

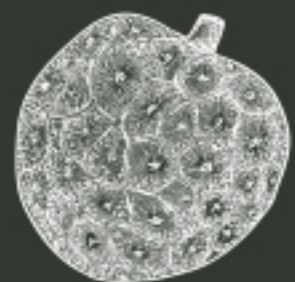


Walking

with

TREES

Lower Area Tree Tour



Medicinal Cheese wood



Hong Kong Sinopora



Hong Kong
Pencilwood



Hairy Chestnut



Taiwan Acacia





Longan



Chinese Swamp Cypress



Chinese Banyan



Camphor Tree



Incense Tree



This guided leaflet accompanies the exhibition Ripples & Pulses Between the Rings, leading you along the Lower Area of KFBG to encounter a selection of characteristic local and regional trees. Through on-site observation and interpretive stories, it invites you to explore Hong Kong and South China's forest landscapes from ecological, cultural and historical perspectives, prompting reflection on tree conservation and the thoughtful use of local resources.

Along the route, you will meet species such as Incense Tree, Chinese Banyan, Taiwan Acacia, Camphor tree, Longan, Chinese Swamp Cypress, Hairy Chestnut, Hong Kong Pencilwood, Medicinal Cheesewood and Hong Kong Sinopora. You will learn about their natural traits, histories and conservation status, and see how each one helps shape the region's distinctive scenery of feng shui woods, orchards, villages and wetlands in this region.

Like a quiet companion walking beside you, this leaflet invites you to read, observe and question as you go. By relearning the names of these trees, noting their scents and feeling the grain of their wood, we may begin to imagine a gentler and more enduring way for people and trees to share the same land.

The Sweet Provider

Longan

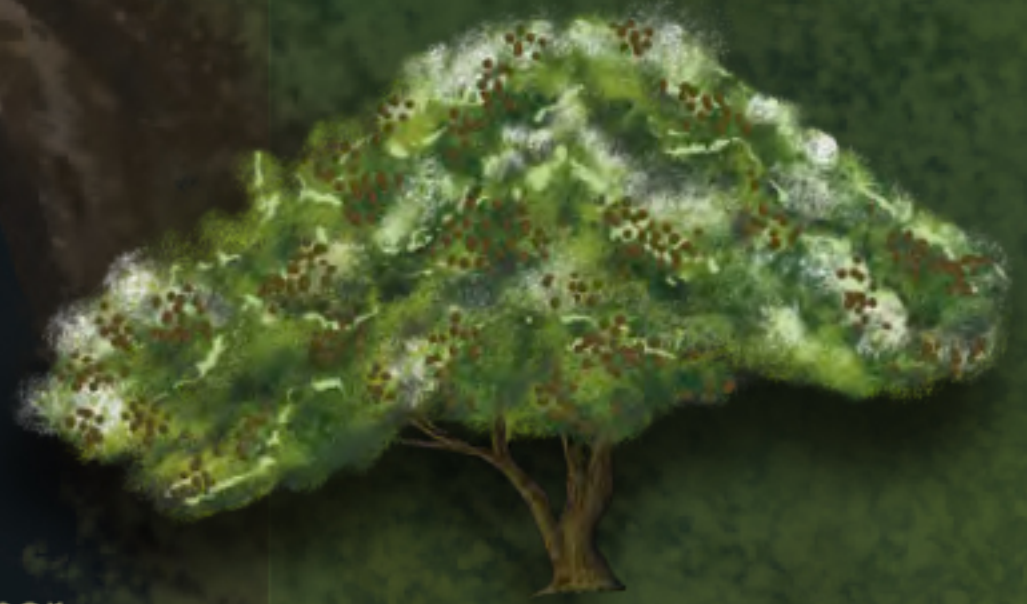
Dimocarpus longan

Family: Sapindaceae

Plant Type: Cultivated Evergreen Tree

Range: Southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines

Conservation Status: Common Cultivated Species



Longan are living markers of Hong Kong's farming heritage. In village orchards and home gardens, they offered more than the juicy, sweet "dragon's eye" fruits that families harvested and dried in late summer. Their dense, durable timber has also been used for posts, agricultural implements and sturdy household furniture that can withstand years of daily use. Today it continues to be appreciated as a beautiful, respected timber in southern Chinese wood carving and woodcraft.

In Fujian, craftspeople developed a distinct "longan wood carving" tradition often working with old trunks. Rather than forcing the wood into a rigid design, carvers follow the natural bends and knots, so the final work feels as if it has grown out of the tree's own shape.

Observe: Notice the rough bark and branching form – can you imagine tools, furniture or crafted objects that might have come from wood like this?

At KFBG, old Longan trees now stand at the meeting point of agriculture and ecology, feeding birds, bees and insects as well as people.



