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Ref. : DEVB(GLTM) 200/2/1/3  
Group : 5, 12

26 February 2020

**Development Bureau**  
**Technical Circular (Works) No. 5/2020**

**Registration and Preservation of Old and Valuable Trees**

**Scope**

This Circular sets out the procedures for registration of Old and Valuable Trees (OVTs) on unleased government land within built-up areas and tourist attraction spots in village areas to the Register of Old and Valuable Trees (the Register). For the purpose of this Circular, built-up areas mean both the metro and new town areas of Hong Kong, but excluding country parks therein, as shown in **Appendix A**.

2. OVTs should be given priority protection. Requirements are also stipulated in this Circular for preservation and maintenance of OVTs at different stages of government projects as well as those under arboricultural maintenance.

**Effective Date**

3. This Circular takes effect on 1 April 2020. Tree Preservation and Removal Proposals being considered according to DEVB TC(W) No. 7/2015 and ETWB TC(W) No. 29/2004 shall continue until completion of the corresponding government projects or tree removals arising from arboricultural maintenance. OVT nominations being considered according to ETWB TC(W) No. 29/2004 shall continue until completion of the corresponding nomination and registration procedures.

## Effect on Existing Circulars

4. This Circular supersedes ETWB TC(W) No. 29/2004.
5. This Circular should be read in conjunction with the following Circulars:

	Circular No.	Subject
1.	DEVB TC(W) No. 6/2015	Maintenance of Vegetation and Hard Landscape Features
2.	DEVB TC(W) No. 4/2020	Tree Preservation

## Policy

6. It is Government policy to provide priority protection to the OVTs in the Register. Trees must satisfy one or more of the following criteria for registration as OVTs—

- (a) Tree of large size (e.g. tree trunk diameter  $\geq$  1m, measured at 1.3m above ground level);
- (b) Tree of precious or rare species;
- (c) Tree of particularly old age (e.g.  $\geq$  100 years old);
- (d) Tree of cultural, historical or memorable significance; or
- (e) Tree of outstanding form.

7. Details on the above criteria are at **Appendix B**. Only trees on unleased government land within built-up areas or tourist attraction spots in village areas are eligible for inclusion in the Register.

8. The Register is available at <http://www.greening.gov.hk/ovt/default.aspx>. It contains tree locations, tree information and photos on a map display. Lands Department (LandsD) will provide updated information on land status to the responsible tree maintenance departments for updating of the Register.

## Registration Procedures

### Nomination

9. Tree maintenance departments or their agents are responsible for identifying potentially registrable trees which are maintained by them and likely to meet one or more of the registration criteria as laid down in paragraph 6 above. Each of the tree maintenance departments or its agent should draw up working procedures to identify potentially registrable trees and integrate the procedures to form part of the routine maintenance programme for the facilities (e.g. roads, buildings, etc.) or areas (e.g. registered man-made slopes) under the department's purview.

10. Tree maintenance departments shall submit details of the potentially registrable tree(s) to the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) (Attn: Assistant Secretary (Tree Management)<sup>1</sup>) using the nomination form at **Appendix C**. An OVT Vetting Panel chaired by Head/Tree Management Office with the support from Assistant Secretary (Tree Management)<sup>1</sup> and an *ad hoc* member of one representative from Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) (in Senior Leisure Services Manager rank or above) or one representative from Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) (in Forestry Officer rank or above)<sup>1</sup> will be established in GLTMS for assessing OVT nominations in accordance with the methodology set out at **Appendix B**.

11. For public works projects requiring tree surveys to be carried out, the responsible project departments should assist to identify potentially registrable trees in the surveys and submit the relevant details to GLTMS for assessment using the nomination form at **Appendix C**.

12. Similarly, LandsD will arrange tree surveys for selected sites prior to their land sales, in order to identify any existing valuable trees within the sites, including potentially registrable trees, and arrange to submit relevant details to GLTMS using the nomination form at **Appendix C**. For trees that warrant special protection, including OVTs and trees that are potentially registrable in the Register, stonewall trees and other trees of particular interest according to paragraph 2.6.1 of the Guidelines for Tree Risk Assessment and Management Arrangement (TRAM Guidelines), the trees will be identified as "trees of particular value" in the corresponding land lease with specific preservation requirements set out in the lease conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> For nominated trees situated on unleased and unallocated government land along public roads or on allocated government land, one representative from LCSD (in Senior Leisure Services Manager rank or above) shall be the *ad hoc* member. For nominated trees on other unleased and unallocated government land, one representative from AFCD (in Forestry Officer rank or above) shall be the *ad hoc* member.

