

**CHECK LIST OF
HONG KONG PLANTS
2001**

BY

HONG KONG HERBARIUM
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

&

SOUTH CHINA INSTITUTE OF BOTANY, CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

CHECK LIST OF HONG KONG PLANTS 2001

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Preface

The *Check List of Hong Kong Plants* has proved to be an important reference to the diverse flora of Hong Kong. Since the publication of the first edition in 1962, the *Check List* has been regularly revised and updated in the past forty years.

This seventh edition recorded 3 136 plant species and varieties. Besides the addition of new records and corrections of nomenclatural errors, this edition also provides information on the habits, localities, habitats, distribution and uses of the plants. We hope this new edition would assist the readers to understand better the flora of Hong Kong, and serve the needs of botanists, scientists, teachers, horticulturists, pharmacognosists, conservationists and amateurs.

This edition of the *Check List* is based on the results of the comprehensive specialist review, supplemented with the latest taxonomic literature. Specialists from the South China Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department reviewed 35 000 herbarium specimens in the Hong Kong Herbarium during the three-year period beginning September 1998. The *Check List* indeed represents their efforts and achievements.

We would like to express our gratitude to all who have offered generous support to the project. In particular, we would like to thank the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for its sponsorship for the project. We would also like to express our appreciation to Profs. HU Qi-ming, WU De-lin and XIA Nian-he of the South China Institute of Botany, and Messrs. Patrick C.C. LAI, LAM Ying-wai, YIP Kwok-leung, Misses CHAN Shuk-king and WAN Yuen-mei of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for their hard work in making this revision possible. Thanks are also due to Mrs. G. Barretto, MBE, and Mr. R. Clibborn-Dyer for their helpful comments to the English Version.

We welcome any comments for improvement towards the next revision.

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August 2002

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Introduction

The Check List

The *Check List of Hong Kong Plants* records the names of vascular plants found in Hong Kong. The first edition of the *Check List of Hong Kong Plants*, which listed 1 767 species and 24 varieties of vascular plants native to Hong Kong, was prepared and issued as stencilled copies by the Hong Kong Herbarium in 1962, with subsequent revisions in 1965 and 1966. The *Check List* was formally printed and published for the first time in 1974 together with background information and indices of Chinese and English names for most of the common plants. Further revisions were published in 1978 and 1993. In 1998, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) invited specialists from South China Institute of Botany and Guangxi Institute of Botany, both of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as well as those from South China Agricultural University to conduct a three-year “Specialist Review on Plant Specimens of Hong Kong Herbarium” (Herbarium Review). The specialists reviewed comprehensively the specimens deposited in the Hong Kong Herbarium (internationally-recognized acronym: HK) and annotated every specimen with a correct scientific name in accordance with the latest *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Saint Louis Code, Greuter et al. 2000) adopted by the sixteenth International Botanical Congress. Based on the results of the Herbarium Review, the 1993 edition of the *Check List* was revised.

This edition records 267 families, 1 353 genera, 3 136 species and infraspecific taxa of vascular plants, of which 2 136 species are native to Hong Kong. Every new addition to this edition is indicated by a “†” sign preceding the scientific name whereas every exotic taxon is marked with an asterisk (*). Synonyms or misidentifications, which should be rejected in accordance with the *Code*, are included in brackets following the scientific names. Besides listing the Chinese and English names for reference purpose, this edition also provides information on the habit (Hab.), locality (Loc.), distribution (Dist.), and uses of the listed plants.

The arrangement of the families of the ferns (Pteridophytes, P1 – P63) follows the system proposed by Ching (1978); that of the naked-seed plants (Gymnosperms, G1 – G17) follows Kubitzki (1990); and that of the flowering plants (Angiosperms, 6 – 389) follows Cronquist (1988).

Geography and Climate of Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) lies on the southeast coast of China between latitudes 22°9'N and 22°37'N, and longitudes 113°52'E and 114°30'E, just south of the Tropic of Cancer. The territory of Hong Kong comprises a small part of the Chinese mainland and 235 small outlying islands. The total land area is 1 100 km². Although the population is about 6.8 million, only about 15% of the territory is built-up areas and less than 1% is still actively cultivated. The hilly topography has protected a relatively large expanse of countryside, which is used as gathering grounds for freshwater and as country parks for conservation, education and outdoor recreation.

