
Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne



G13009 Royal Botanic Gardens

Location

Birdwood Avenue, MELBOURNE VIC 3004 - Property No G13009

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

International

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1459

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 30, 2004

The Royal Botanic Gardens, commenced in 1846, developed in conjunction with the National Herbarium by Ferdinand Mueller from the 1850s, comprehensively relandscaped from 1873-1909 by William Guilfoyle, with his design maintained by subsequent directors, is of international cultural significance:

Historically:

- for the manner in which the rapidly growing colony of Victoria (fuelled after 1851 by wealth from the gold rushes)

attracted figures such as La Trobe, Dallachy, Mueller and Guilfoyle and how such people combined to create and maintain a botanic garden as well as establish other scientific and cultural institutions based on 'metropolitan' models;

- for its surviving trees and physical features that provide a link with the pre-history and development of Melbourne; such features include remnant River Red Gums (especially the Separation Tree), mature native and exotic trees, the relationship between the Gardens and the Yarra River, the bluffs and evidence of the former course of the Yarra, the former Under-gardeners Cottage and Director's Residence, Temple of the Winds, rest houses, lodges, arbours, nursery buildings, rockeries, gates and fencing and many other works;

- for its close association with Ferdinand Mueller, a botanist of international repute and both Director of the Gardens (1857-69) and Government Botanist (1853-96);

- for its integral link with the National Herbarium of Victoria, established by Mueller and maintained as a major scientific institution to the present; specimens in the Herbarium are of international importance and the collection has dominated the history of Australian botany;

- for its relatively intact nineteenth century landscape design (including the extraordinary intactness of the main layout) forming perhaps the most outstanding historic garden in Australia; Guilfoyle, a landscape designer of exceptional abilities and whose work at the Botanic Gardens established him as one of Australia's leading landscape designers, subsequently attracted a wide range of government and private commissions, many of which are still extant and well maintained;

- for its link with Government House, as a neighbouring property and for the manner in which Government House provided a strong visual and emotional focus; this attribute was shared with many Australian and colonial botanic gardens but is best demonstrated at Melbourne;

Aesthetically:

- for the outstanding beauty of its landscape attributes; such attributes include links with natural features, links with contiguous parkland and Government House grounds, combination of natural landforms and constructed features, the structure of landscape forms (including paths, lawns, beds and clumped planting, specimen trees, distant views and vistas within the Gardens, contribution made by significant works and structures), contrast of colour, foliage size, habit and seasonal appearance of plants; many of these attributes were established by Guilfoyle and nurtured by subsequent directors; the north facing valley of the Gardens (chosen by La Trobe) has also proved an ideal site for a botanic garden;

- for its link with the Yarra River and surrounding parkland of the Domain and the manner in which these combined elements create one of the strongest characteristics of Melbourne's urban form (renowned for the scale and quality of its parklands and boulevards as well as private gardens); the Domain provides a spatial and visual buffer as well as minimising visually intrusive developments adjacent to the Gardens;

Scientifically:

- for the manner in which the site, enhanced by its favourable northern aspect and temperate climate, generally deep and well drained alluvial soil, high water table, evenly distributed rainfall and low evaporation rate, permits an unusually wide range of native and exotic plants to achieve optimum growth and appearance; some of the key components are the lake systems, the lawns, the Fern Gully and Palmetum, collections of subtropical vegetation, mounds and rockeries.

- for its exceptionally wide range of plants in a relatively constricted site and the long-term security of these collections; for example, the Gardens the widest range of mature exotic trees in Australia;

- for its continuous link with associated institutions such as the Herbarium and Library and the publication of a wide range of material including a scholarly journal (Muelleria);

- for its maintenance of some taxonomic horticultural plantings and thematic plantings embracing climatic, geographic, social, visual and economic characteristics;

- for the potential of its plant collection as a scientific and cultural resource;

Socially:

- as the focus of community sentiment and horticultural activity over a long period; the Gardens have been a focus for almost a century and a half for Melbourne residents and visitors, ranging from simple enjoyment to scholarly enterprise.

- for its close physical links with a large population and its proximity to the central business district of Melbourne, which contributes to its exceptional popularity.

[On 6 June 1994 Trust Council resolved:

That the classification of the Royal Botanic Gardens at the international level be reaffirmed;

That the extent of designation covering the entire site (including the works area) be confirmed;

That the content and findings of the 1992 Conservation Analysis be endorsed.]

Hermes Number 70229

Property Number

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/>