## Registration

13. GLTMS will advise the nominating department of the assessment result within 42 calendar days upon receipt of the nomination and all necessary information. The nominating tree department shall upload the newly registered OVTs to the Register within seven calendar days from the notification of the assessment result.

## Erection of tree sign

14. LCSD<sup>2</sup> and the responsible tree maintenance departments will arrange to erect tree signs, where appropriate, for registered OVTs. Each tree sign will contain information including OVT number, Chinese name, common name and botanical name of the tree, the maintenance department, tree register ID and a QR Code for digital access to information on the OVT. For those OVTs that are inaccessible by the public, QR Codes on the tree signs are not necessary. A sample of the tree sign is at **Appendix D**.

## **Tree Preservation**

15. It is Government policy to provide priority protection to the OVTs in the Register. The OVTs in the Register should be preserved throughout the different stages of their life cycles irrespective of the working situations in which they may interact with the operations of tree maintenance departments (which are also the project departments for trees in public works project) or their agents. In particular, for the following working situations, tree maintenance departments or their agents are required to follow the respective requirements as stipulated in paragraphs 16 to 32 to preserve the OVTs in the Register:

- (a) Routine maintenance
- (b) Removal
- (c) Construction works in the vicinity

## Routine maintenance

16. Tree maintenance departments or their agents shall follow the latest version of the TRAM Guidelines to identify the triage class of the registered OVTs under their maintenance and conduct at least one individual tree risk assessment every six (6) months.

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<sup>2</sup> LCSD may procure tree signs for other tree maintenance departments together with the procurement of tree signs for its OVTs. Respective tree maintenance departments should arrange to collect the tree signs so procured by LCSD and arrange to erect on their OVTs.

17. If the inspection reveals that the tree grows abnormally or diseased or that the environmental conditions may affect its growth, the tree maintenance department concerned or its agent shall take remedial action, and report promptly to and seek advice from GLTMS. Tree maintenance departments or their agents shall conduct arboricultural maintenance of OVTs as recommended in the respective individual tree risk assessments, including but not be limited to pruning or removal of damaged/unhealthy/structurally defective parts, implementing measures to enhance tree health and stability such as extending planter size, guiding aerial roots to anchor at the ground, etc. There is no need to submit TPRP or consult GLTMS. Tree maintenance departments or their agents may also explore the use of new technology, such as tilt sensor, fiber-optic sensor, etc., to monitor the stability of OVTs.

18. Tree maintenance departments or their agents shall observe the guidelines in respect of preservation and maintenance of OVTs promulgated from time to time by GLTMS.

19. GLTMS will conduct regular audit inspections to appraise the conditions of OVTs. Records of tree conditions including photographs will be maintained after each inspection. GLTMS will advise the relevant tree maintenance departments of necessary follow-up actions.

#### Tree removal

20. In the event that an OVT has died, the responsible tree maintenance department (which is also the project department where the tree has died within the construction site of a public works project) or its agent shall report promptly to GLTMS and provide the details for investigation. The OVT can only be removed with GLTMS's written consent unless the tree poses an imminent danger to the public as stipulated in paragraph 24. The responsible tree maintenance department shall include a remark in the Register to record the cause of death. If replacement planting at the affected site is deemed necessary by GLTMS, the planting should be carried out or arranged by the responsible tree maintenance department.

21. Except under the situation as stated in paragraph 20 above, removal of OVTs is prohibited. If retaining an OVT at its existing location is not practicable, transplanting of the tree should be considered first and the transplanting and compensatory planting proposals shall be prepared and processed according to the control procedures set out in DEVB TC(W) No. 4/2020 or its latest version. If removal of an OVT is unavoidable, the responsible tree maintenance department concerned should demonstrate that removal of the tree is the best available and only practicable option.

22. For removal of an OVT, irrespective of whether it is alive or dead, the responsible tree maintenance department shall submit an application to GLTMS for initial comment, which shall respond within 28 calendar days upon receipt of all necessary information and documents, setting out the following information —

- (a) updated details of the tree(s) as required in Section I of the application form at **Appendix C**;
- (b) justifications for removal of the tree(s);
- (c) results of the consultation procedures as required in Section 2.6 of the TRAM Guidelines; and
- (d) details of the compensatory planting and any mitigation proposals, if applicable.