The Village Guardian

Camphor Tree

Cinnamomum camphora



Family: Lauraceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: South to Southwest China, Japan

Conservation Status: Common & Widely Cultivated

The Camphor Tree is a Hong Kong native, large individuals of which are often found in feng shui woodlands near old villages. Its crown offers cool shade, while the tree provides food and shelter for butterflies, birds and a spectacular moth. Its leaves, bark and wood hold aromatic oils that give off a distinctive camphor scent when rubbed or worked.

For generations, Camphor Trees were planted at villages as windbreaks and to bring good feng shui, quietly guarding homes from storms and bad luck. The richly scented wood is naturally durable and helps repel insects, so it has long been favoured for storage chests and furniture. Particularly, in Hakka culture, it was a tradition to plant a Camphor Tree in the village upon the birth of a daughter. As the girl grew, the tree matured, providing wood for her wedding dowry chest.

Observe: Gently rub a fallen leaf and take a deep breath near it. The refreshing scent of natural camphor is unmistakable!



The Living Landmark

Chinese Banyan

Ficus microcarpa

Family: Moraceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Tropical & Subtropical Asia to Western Pacific

Conservation Status: Common & Widely Cultivated

If you have ever walked down a Hong Kong street and looked up at a great spreading Chinese Banyan, you have seen how life can build itself into a single living structure. Chinese Banyans are known for their broad crowns and long aerial roots that descend from branches and anchor into the ground, forming pillar-like supports over time, a characteristic that ominously hints at these figs' tendency to be slow killers !

Wild Chinese Banyan sometimes begin life as epiphytes, germinating in the crotches of other trees and extending tendril-like roots to the ground. Once rooted, the ever-expanding roots form a mesh around the perch's trunk.

The fig competes for light, water and nutrients, and eventually strangles the host. The original tree then decays and disappears, leaving behind an astonishing and unique habitat: the hollow, lattice-like form of the Chinese Banyan itself.

Observe: Look at the cascading aerial roots descending from the branches. Does this Chinese Banyan remind you of a tree from your own past?



The Tree That Spawned Our City's Name

Incense Tree

Aquilaria sinensis

Family: Thymelaeaceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Southeast China to Hainan

Conservation Status: Listed in *Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong*; ranked as "Vulnerable (VU)" in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



The Incense Tree is a native of Hong Kong's hillsides, and the city itself is even named after the trade in its wood, hence "Fragrant Harbour"! For centuries, its fragrant wood travelled from village forests to distant temples, carrying prayers, blessings and memories in rising smoke. At the same time, its precious "agarwood" resin was carefully prepared as traditional medicine to ease pain, calm the spirit and support recovery from illness, making it a trusted remedy in village life.

Unfortunately, with agarwood now worth more than gold, illegal logging of old trees by gangs of poachers is now a major threat to the population of Incense Trees in Hong Kong. On top of poaching, habitat loss is another major threat to the survival of Incense Trees.

Pause for a moment and let this tree invite you to slow down and enjoy nature's quiet gifts.





The Pioneer

Taiwan Acacia

Acacia confusa

Family: Mimosaceae

Plant Type: Introduced Pioneer Tree

Range: Taiwan, West Malaysia to Philippines

Conservation Status: Common

The Taiwan Acacia once stitched whole Hong Kong hillsides together in even rows of green. Originally introduced from outside Hong Kong, this fast-growing tree was widely planted from the 1950s onwards to bind loose soil, stabilise man-made slopes and quickly cover bare ground after decades of erosion and grazing.

Like many other legumes, its roots house nodules of bacteria that fix atmospheric nitrogen, allowing the tree to grow on nutrient poor soils.

At KFBG, many of these Taiwan Acacias are now reaching the end of their natural lifespan and becoming hazardous. Rather than seeing them only as a “problem”, KFBG’s team treats them as pioneer helpers that provide much needed shade and shelter for birds and mammals.

Observe: As you pause here, perhaps notice both what these trees have given, and what is quietly growing up beneath them.



The Ultimate Botanical Discovery

Hong Kong Sinopora

Sinopora hongkongensis

Family: Lauraceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Hong Kong

Conservation Status: Ranked as "Critically Endangered (CR)" in *Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong*



The Hong Kong Sinopora is a very special tree that, remarkably, was only discovered in 2005 and the type specimen was collected on Tai Mo Shan. In the wild, it grows as a modest evergreen tree in misty broadleaf forest, with reddish brown twigs, neat, dark green leaves and rough, rounded fruits that take a full year to ripen after the tiny autumn flowers have opened. The genus *Sinopora* contains just one species, *Sinopora hongkongensis*, which has only ever been recorded in the New Territories, and nowhere else on the planet.

