

Why is it necessary to preserve the trees?

It is a myth that these sturdy giants need no caring and attention from us. Apart from natural threats such as the recent drought and the continuing problem with scales, the increasing densification and building of blocks of flats, especially in the Bult area as well as the increase in pollution and traffic have a drastic negative effect on the survival of the trees.

The Oak Avenue is part of the rich heritage of Potchefstroom and its residents. The first trees were planted in 1910. With the declaration as national monument in 1977 it was said: "The oak trees lend to the streets along which it



Reuben Gericke, who initiated the planting of the first oak trees in 1910.

is situated both dignity and aesthetic character." Imagine how it would look if the trees are not there anymore...

Being a Grade II Provincial Heritage Site makes it illegal to cause any damage to the trees.

The benefits of trees and green spaces are also far reaching. It has the advantage that it regulates air quality and moderates local climate. Trees also remove carbon, one of the greenhouse gases, from the atmosphere and release oxygen.

What causes the decline in the health of the trees?

By 1980 it was apparent that the oak trees were suffering. Studies were undertaken and plans were made. Research has shown that the main reason for the decline of the trees was insufficient ground water. This was in part due to the closure of the water furrow system of the town in 1972. The increase in solid surfaces such as buildings, roads and paved areas, brought on by urban development, caused most of the rain water to end up in storm water drains and not reaching the roots of the trees.

The City Council undertook many efforts to see to it that the trees receive enough water. An irrigation system was installed along the entire route. This fell into disrepair due to vandalism and uncontrolled and indiscriminate paving under the trees.

What can I do to help preserve the oak trees?

The preservation of the Historic Oak Avenue is not the sole responsibility of the city council (who acknowledges the trees as one of its assets), but also the responsibility of the owners of the properties adjacent to the trees and the residents who reap the benefits of the trees.

If you are a property owner with Historic Oaks on your pavement...

Please water

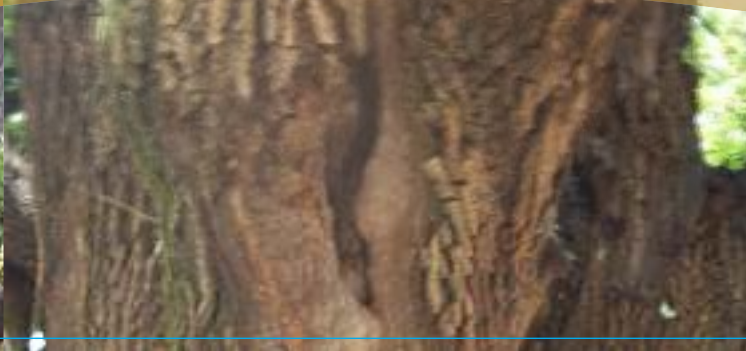
You can see to it that the trees receive enough water. Regularly water the oak trees as well as your own adjacent garden as the tree roots extend into your garden. A mature oak tree in average requires a minimum of 200 l of water per day. This is critical during the growth season (from September to midsummer). Some of this water comes from available ground water, but it is not enough.

Don't pave

Where the areas under and adjacent to the trees were paved or the soil compacted, the trees suffer. In areas where owners developed gardens under the trees and the gardens are well irrigated, the trees flourish. Try your best to reduce the paved areas in your garden and around the oak trees, or use pervious paving stones that are able to let water through.

Don't park

Kindly only park on designated parking spaces under the oak



trees. Parking compacts the soil, preventing water and oxygen from reaching the roots. It has an adverse effect on important processes of photosynthesis and respiration.

If you are a tenant living in a building with Historic Oaks on the pavement...

You can lobby the property owners to properly take care of the trees, by decreasing the paved areas and watering the trees. You and your fellow tenants can, with the permission of the owner, adopt the oaks and take care of them.

What about the sticky fluids dripping from the trees?

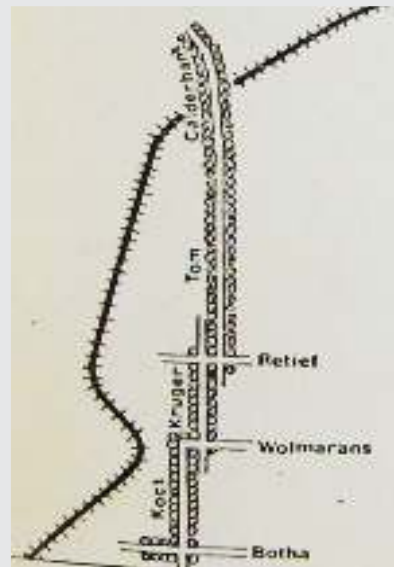
Water-stressed trees are prone to scale infestations which cause further die-back of the trees. Additionally, aphids draw nutrients from the trees, often during the resting stage of the trees. The aphids produce the sticky honeydew that falls from the trees. A black fungus (sooty mildew) grows on the honeydew that falls on the leaves, but is not directly harmful to the trees.

Treatment with chemicals has many disadvantages and experts recommend biological control for the scales. Since the trees are not indigenous to South Africa, the scales have limited natural enemies locally.

Also...

Nobody is allowed to chop off any branches, or remove a dead tree. Treatment of the infestation of parasites by laymen is also not allowed. Please take note that the lichens and mosses on the tree trunks are not parasites and they do not cause any harm to the trees.

Research on the proper treatment of scales, aphids and termites endangering the trees are critically necessary.



Heritage Potchefstroom Erfenis appreciates all and any help to preserve our precious oaks.

In order to secure the future of the trees research, proper monitoring and ongoing replanting of dead trees are necessary, but cost consuming.

Help save our precious Oak Avenue

The Historic Oak Avenue of Potchefstroom is dear to residents of the city. it is also a declared Provincial Heritage Site.

It is one of the biggest assets of Potchefstroom and in most minds synonymous with the city.

Many oak trees in the avenue are suffering, dying or dead. A recent survey found that almost 40% of the trees are obviously in dire straits.

Immediate action and the effort of all the residents of Potchefstroom are needed to save the trees.

A branch infested with Aphids.

Kindly contact the
Potchefstroom Museum at 018 299 5042
if you need more information or want to contribute financially towards efforts saving the trees.