The responsible tree maintenance department shall update the application incorporating GLTMS's comments and submit the updated application to the relevant Tree Work Vetting Panel (TWVP)<sup>3</sup> for approval.

23. The TWVP shall respond to the applicant within 42 calendar days from the date of receipt of the application. The TWVP shall also notify GLTMS of its decision. Upon completion of the tree removal, the responsible tree maintenance department shall update the Register.

24. The requirements under paragraphs 21 to 23 of this Circular are not applicable to emergency works where public safety is at stake, e.g. the OVT poses an imminent danger to the public. For each emergency OVT removal, GLTMS and the relevant District Officer should be alerted as soon as practicable. The responsible tree maintenance department shall also prepare line-to-take and press release on the emergency OVT removal as soon as possible, and in any event within three calendar days, preferably before removal of the OVT. It should also take full photographic records of the OVT(s) concerned before removal. The photographs should be in colour, imprinted with date and time and covered the ground conditions surrounding each of the OVT(s), the fallen parts and the exposed roots and/or root crown of the OVT(s) if applicable. A tree failure report/tree assessment report (where applicable) for each of the OVT(s) concerned should be prepared and submitted to GLTMS, and the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel, if applicable, within 21 calendar days from the date of completion of the emergency tree removal.

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<sup>3</sup> The formation, composition and terms of reference of TWVP is set out in DEVB TC(W) No. 4/2020.

25. The general public loves OVTs. Adequate and earnest community engagement activities shall be arranged to address public sentiments towards tree removal proposals. In this regard, tree maintenance departments shall follow the tree removal protocol set out in DEVB TC(W) No. 4/2020 or its latest version.

#### Construction works in the vicinity

26. A zone encompassing the tree along its dripline<sup>4</sup> projecting vertically from the tree canopy and extending 2m below the ground level and 2m above the top of an OVT shall be designated as tree protection zone. For an OVT growing on a retaining structure/wall, the tree protection zone should encompass the body of the tree and 2m above the tree crown as well as the vertical and horizontal surfaces of the retaining structure/wall, covered by the tree roots together with the space up to 2m behind those surfaces.

27. The planning and design of any construction works must take into account the need to preserve and avoid any damage to OVT(s) within and adjacent to the site. In addition, precautionary measures should be included in the design and contractual provisions to preserve and protect the trees during the construction stage. Within the tree protection zone of OVTs, construction works such as excavation, trenching, piling and landfilling, etc., should be avoided as far as possible.

28. If construction works within the tree protection zone are unavoidable, the project department shall submit an application with full justifications and method statements to GLTMS and the relevant tree maintenance department for comment at an early stage of the project before the design is finalised. The application should include, but not be limited to, a detailed arboricultural assessment on the impacts of the proposed works on the OVT(s) affected. The project department should minimise the anticipated impacts and avoid irreversible and/or irreparable damage to the OVTs. Necessary site-specific measures to preserve the OVT(s) should also be recommended in the detailed assessment and be properly implemented under the supervision of a qualified tree professional<sup>5</sup>.

29. The project department shall submit the updated application with full justifications and method statement(s), incorporating the comments from GLTMS and

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<sup>4</sup> Dripline of a tree means the imaginary vertical plumb line that extends downward from the tips of the outermost tree branches and intersects the ground.

<sup>5</sup> Qualified tree professional refers to personnel with arboricultural expertise, i.e. Forestry Officer Grade, Landscape Architect Grade and Leisure Services Manager Grade staff, in tree maintenance departments; registered landscape architects; or tree specialists who possess the minimum requirements for Technical Staff (Tree Specialist) under Annex 35 to Appendix 3C of the Contractor Management Handbook of the Development Bureau.

the relevant tree maintenance department, to the relevant TWVP for approval.

30. The TWVP shall respond to the applicant within 42 calendar days from the date of receipt of the application. The approval can be conditional upon the implementation of additional precautionary measures stipulated by the TWVP.

31. The performance of the contractors in tree protection and preservation should be fully reflected in the performance reports. In this regard, the reporting officer should consider rating Section 6 of the Report on Contractor's Performance as "Poor" and the Report as "Adverse" if the contractor is found liable for the damage or unauthorised removal of any OVT(s) on the site.