As only a few individuals have been found and all are confined to a single area, the Hong Kong Sinopora is considered "Critically Endangered" and is carefully watched and protected inside Country Park boundaries, with seeds collected for propagation.

Observe: The seeds of this precious species are about the size of ping-pong balls! In other parts of Asia, seeds of this size are dispersed by animals such as hornbills and gibbons. What kind of animal do you think used to do this job in Hong Kong's forests?



The Furniture Favourite

Hairy Chestnut

Castanopsis concinna



Family: Fagaceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Southern Guangdong, Southern Guangxi, Hong Kong

Conservation Status: Listed in *Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong*. Ranked as "Vulnerable (VU)" in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

The Hairy Chestnut is a Chinese endemic species. For generations, its hard, beautifully grained reddish timber was used for quality furniture and building. In the forest, its tough, leathery leaves shade the understorey, while its spiny, chestnut-like fruits feed animals and insects, weaving it into the wider web of life.

Across its range, over-logging and forest loss left only scattered survivors, and the Hairy Chestnut is now recognised as an endangered, nationally protected species. At KFBG, a small living collection of trees is being carefully tended. Each new nut is not just a seed, but a small act of repair, helping to reconnect today's visitors with an almost-lost tree of the old South China evergreen forests.

Observe: This tree was grown from an acorn collected in 2014. Can you imagine how many years it takes for a tree to grow big enough to make furniture? How old would you be by then?



The Medicinal Cheesewood, known locally as “Dan Mu”, is a native evergreen tree once woven into daily life in southern Chinese villages. It develops a smooth, upright trunk and a rounded crown, bearing clusters of small flowers that swell into ball-shaped fruits. For early villagers, however, its most important feature was invisible: the powerful substances stored in its bark and wood.

Traditionally, thin shavings of Medicinal Cheesewood bark or wood were boiled into bitter decoctions to treat fevers, stomach upsets and colds. Over time, this reputation led to heavy cutting and ring-barking, as people harvested more than the trees could safely give. Today, Medicinal Cheesewood is considered “Vulnerable (VU)”, with remaining wild trees depending on protected forest and more careful use.



Observe: Notice the smooth, slender trunk and simple, opposite leaves – can you imagine how just a few shavings once became a whole pot of herbal medicine shared by a village family?

The Village Pharmacy

Medicinal Cheesewood

Nauclea officinalis

Family: Rubiaceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Southeast China to West Malaysia

Conservation Status: Listed in *Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong*



The High-Quality Survivor

Hong Kong Pencilwood

Dysoxylum hongkongense

Family: Meliaceae

Plant Type: Native Evergreen Tree

Range: Southern China, Taiwan

Conservation Status: Listed in *Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong*

The Hong Kong Pencilwood is native to lowland broad-leaved forests, whose type specimen was collected on Mount Parker in 1903. Growing up to around 25 metres tall, it forms a straight, elegant trunk with a high crown, producing small white flowers in early summer and rounded fruits that ripen from autumn into the following spring.

Its timber is of particularly high quality and has long been valued for furniture and other crafted uses, which led to heavy felling and made the species vulnerable to timber extration across its range.

Observe: Notice the tall, straight trunk – it hints at the strong, even timber inside, and why this quiet forest tree now needs careful protection.





The Living Fossil of the Wetlands

Chinese Swamp Cypress

Glyptostrobus pensilis

Family: Taxodiaceae

Plant Type: Deciduous Coniferous Tree

Range: Southeast China, Vietnam, Laos

Conservation Status: Ranked as "Critically Endangered (CR)" in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

