

Cherishing our Green Shades — Tree Preservation in Shek Kip Mei Estate

Man A:

The dilapidated buildings need to be demolished, but many of the trees here are still very healthy. We'll try our best to preserve them.

Man B:

The residents used to sit under the trees chatting, or playing chess. Through preserving these trees, we hope the residents can keep their fond memory.

Super:

Cherishing our Green Shades —
Tree Preservation in Shek Kip Mei Estate

Man A:

Phases 2 and 5 of the Shek Kip Mei Estate Redevelopment included blocks 8 to 13 and blocks 25 to 34 of the original Shek Kip Mei Estate. They were built in the 1950s. There remain some 50 trees that are 10 to 20 metres tall. They are over 30 years old and are mostly species commonly found in Hong Kong,

Super:

Chinese Banyan

Man A:

such as the Chinese Banyan,

Super:

Paper-bark trees

Man A:

Paper-bark trees,

Super:

Candlenut trees

Man A:

Candlenut trees

Super:

Cotton trees

Man A:

and Cotton trees.

Among them, over 30 are still growing healthily.

Super (Title):

Sunny Lo

Landscape Architect

Housing Department

Sunny Lo:

To decide which trees can be preserved,
our Landscape Group colleagues
have conducted a detailed tree survey and recorded
the species, health and conditions of the trees.

Then, we have to see how to fit them
into the overall design of the new estate.

We have hired an arborist
to take care of the trees in the construction site.

Throughout the construction period,
he will examine the trees regularly
to see if there are any pest infestation
or branches broken by gales.

In case there is any problem,
he will take appropriate action at once.

We have laid a mulch layer over the roots
so that weeds cannot grow around them.

Arborist:

I am examining if the tree is infested with pests
or if there are any rotten parts.

The roots look quite normal.

Sunny Lo:

But look at this cavity here.
Rotting usually starts from such areas.
We have to pay attention.
Note the area indicated by the green light.
Possibly being cracked by the wind,
the tissue of the trunk is exposed.
Pruning is needed to stop further damage
and avoid the rot from spreading.

Super (Title):

Frederick Chu
Architect
Housing Department

Frederick Chu:

The clusters of trees in Shek Kip Mei Estate
are mainly found in Phase 5 of the redevelopment.
They used to grow among the buildings of the old
estate
in an alternate pattern.
To protect the trees,
we have adopted a site specific design for Phase 5.
The trees and buildings are arranged alternately.
It is also the first time that buildings are designed as
non-standard small Y-blocks with 16 flats on each floor
so as to provide growing space for the trees.
In this way, neither sunlight is blocked
nor the number of flats reduced.
Also, at the construction stage,
lots of pipes need to be laid.
To avoid affecting the growth of the roots,
We have not run any pipes under the trees.

Sunny Lo:

From the perspective of a landscape architect,
Not only the design of the buildings should match with
the trees.

From the demolition of the old buildings,
to the laying of foundation for the new buildings
and throughout the whole construction period,
we have to ensure a suitable environment for the trees.

Super:

Ensuring adequate sunlight

Sunny Lo:

For example, we must avoid blocking the trees.
from absorbing sunlight.

Super:

Watering the trees regularly

Sunny Lo:

Our staff water the trees regularly
and clean the tree crowns whenever necessary,
lest dust trapped on the leaves
will obstruct their photosynthesis.

Super:

Setting up a protection zone

Sunny Lo:

We have put up a wired fence around the trees
to forbid works within the area.
This helps prevent the trees from unintentional
damage.

Super:

Installing a catch fan

Sunny Lo:

We have also installed a catch fan outside the building
to prevent falling construction debris
from harming the trees.
A small portion of the fine trees, however,
occupy strategic spots of the redevelopment
such as the future emergency vehicular access.

They will be transplanted properly.

Super:

Stablising the trees with cables

Sunny Lo:

Trees transplanted or collapsed due to strong wind
need to be stabilised with cables.

This Chinese Banyan was transplanted around two
years ago.

The tree crown has been trimmed.

Otherwise, it would have been too huge
to be moved, even with a crane.

So we reduced the tree crown first
and moved it carefully with a crane.

From the environmental or conservation perspective,
we, of course, hope to preserve all the trees.

It takes ten years for a tree to grow up,
but it's easy to destroy one.

Nurturing a tree is not an easy task.

The trees here are all over 30 years old.

They are really precious.

Preserving them is beneficial
to the environment of the estate as a whole
as well as to the ventilation of Woh Chai Street.

Frederick Chu:

The tree clusters here
provide green shades for the residents
and an ideal meeting place for the community.
The residents have a deep affection for the trees,
which remind them of their life style in the past.

Preserving the trees here
not only sustain the community ties,
but also conserves the unique feature of the
community.

As time goes by,
buildings will inevitably become worn out.
Trees, however, will continue to thrive
and provide us with shades of green.