32. For public works construction contracts (including maintenance works contracts and ground investigation contracts), the project department should incorporate the contractual requirements for preservation of OVT(s) within the site. A set of sample contractual clauses for inclusion in the Form of Tender, Special Conditions of Contract, Particular Specification (PS), Method of Measurement and associated items in the Bill of Quantities for preservation of registered OVT(s) are available in the Cyber Manual for Greening (<http://devb.host.ccgo.hksarg>). Where appropriate, the sample PS may need to be modified to suit specific project requirements to incorporate the comments of GLTMS as well as the approval conditions stipulated by the TWVP.

### **OVT(s) on Government Land to be Leased to a Third Party**

33. Where a piece of government land to be leased to a third party (e.g. private developers) contains OVT(s) or trees that have been nominated for registration as OVT(s), LandsD shall seek advice from GLTMS on the inclusion of appropriate tree preservation and protection clauses in the lease to ensure their proper protection, maintenance and preservation. Where appropriate, additional provisions should be included in the lease conditions to stipulate that the tree protection zone is solely used for preservation and growth of OVT(s) and not for any other purposes without prior approval from LandsD. Where necessary, provisions should also be included in the lease conditions to allow GLTMS to inspect the OVT(s), in addition to the Government's general right to inspect the lot at all reasonable times.

34. A proactive approach should be adopted to deal with any damage or unauthorised removal of OVT(s) on leased land. Any incidents of damage or unauthorised removal of OVT(s) on leased land should be reported promptly to LandsD for prompt enforcement action, copying to GLTMS.



35. Where the land status of an OVT has been changed, LandsD will provide GLTMS with the latest land status information for updating the Register and informing the tree maintenance department.

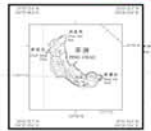
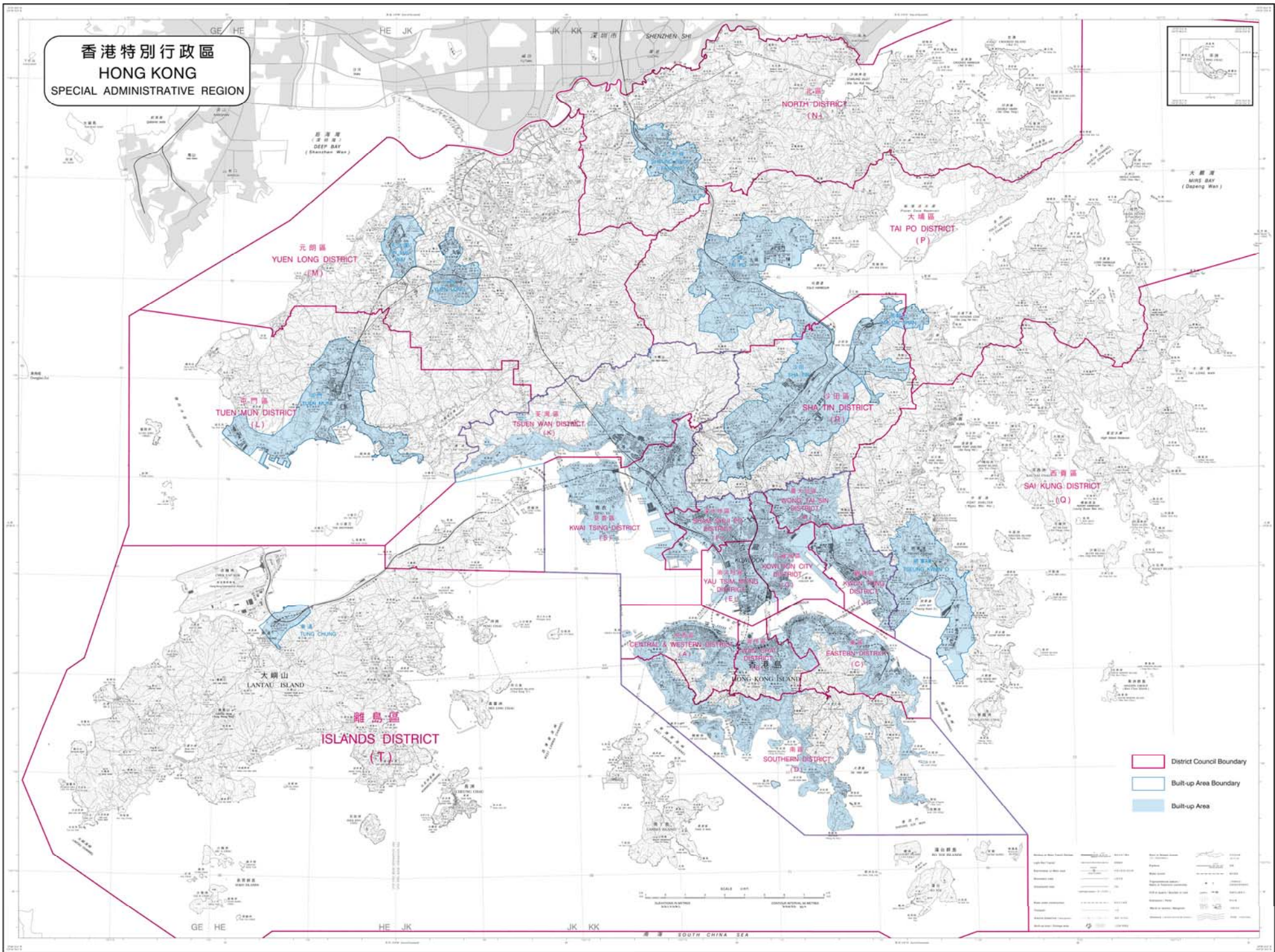
36. In case of unauthorised removal of OVT(s) on leased land where trees are subject to lease control, a land premium would usually be imposed in addition to a requirement for compensatory planting, if LandsD considers it inappropriate to exercise the power of re-entering the land where the lessee has breached the lease condition.