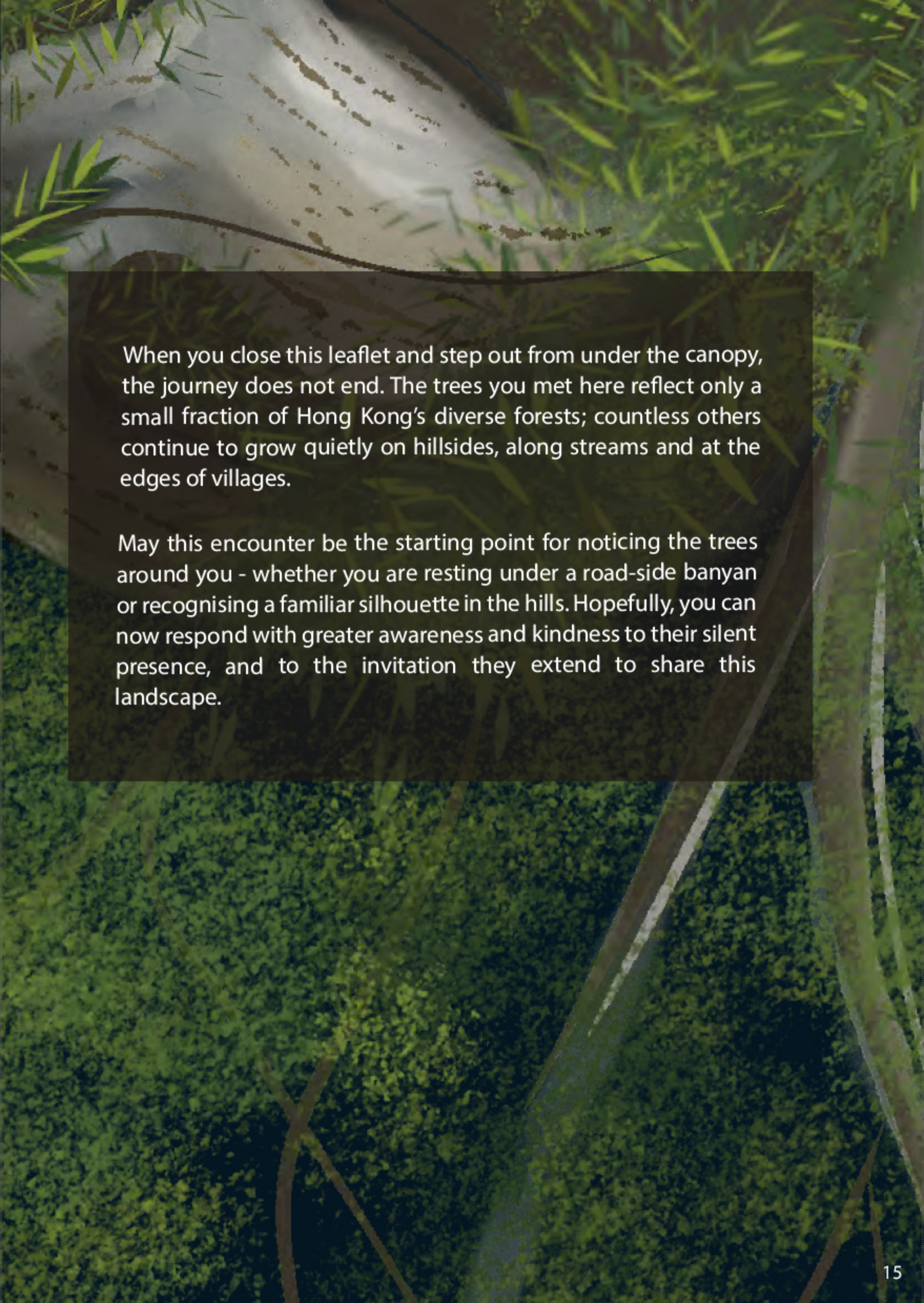


The Chinese Swamp Cypress, also known as Canton Water Pine, is a rare wetland conifer that once formed extensive swamp forests across southern China and nearby regions. Today, it is almost extinct in the wild, and it is classed as "Critically Endangered (CR)" internationally.

In flooded ground it develops a flared, buttressed base, and sends up curious "knees" or air-roots (pneumatophores) from its lateral roots, helping the tree breathe and stay stable in soft mud.

Its timber is finely textured, pleasantly aromatic and resistant to rot and insect attack, so it was historically favoured for boats, houses, cabinet work and fine carving. Together with conversion of its habitat to paddy fields, overuse contributed to its decline. In Hong Kong, every remaining Water Pine is now highly valued by botanists and conservationists.

Observe: Look at the feathery foliage – can you picture this tree standing surrounded by statuesque mother trees and its siblings in a swamp forest, rather than as a rare survivor in today's landscape?



When you close this leaflet and step out from under the canopy, the journey does not end. The trees you met here reflect only a small fraction of Hong Kong's diverse forests; countless others continue to grow quietly on hillsides, along streams and at the edges of villages.

May this encounter be the starting point for noticing the trees around you - whether you are resting under a road-side banyan or recognising a familiar silhouette in the hills. Hopefully, you can now respond with greater awareness and kindness to their silent presence, and to the invitation they extend to share this landscape.



About Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG)

Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) is a non-profit organization, established in 1956 as the base of the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association (KAAA), which was founded in 1951 to help farmers. It gradually transformed in the later period to focus on science-based species conservation and ecosystem restoration, and has become a precious conserved area where the public can experience and connect to nature. In KFBG, there are live animal display areas, themed botanic gardens, terraced farms, and conservation and educational facilities.

Through nature conservation, holistic education and sustainable living projects, we wish to harmonise our relationship with the environment and live sustainably with respect for each other and nature.