

Stone Pines discovery

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Four of the world's largest Stone Pines have been discovered in South Australia's Brownhill Creek Recreation Park.

The Stone Pine or *Pinus pinea* has a long association with European civilization. It produces useable resin and edible pine nuts and has been planted since ancient times. The Greek philosopher Theophrastus (c.372 - 287BCE) recorded the Stone Pine in *Peri Phytion Historia*. Roman poet Ovid (43BCE - 17CE) includes the nuts in a list of aphrodisiacs in *Ars Amatoria*, while Dante (1265 -1321) described the Stone Pines along the Adriatic near Ravenna as "the divine forest green and dense".

Roger Spencer's work on conifers notes that Stone Pines were probably the first trees used for avenue planting in Australia and that they were also used as a signature tree in early NSW townships.

Brown Hill Creek reserve was set aside in 1841 for "public purposes" by the South Australian Governor. By 1858 it was on survey maps, making it significantly older than the first declared National Park in the United States (Yellowstone, 1872), or Australia (Royal National Park, Sydney, 1879 or Belair National Park, Adelaide, 1891). The area has a long history of Kaurna Aboriginal occupation.

In 1891 the local Mitcham Council recorded that "Mr H. Prince offered to the Council seven young stone pine trees. He suggested they should be planted in the Brown Hill Creek Reserve. At the time the reserve was denuded and over grazed.

George "H" Prince was born in England in 1811, and arrived in South Australia in 1849. He established successful crockery businesses, becoming known as "Crockery Prince", but also had a family horticultural heritage. A Stone Pine planted c.1850 in his private garden was among the earliest in the colony and later in life he germinated the seven Stone Pines from this specimen.

The largest of the surviving Stone Pines in Brownhill Creek has the largest girth (6.8 metres) of any known Stone Pine in Australia. Its trunk diameter at 1.4 metres above ground is 2.16 metres, 1.15 metres greater than the species' botanical description.

By comparison, the largest specimen of *Pinus pinea* in Italy is recorded in the *Monumental Tree Register of Italy* for the Region of Calabria. This specimen is 35 metres tall, with a girth of 6.4 metres. The girth of this champion specimen is dwarfed by the SA specimen.

The Brownhill Creek Stone Pines are undoubtedly "Living Monuments" of great historical significance for Mitcham and the State of South Australia. They also have botanical and scientific significance at National and International levels. Their nomination to the Register of Significant Trees of the National Trust of Australia accords them new status.

RIGHT A Stone Pine specimen in South Australia's Brownhill Creek Recreation Park. M Beresford



World's largest Stone Pines

ABOVE The Stone Pine in South Australia's Brownhill Creek Recreation Park has a long association with European civilisation. M Beresford

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