



A closer look at Singapore's green marvel

The Singapore Botanic Gardens cleared the first hurdle in its bid to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site when the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) gave the garden its endorsement last week. The non-governmental organisation is recommending the Botanic Gardens for inscription without reservation – the best recommendation possible – so it stands a good chance of being inscribed by the World Heritage Committee. Before the final decision is announced in July, here's a closer look at the Gardens.



ICOMOS:

The influences of the Singapore Botanic Gardens has been significant in the history of tropical botany and horticulture, and notes that while the Kew Botanic Gardens supplied the first few seedlings, the Singapore Botanic Gardens provided the conditions for their planting, mass-multiplication, experimentation, agro-industrial development and eventual distribution to much of South-east Asia and elsewhere.

Number indicates where sketch was done
1 Common red-stem fig along the Rain Forest trail



The Gardens require constant maintenance and gardeners hard at work is a common sight.
2



Swan Lake

The Swan Lake is a major attraction in the Singapore Botanic Gardens. It was formerly known as the Main Lake or the First Lake. It was constructed in 1866, shortly after the Gardens' formation. It is considered to be the oldest ornamental water feature in Singapore.

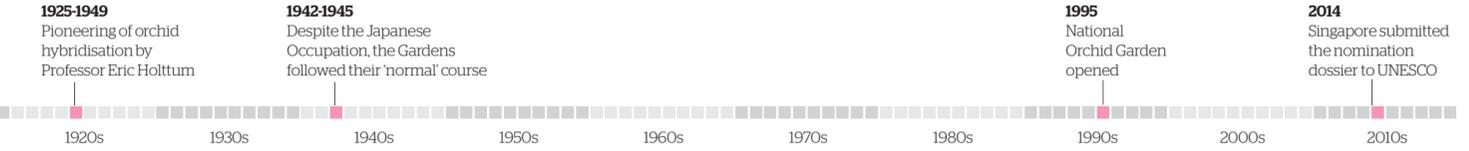


3 The gazebo at Swan Lake was built in the 1850s

Rain Forest

Some 314 species of plants jostle for space in this precious 6ha fragment of primary tropical forest, forming a multi-layered ecosystem of herbs and ferns, climbers, shrubs and trees. Some trees reach 50 metres in height, and were here even before the founding of modern Singapore in 1819.

Houses a collection of about 750,000 specimens, with the earliest specimen dating back to 1790.



Healing Garden

Over 400 varieties of plants with medical uses are in the area.

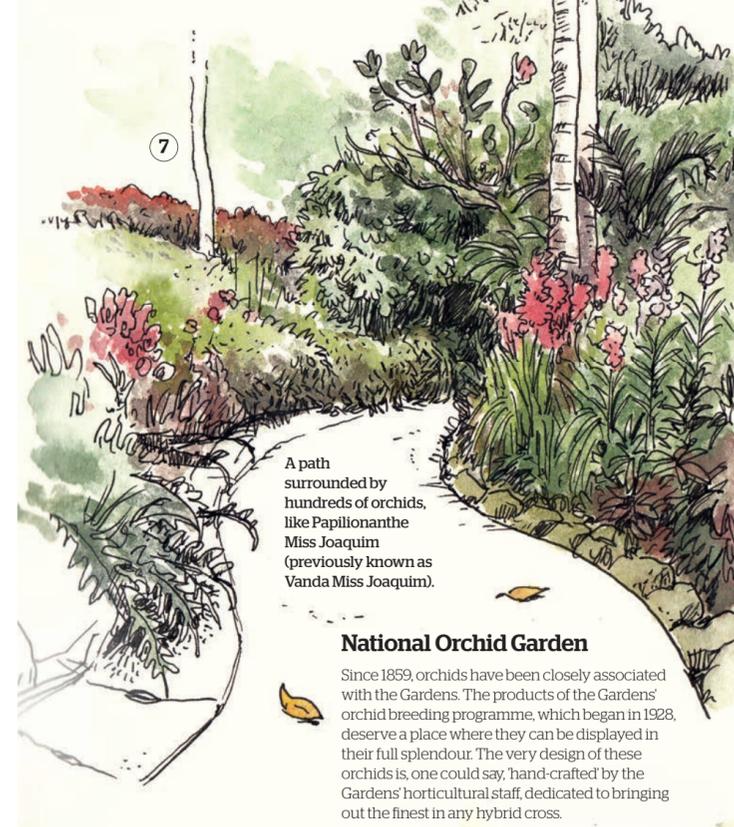
Every medicine plant has a display showing information about it.