### **Further Enquiries**

37. For further enquiries on this Circular, please contact Head/Tree Management Office of this Bureau.

**(LAM Sai-hung)**  
**Permanent Secretary for Development (Works)**

香港特別行政區  
HONG KONG  
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION



- District Council Boundary
- Built-up Area Boundary
- Built-up Area

**Assessment Methodology of Old and Valuable Trees**

**Criteria for Old and Valuable Trees**

Only trees on unleased government land within built-up areas or tourist attraction spots in village areas are eligible for inclusion in the Register.

2. Registration is based on one or more of the following criteria: -
  - (a) Tree of large size;
  - (b) Tree of precious or rare species;
  - (c) Tree of particularly old age;
  - (d) Tree of cultural, historical or memorable significance; or
  - (e) Tree of outstanding form.

**Guidelines for Nominations**

3. Each tree maintenance department/project department of public works projects, or their agents should assist to identify potentially registrable tree, and make nomination to GLTMS for consideration of inclusion into the Register, if a tree is known to meet one or more of the following detailed guidelines.

- (a) Tree of large size

Tree of particularly large size (i.e. either trunk diameter or height or canopy spread), taking into consideration the normal size of such species. In terms of size, the following standards would generally be used: -

  - *Trunk diameter*  
Trees with trunk diameter  $\geq 1$  m (measured at 1.3m above ground level).
  - *Height*  
Trees  $\geq 25$ m in height.
  - *Canopy spread*  
Trees with spread  $\geq 25$ m in diameter.
- (b) Tree of precious or rare species

The list of precious or rare species is available on-line at AFCD Herbarium web site (<http://www.herbarium.gov.hk>) under the category of “publications/books”. It should be noted that the list is not exhaustive and other species not on the list could also be regarded as precious or rare species after due consideration by AFCD.

(c) Trees of particularly old age

A tree which is known to be 100 years old or more. In nominating trees of this category, it would be helpful if the tree management/maintenance department would assist to trace the planting date of the tree as far as practicable, e.g. through records or photos taken in the old days to check its age. If the planting date is not known, consideration can be given to comparing the nominated tree with other trees of the same species over 100 years old.

(d) Trees of cultural, historical or memorable significance

A tree which is known to have cultural, historical or memorable significance. Examples of such are listed below for reference: -

- *Cultural Significance*

Well-known Fung Shui or landmark trees (e.g. the *Ficus microcarpa* in Yau Ma Tei Community Centre Rest Garden (commonly refers as 'YUNG SHU TAU' by the locals)), or trees within known woodlands will also be considered where appropriate.

- *Historical Significance or Memorable Significance*

Landmark trees preferably with evidential records to support the historical significance of the trees, e.g. the *Pterocarpus indicus* outside the ex-Central Government Office. Trees associated with special memories such as those planted by a senior government official, or local/foreign dignitaries and celebrities for commemorating special events would also be considered.

(e) Tree of outstanding form

Trees of outstanding form in terms of their aesthetic and landscape significance. Some examples of such are provided below for reference: -

- The Tree House in Shui Mei Tsuen Playground, Kam Tin;
- The hollow tree at Lai Chi Wo;
- Trees with natural fusion of branches or with curtain like aerial roots; and
- Trees growing on old stone retaining walls and displaying a well-balanced form or curious growth form.

