
Malvern Public Gardens



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Location

2A Spring Road, MALVERN VIC 3144 - Property No 10192

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO469

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Malvern Public Gardens is a late-Victorian public park created following long and successful petitioning by the local Shire Council to gain public recreational space from a former water reserve. Laid out under the curatorship of Thomas Pockett from 1888, the Gardens feature a typical late 19th century serpentine path system and plantings of mature exotic trees, many of which reflect the Victorian penchant for strong, evergreen forms, as well as for the exotic. The park features a substantially intact pond, grotto and fountain specifically commissioned from Charles Robinette as part of the original design for the site.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Mature trees throughout the site as indicated on the attached schedule.
- The form and materials of the Charles Robinette designed pond, grotto and fountain.
- The alignment of the serpentine path system, but not specific path materials.
- Presentation of display shrubberies, but not individual shrub or herbaceous plantings.
- Lawn areas maintained to high standard.

Modern elements, including the toilet block, park benches, signage and fencing, do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

Malvern Public Gardens is of historic, social, aesthetic and scientific significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Malvern Public Gardens is of historic significance as one of the oldest and substantially intact public parks in Stonnington (TEH 8.7.2 Public health and municipal pride). The park was established following ongoing petitioning from the local council, where at one stage the land was proposed to be sold. The park features much of its original path layout and mature tree plantings, as well as the grotesque pond, grotto and fountain designed by Charles Robinette. The overall layout was implemented by noted local gardener Thomas Pockett, responsible for the form of many other parks and gardens established within the former City of Malvern in the late 19th and early 20th century. Pockett was also an internationally renowned breeder of chrysanthemums.

The Gardens are of social significance as the setting for numerous formal and informal events, including the location for the proclamation of the City of Malvern in 1911 by Governor Sir John Fuller (Criterion A & G).

The Gardens are of aesthetic significance as a fine and substantially intact Victorian park, reflecting the penchant for the exotic and unusual (Criterion E). The extensive plantings of trees now in maturity, including the central avenue of oaks, contribute strongly to the amenity of the place, which can also be appreciated from the broader streetscape. The meandering path system, display shrubberies, lawns and pond all contribute to the aesthetic values of the Gardens, contrasted with the surrounding built forms of adjoining residential development and High Street to the south.

The Gardens are of scientific (botanical/horticultural) significance within the City of Stonnington for their outstanding and diverse collection of notable, and in some instances, locally rare trees (Criterion B). These include fine, mature specimens of several species of Araucaria and Oak, amongst an array of other trees within the site, including a contorted specimen of Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*); a substantial Totara (*Podocarpus totara*) and Yellow Wood (*Afrocarpus falcatus*), both of notable size within the broader metropolitan area; and the rarely cultivated Scrub Bloodwood (*Baloghia lucida*).

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Heritage Places in the City of Stonnington - Heritage Citations Project, Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 2013;
Hermes Number	195812
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Malvern Public Gardens is an attractive late-Victorian public park with serpentine paths, areas of lawn, shrubberies, bedding displays and a fine and varied collection of mature exotic trees. One of the garden's main features is the Charles Robinette designed ornamental pond with a fountain on artificial rockwork grotto. The pond was restored in 1998, including reconstruction of the fountain based on photographic records.

The site contains a number of outstanding trees within the context of the municipality, including evergreen and deciduous Oaks (*Quercus robur*, *Q. canariensis*, *Q. suber* and *Q. ilex*), Araucarias (*Araucaria bidwillii*, *A. cunninghamii* and *A. heterophylla*) and an array of other broadleaf and coniferous species such as Moreton Bay Figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) and Bhutan Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*). These reflect the Victorian era tastes for strong, especially evergreen forms, as well as for the unusual and the exotic.

Four of the garden's trees are classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria):

- Totara (*Podocarpus totara*), an outstandingly large tree native to New Zealand;
- Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), with a twisted, wide-spreading form;
- Scrub Bloodwood (*Baloghia lucida*), a rare cultivated example in south-east Australia; and,
- Yellow-wood (*Afrocarpus falcata*), considered by the National Trust to be finest example of the known specimens in Victoria.

In concert with the serpentine path system, pond, grotto and garden bed presentation, the Gardens retain much of their original character and present as a 19th century municipal garden.

The gardens have lost some early features, including the original fence and entry gates, a pavilion and kiosk, but retain a strong late-Victorian landscape character. Key early elements to survive include the fountain, pond and grotto and the serpentine layout of the main path system. It is not clear how much of the original Pockett design survives but based on historic aerial photography, it is apparent that there has been little change in the garden's overall layout since 1931.

Local Historical Themes

Malvern Public Gardens illustrate the following theme, as described in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

8.7.2 Public health and municipal pride

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/>