4 The fruits of this 'ananas comosus' are used to treat indigestion, lupus, gout, anorexia and rheumatoid arthritis.
5

ICOMOS:

The Singapore Botanic Gardens is an outstanding example of a British tropical colonial botanic garden and the best preserved of its kind. Compared to the other British colonial botanic gardens of comparable size and function in the tropics, Singapore Botanic Gardens is outstanding for its preserved landscape design and continuity of purpose



7 A path surrounded by hundreds of orchids, like Papilionanthe Miss Joaquim (previously known as Vanda Miss Joaquim).

National Orchid Garden

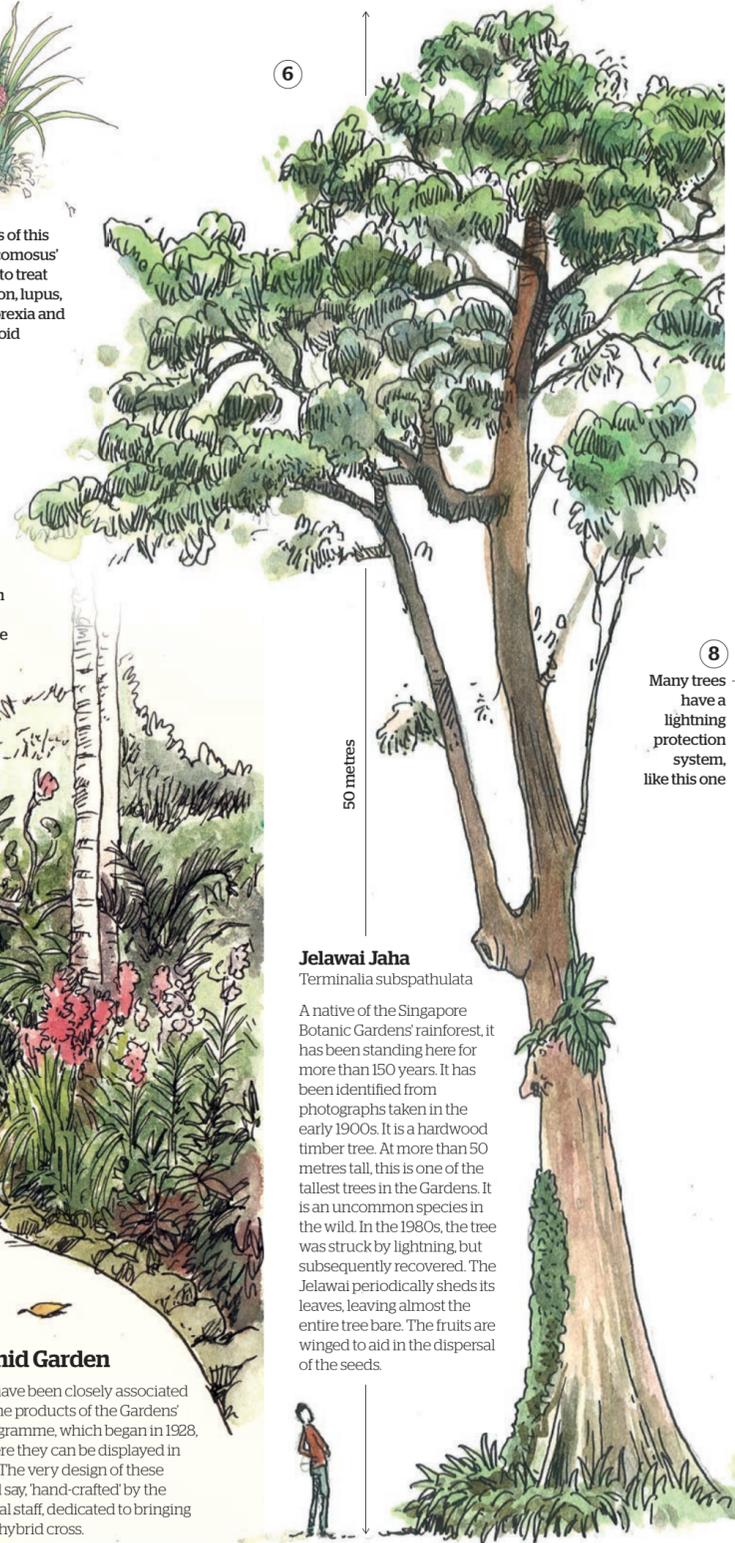
Since 1859, orchids have been closely associated with the Gardens. The products of the Gardens' orchid breeding programme, which began in 1928, deserve a place where they can be displayed in their full splendour. The very design of these orchids is, one could say, 'hand-crafted' by the Gardens' horticultural staff, dedicated to bringing out the finest in any hybrid cross.

Criteria for inscription as UNESCO World Heritage Site

These two criteria have been used by the International Council on Monuments and Sites to nominate the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Criterion II
 Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.

Criterion IV
 Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history.



6 **Jelawai Jaha**
Terminalia subspatulata

A native of the Singapore Botanic Gardens' rainforest, it has been standing here for more than 150 years. It has been identified from photographs taken in the early 1900s. It is a hardwood timber tree. At more than 50 metres tall, this is one of the tallest trees in the Gardens. It is an uncommon species in the wild. In the 1980s, the tree was struck by lightning, but subsequently recovered. The Jelawai periodically sheds its leaves, leaving almost the entire tree bare. The fruits are winged to aid in the dispersal of the seeds.

8 Many trees have a lightning protection system, like this one

Meranti Laut
Shorea gratisissima

This tree species is critically endangered throughout its natural range. Current surveys in the nature reserves of Singapore show there are an estimated 50 trees. No seedlings or smaller trees of this species have ever been found in Singapore. So it seems the species is not regenerating and might actually become locally extinct when these giant trees eventually die.



9 A black swan in Eco Lake moves to the shore at dusk, without fear of humans.