4. Upon receipt of the nomination for registration, GLTMS will verify the information provided by the nominating department. An OVT Vetting Panel set up in GLTMS would then consider the eligibility of the tree for inclusion into the Register and where necessary consult other relevant parties before a decision is made. Apart from the five criteria mentioned in paragraph 2 above, the OVT Vetting Panel would also assess the nominated tree against the following general conditions: -

(a) Health and physical conditions

The physical and health conditions of the nominated tree, such as any presence of extensive cavities, cracks or diseases etc., or poor branch structure, which may endanger its structural stability resulting in public safety hazards.

(b) Location

The importance of the nominated tree in the landscape will be assessed with regard to its prominence in relation to the surroundings and the presence of environmental constraints. Factors such as close proximity to a building structure, or traffic safety concern due to blocking of traffic sightlines would also be considered.

(c) Representative of its kind

The special features of the nominated tree will be considered. Comparison with similar trees in the Register will also be made to assess whether such features are representative of its kind and whether the tree has any special scientific and ecological value.

5. A nomination would normally be processed within 42 calendar days from the time the nomination is received by GLTMS. The final recommendation will be made known to the nominating department upon the decision is made.

6. After the assessments, relevant tree maintenance department shall upload the tree information to the Register within seven (7) calendar days from the date of release of the assessment result(s).

**The Register of Old and Valuable Trees**

**Nomination Form**

**Scope of the Register:**

The Register covers Old and Valuable Trees on unleased government land within built-up areas or tourist attraction spots in village areas.

**I. Details**

**A. Nomination shall be based on one or more of the following recommended categories. Please circle the category(ies) of significance:**

1. Tree of large size (e.g. trunk diameter  $\geq$  1 m measured at 1.3 m above ground level);
2. Tree of precious or rare species;
3. Tree of particularly old age (e.g.  $\geq$  100 years old);
4. Tree of cultural, historical or memorable significance;
5. Tree of outstanding form for its aesthetic or landscape significance or curious growth form (e.g. natural fusion of branches, hollow tree).

**B. Species (if known)**

**C. Location of the Nominated Tree:**

1. District/Place;
2. Type (Parks/Roadside/Village environs/Natural area/Others);
3. Land status (if known).

*Note: Please attach a location map to show the location of the tree.*

**D. Age (if known)**

**E. Dimension of the Nominated Tree**

1. Height (m);
2. Diameter/circumference of trunk measured at 1.3m above ground level;
3. Spread of canopy (m);
4. Special features in growth form (if any);
5. Date of measurement.

*Note: Please attach photos to show the whole tree form, special features (if any) and the surrounding environment with the tree in context.*

**F. Condition of the Nominated Tree**

1. Overall Health;
2. Sign of infection, decaying, wilting, or physical damage (if any);
3. Threat in surrounding environment (if any);
4. Individual tree risk assessment reports of the tree in the past two years (if any).

**II. Details of Applicant**

Name of contact person:

Post of contact person:

Department:

Address:

Telephone:

Signature:

Date:

**Note:**

The nomination form should be submitted to GLTMS (Attn: Assistant Secretary (Tree Management)1). For any enquiry, please contact Assistant Secretary (Tree Management)1 at 3509 7360.



**Example of Tree Sign**  
(For Reference Only)



photo 1 (Front Face)



photo 2 (Rear Face)



**Specification of Tree Sign**

**Material:**

Compressed fiber sheet (壓縮纖維膠板) – Color : Black

**Size :** A5 size, approx. 210mm (W) x 149mm(H) with thickness not less than 3mm

**Font, Size and Color :**

Chinese Name	:	about 30mm, Bold, 標楷體, Red
Botanical Name	:	10-14mm, Bold, Times New Roman, Italic, Red
Common Name	:	7-10 mm, Times New Roman, Red
Heading for Old and Valuable Tree No. and Maintenance Department	:	for English : 5-7mm, Times New Roman, Red for Chinese : 6-7mm, 標楷體, Red
OVT Registration No	:	about 8mm, Times New Roman, Red

**Remarks:**

1. It should resist to UV ray and graffiti. Spray paint, lacquer, and crayon graffiti can be easily removed with paint thinner, lacquer thinner or similar solvents;
2. It should be of fire retardant material;
3. It should be mounted with 2 stainless steel (not less than 1mm thick) hanging hook (pls. refer photo 1 & 2); &
4. Graphic colour design should be submitted for approval.