Located along the northern fringe of the Tropics and bordered on to the Pacific Ocean, Hong Kong experiences seasonal variations in weather conditions. The winter monsoon, which blows from the north or northeast, begins in September and prevails from October until mid-March. During these months the weather is cool and dry. Coastal fog and drizzle occur from time to time in early spring when the southeasterly wind interacts with the north-easterlies. The summer monsoon blows from the south or southwest and may occur from mid-April until September. Summer is the rainy season and the weather is hot and humid. From May to September, tropical cyclones (typhoons) may occur, bringing heavy rainfall and gales to Hong Kong.

The mean daily temperature at sea level is 22.8°C, ranging from 15.8°C in January to over 28.8°C in July. At higher elevations the temperature may be a few degrees lower and frost may occur in the winter. The mean annual precipitation is 2 214 mm, 80% of which is recorded between May and September.

Geology and Geomorphology of Hong Kong

Hong Kong, as part of the South China sub-continent, experienced several changes in sea

levels in its geological past. Rocks in Hong Kong belong mainly to three types of igneous rocks formed in Paleozoic and late Cenozoic: (1) Granite: widely distributed in the northern part of Hong Kong Island, the areas between Kowloon and Sha Tin, west of Tsuen Wan, and south of Yuen Long, eastern part of Lantau Island and Lamma Island; (2) Granodiorite: mainly distributed in Tai Mo Shan area, Tsing Lung Tau, Shek Kong, Tai Po, Tsing Yi Island and Shing Mun; (3) Quartz Monzonite: mainly distributed in Tong Fuk, Mui Wo and Pui O on southern Lantau Island, as well as Cape D'Aguilar on Hong Kong Island.

The topography of HKSAR is rugged. About three quarters of the land area is hilly. The highest hill rises to a height of about 900 metres above sea level. In descending order, the major peaks of Hong Kong are: Tai Mo Shan (958m), Lantau Peak (934m) and Sunset Peak (869m) on Lantau Island, Ma On Shan (703m), Grassy Hill (645m), Fei Ngo Shan (Kowloon Peak) (603m), Victoria Peak (554m) and Mount Parker (531m). In contrast, an extensive flat land occurs in the northwest although smaller pockets of flat land can be found in the lower parts of various valleys and at the heads of sea-inlets.

Soils of Hong Kong

Soils of Hong Kong are mainly colluvial soil and alluvial soil. Colluvial soil, distributed mainly in uplands and hilly areas, can be classified into (1) yellow earth (*or* yellow podsollic), (2) red earth (*or* krasnosem) and (3) latosolic red earth, based on the parental material. Derived from granite, yellow earth is widely distributed between 500–700 m above sea level in Castle Peak, Tai Lam Chung, Tai Mo Shan, Pat Sin Leng, Ma On Shan and central and eastern Lantau Island. Red earth and latosolic red earth are mainly found in the lower parts of the hills below 500 m and 300 m respectively. Alluvial soil is mainly distributed in the flood plains of rivers and streams and along the coast. Most of the fertile soils on flood plains were once cultivated. The muddy shorelines nourish mangroves.

The Vegetation of Hong Kong

The original vegetation of Hong Kong no longer exists after centuries of human disturbance through his fire and axe. The existing vegetation is the secondary forest developed in the latter half of the twentieth century after the Second World War (Xing et al., 1999). The major types of vegetation in Hong Kong are woodland, shrubland and grassland (Thrower, 1975). Minor formations occur in special habitats in relation to the freshwater and coastal environments.

The majority of the vegetation in Hong Kong belongs to evergreen broad-leaved forest of the subtropical flora of Southeast Asia. Dominant families include the Euphorbiaceae, Sapotaceae, Moraceae, Sterculiaceae, Myrtaceae, Fagaceae, Lauraceae, and Theaceae. Four types of plant communities can be classified by the characteristics of eco-physiognomy and species composition: (1) river-bank woodland, (2) lowland woodland, (3) low-hill forests, and (4) montane forests (Chang et al., 1989). The river-bank woodlands are commonly seen along rivers and low-lying areas, where *Cleistocalyx operculatus*, *Syzygium jambos*, *Bischofia javanica*, and *Glochidion hongkongense* are some examples of the dominant species. Lowland woodlands are mainly distributed in the hilly areas and valleys below 300 – 400 m, where the Euphorbiaceae, Moraceae, Sapotaceae, and Myrtaceae are the dominant families and *Ficus microcarpa*, *Endospermum chinense*, *Syzygium levinei*, *Antidesma bunius*, *Psychotria asiatica*, and *Aquilaria sinensis* are some examples of the dominant species. Low-hill forests are mainly distributed on uplands between 300 – 800 m, where the Lauraceae, Fagaceae and Theaceae are dominant families and *Machilus thunbergii*, *Machilus breviflora*, *Machilus chekiangensis*, *Cinnamomum porrectum*, *Schima superba*, and *Castanopsis fabri* are some examples of the dominant species. Montane forests are found on the hilly reliefs at 700 – 1000 m, where the Fagaceae, Theaceae, Magnoliaceae, and Hamamelidaceae are the dominant families and *Camellia kissi*, *Ternstroemia gymnanthera*, *Manglietia fordiana*, and *Pentaphragma euryoides* are some examples of the dominant species.

