maryborough architect Edward Peck, it was officially opened by the Governor of Victoria, Lord Huntingfield, on 19 November 1938, which was then known as Pioneers' Day. The tower restored the views that had been reduced by tree growth and enabled views across the reservoir. During World War Two, the tower functioned as an Air Observation Post.

After Cooper's retirement in 1937, he was replaced by William Greville who had been with the Ballarat Botanic Gardens. His experience and connections led to a resurgence in the Gardens as he obtained many donations from other gardens and nurserymen including dahlias, cannas, anemones, ranunculi, begonias and succulents.

In the 1940s he started a collection of cacti and the Government nurseries at Macedon and Creswick took cuttings and seeds from the Daylesford Botanic Gardens sending in return young trees and shrubs. He also arranged for identification plates to be attached to the plants.

A new glasshouse was built in 1941 and in 1948 a new cream brick residence was built to the south in front of the original Curator's cottage which was then removed. The twenty-first birthday of Princess Elizabeth in 1947 was commemorated by the Country Women's Association planting of a Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*).

Tuberous begonias continued to be grown after Gascoigne introduced them until at least 1905 when Curator Allen resigned. They were possibly abandoned during the 30 years Cooper was curator, but in 1938 Greville obtained 45 tubers from Ballarat City Council and the following year Queens Park in Essendon sent 30 new varieties and the collection rapidly increased to 250. In 1943 Greville produced a tuber called "Daylesford", but the display ceased with his retirement in 1952.

1950-Present

The Gardens were in decline by the middle of the twentieth century, as evidenced by the formation of the Wombat Hill Gardens Development Committee. Public concern was expressed about a Council decision to allow the public gardens to return to "parklands and to appoint a part-time gardener". In 1956 Alf Headland took up this position.

The Lower Service Basin was constructed c 1969 and roofed in the 1990s along with the Oval Reservoir.

Robert Beard was appointed full time gardener in 1978 and later became Superintendent Parks and Gardens. The Gardens were returned to order, but not to the same extent of horticultural display as once prevailed.

In 1980 a treated pine picnic shelter was funded by Rotary and built in the vicinity of the car park to the east of the lookout tower. In 1985, funding provided to celebrate Victoria's 150th Birthday enabled Sangster's Fernery to be restored and tree identification, assessment, surgery and labelling to be undertaken.

The original rotunda removed earlier to Mineral Springs Reserve was dismantled in 1984 and stored by the Council until purchased by a Daylesford resident where it remains in storage. In 1993 a new kit rotunda was erected in the Gardens close to the site of the old one, although this structure is not faithful to its predecessor.

Additional works and events in the Gardens at this time included the Curator's residence being leased and an adjoining kiosk and terrace added although it is no longer in use, and the construction of the Alf Headland Conservatory in 1988 which was purpose built for the famous annual tuberous begonia display. Also the summit path alignment was altered, the Shire works depot relocated to the Gardens, the Trehwella Pavilion removed, and a new picnic shelter constructed. Renovations to the Pioneers' Memorial Tower were undertaken and a new toilet

block constructed.

## Assessment Against Criteria

Date Started 1861; Date Finished 0; Storeys 0; Desc PUBLIC GARDEN;

### *a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history*

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are an important example of a nineteenth century regional botanic gardens in Victoria with the typical characteristics of a carriage drive, informal park layout, decorative structures and works such as the rotunda, memorial tower and cascade, contrast between open lawns planted with specimen trees, areas of intensive horticultural interest and a location close to a township.

### *b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.*

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are scientifically important for the outstanding collection of conifers and cool temperate tree and shrub species many of which were donated by renowned botanist Ferdinand von Mueller.

### *c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.*

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are important for the collection of plants characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth century Victorian gardens, as well as representative of more specialised plant groups befitting the scientific role of a botanic garden. The planting includes many rare and uncommon specimens now often only found in botanic gardens or historic landscapes.

### *d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.*

The Daylesford Botanic Gardens are historically significant for the design and input by noted landscape designer William Sangster, and for the survival of his 1884 plan, a rare example of a plan from this prolific designer.

### *e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.*

The spectacular siting of the Daylesford Botanic Gardens on top of the extinct volcano of Wombat Hill provides one of Daylesford's most important landmarks. Together with the Pioneers' Memorial Tower, the unique site enables panoramic views across the gardens and surrounding countryside as well as views to the gardens from the township of Daylesford.

### *f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

*g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.*

### *h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.*

## Plaque Citation

Daylesford Botanic Gardens (Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens)

Also known as Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens, established in 1861, they are a fine example of a regional botanic garden set in a spectacular location with many significant conifers and cool climate plants.

## Extent of Registration

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2202 held by the Executive Director:

B1 Curator's House

B2 Alf Headland Conservatory



B3 Pioneers' Memorial Tower

2. All the features marked as follows on Diagram 2202 held by the Executive Director:

F1 Fernery and Cascade

F2 Circular Day Basin

F3 Oval Reservoir

F4 Lower Service Basin

F5 Cannon

F6 World War 1 German Mortar

3. All the pathways and roads marked P1 on Diagram 2202 held by the Executive Director.

4. All the land known as Daylesford Botanic Gardens marked L1 on Diagram 2202 held by the Executive Director being Crown Allotments 12A, 31A, 40, 41, 42, 45A, 45B, 55A, 64, 65 and 66, Section 37, Township of Daylesford, Parish of Wombat.

5. The object known as the William Sangster 'Plan for Public Gardens Daylesford' 1884 held in the Hepburn Shire Council offices.

---

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*