

DARWIN BOTANIC GARDENS

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The Darwin Botanic Gardens gained historical significance as the site of major botanical and agricultural activity since the late 1800's and for its long association with the Holtze family and the late Mr George Brown.

Mr Maurice Holtze was appointed Government Gardener in 1878 and successfully established the 'Experimental Nursery' and gardens at its first site near the Gaol in Fannie Bay. In 1886 the gardens were re-established at its current site on Gardens Road.

Nicholas Holtze took over from his father in 1892 when Maurice became curator of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. Both Maurice and Nicholas proved successful in experimenting with crops that could be grown in the Top End. Investment funds in the North were not forthcoming so much of their success was not transmitted into agricultural production.

The Gardens are also significant for their social and recreational value. They are an important part of the broader cultural landscape of Darwin and are a popular venue for barbeques, weddings and functions.

From 1970 until 1990 the Darwin Botanic Gardens were under the care of Mr George Brown, who resigned and later took up the position of the Lord Mayor of Darwin. In recognition of his contribution to the Gardens and the post-cyclone greening of Darwin, the Botanic Gardens were renamed the "George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens" in January 2002 shortly after his death.

Over the years the Darwin Botanic Gardens have suffered a number of setbacks. When Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in December 1974 the Gardens lost 78 percent of its trees and shrubs. The nursery, the fern house and the original curator's cottage were all destroyed. The Gardens also survived cyclones in 1897 and 1937, a fire in 1902 and the bombing and occupation by armed forces during WWII.

The area of the gardens encompassed in the Darwin Botanic Gardens Heritage Place includes a number of historic features and plants. These include the Old Fence Post, the Triangle and Rockery Garden, the Holtze steps, the retaining wall adjacent to the site of the original Holtze residence, and portion of roadway with retaining walls on either side, assumed to have been constructed in 1925.

Plants of historic significance include a Tree of Life (*Guaiacum officinale*), Pony Tail Palm (*Nolina recurvata*), Sabal Palm (*Sabal palmetto*), Bottle Palm (*Hyophorbe lagenicaulis*, *Orbignya cobune*) and African Oil Palm (*Elaeis guineensis*). These plants are important because of their age, condition and location in the wet/dry tropics.

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