There are also small but well-developed woodlands associated with many of the older villages and temples. These are the “Fung Shui Woods” (“Sacred or Lucky Groves”), which owe their existence to the protection afforded by the villagers in accordance with ancient traditions. These woodlands are often enriched by the planting of *Aquilaria sinensis*, *Cinnamomum camphora*,

and fruit trees such as *Euphoria longan*, *Litchi chinensis*, *Syzygium jambos* and clumps of bamboos.

Many hillslopes have been reforested with *Acacia confusa*, *Pinus massoniana*, *Pinus elliottii*, *Eucalyptus species* and *Lophostemon confertus*. In recent years, more native trees have been planted on hillslopes, including *Machilus chekiangensis*, *Castanopsis fissa*, and *Schima superba*.

Bamboos in Hong Kong are scattered and shrubby. Common species are *Arundinaria hindsii*, *A. cantorii*, and *Indocalamus sinicus*.

Shrublands are widely distributed in Hong Kong. The most common one is the *Baeckea frutescens* – *Rhodomyrtus tomentosa* – *Gordonia axillaris* community. Common grasslands in Hong Kong include the *Arundinella setosa* – *Cymbopogon caesius* – *Dicranopteris pedata* community and the *Miscanthus sinensis* – *Ischaemum indicum* community.

Many plants tolerant to coastal conditions can be found on the long and irregular coastline of Hong Kong. On sandy beaches, pioneers and sand-binding plants such as the *Ipomoea pes-caprae*, *Vitex rotundifolia*, *Spinifex littoreus* and *Wedelia prostrata* frequently occur on the seaward side of the beach. These are followed by the shrubby *Clerodendrum inerme*, *Pandanus tectorius*, *Scaevola sericea*, and the larger shrubs or trees of *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, *Macaranga tanarius*, and *Cerbera manghas* towards the back of the beach. At the back of the rocky and boulder-strewn beaches, the creepers *Asparagus cochinchinensis*, *Morinda parvifolia*, and the shrubs *Scaevola sericea*, *Pandanus tectorius* and *Phoenix hanceana* are commonly found. On muddy shores, *Avicennia*, *Aegiceras*, *Excoecaria* and members of the Rhizophoraceae occur. Dwarf mangroves on muddy shores, for example, the *Kandelia candel* – *Aegiceras corniculatum* – *Avicennia marina* community, *Acanthus ilicifolius* community and the *Acrostichum aureum* community are also common on muddy shores.

The streams in Hong Kong are often small and swift-flowing. They may become torrential with the summer rains but tend to remain very low or even become a series of isolated pools during the dry winter months. Plants that are rooted on the stream banks or on the exposed streambeds include *Hydrocotyle*, *Ludwigia*, *Polygonum*, *Acorus* and *Eriocaulon* species.

Flora Conservation

The AFCD implements flora conservation work mainly through the following measures:

(1) Species Protection: Under the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap. 96), damaging plants in any forest or plantation on government land is prohibited. Some rare and attractive indigenous plants, such as *Camellia* species, *Enkianthus quinqueflorus*, *Impatiens hongkongensis* and *Iris speculatrix*, are specifically listed in the Forestry Regulations to control their sale or possession.

(2) Habitat Protection: About 38% of the land area in Hong Kong is designated as country parks and special areas under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208). The AFCD manages the country parks and special areas, within which no new development shall be carried out without the prior approval of the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation. Many rare plant populations in Hong Kong are located within country parks and under statutory protection. The listing of Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs) is an administrative measure to ensure that concerned government departments are aware of the scientific importance of such sites and that due consideration is given to conservation when developments in or near these sites are proposed. There are now 64 SSSIs, a large proportion of which are listed owing to their floristic importance. For instance, Mau Ping at Ma On Shan is listed as an SSSI in recognition of the presence of the largest population of *Camellia crapanelliana* in Hong Kong.

(3) Propagation: Various methods, such as seed collection, cutting and air layering, have been used to propagate rare and endangered plants. The seedlings are produced with care in nurseries for planting in their potential natural habitats. Transplantations may also be carried out if their habitats are threatened. Successful examples of propagation include *Keteleeria fortunei*, *Camellia crapanelliana* and *Camellia granthamiana*. The AFCD has also set up the Shing Mun Arboretum for ex-situ conservation. About 300 species including some rare species have been established there.

Besides the vascular plants recorded in the *Check List*, more than 300 species of bryophytes

and 260 species of lichens are known in Hong Kong. Such a diverse and invaluable local flora deserves our care and appreciation.

Hong Kong Herbarium

The Hong Kong Herbarium of the AFCD is responsible for the systematic collection, identification and curation of plant specimens of Hong Kong. It plays a significant role in supporting the studies on the taxonomy, ecology and conservation of Hong Kong flora. The Hong Kong Herbarium was established in 1878 and has the longest history in the region.

Similar to the practice in major herbaria around the world, most plant specimens in the Hong Kong Herbarium are dry-pressed specimens whereas some are preserved in alcohol. There are over 37 000 specimens, 200 of which are type specimens that render the Herbarium regionally important. The Herbarium houses the holotype specimen of *Bauhinia blakeana* Dunn (Hong Kong Orchid Tree), the emblem and city flower of the HKSAR. It also houses the collections made by C. Ford, A. Henry, S. T. Dunn, W. J. Tutcher, E. H. Wilson and other collectors in Guangdong, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and other localities in China. These materials are important references for phytogeographical studies of China.

Although it was known that C. Abel had collected plants on Hong Kong Island in 1816, the first authentic record for plant specimen collection in Hong Kong was made in 1841 by R. B. Hinds, a surgeon of the *H.M.S. Sulphur*, who collected specimens of 140 species of plants (Bretschneider, 1898). In fact, a number of well-known botanists carried out extensive botanical collection on Hong Kong Island during the first thirty years after the founding of Hong Kong as a trading base. A large number of plant species new to science were discovered. They provided good research materials for G. Bentham's *Flora Hongkongensis* (1861) and H. F. Hance's *Supplement to Bentham's Flora Hongkongensis* (1872). As the Hong Kong Herbarium had not yet been established at that time, the specimens were shipped out of Hong Kong for identification and safe-keeping. These collections are currently kept in the herbaria of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, and the Natural History Museum in London. The original collections made by C. Wright are deposited in the U.S. National Herbarium at the Smithsonian Institutions and Harvard University Herbaria, U.S.A.

In the annual report of 1872, Charles Ford, the then Superintendent of Government Gardens of Hong Kong, suggested to establish a herbarium for keeping dried plant specimens in the Government Gardens. In 1878, a public herbarium was set up primarily with Ford's own collections from Hong Kong and South China. The Hong Kong Herbarium is the first public herbarium in China.

From 1882 to 1914, a series of expeditions were made by the Herbarium staff to Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, Fujian and central China to investigate the flora and the economic plant products which were unknown to the outside world. *Flora of Kwangtung and Hong Kong (China)*, written by S. T. Dunn and W. J. Tutcher, the then Superintendents of the Botanical and Forestry Department of Hong Kong from 1903 to 1910 and from 1910 to 1920 respectively, was published in 1912. The work gave a detailed floristic account of Hong Kong as well as South China.

During the winter of 1926, Ren-chang Ching, a Chinese pioneer and world authority in pteridophytes visited the Hong Kong Herbarium together with his mentor Woon-yong Chun, a leading Chinese botanist at the time. It is believed that Ching began his life-long career in the study of the Chinese ferns with this visit.

The collection of the Herbarium continued to grow with the addition of more specimens from China, Indochina, the Philippines, India and Australia. The Herbarium was of sufficient international significance that it was evacuated under special arrangement in 1940 to Penang, Malaysia for safe-keeping prior to the Japanese occupation in the Second World War. During the war years, it was under the care of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Although the library collection was unfortunately lost, the Herbarium collection was returned to Hong Kong in 1948, being housed temporarily in the Supper Room of the Government House. The Herbarium was brought back to function in 1950 in the Main Building of the University of Hong Kong.

In 1951, the departments of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Gardens were

amalgamated to form the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Department. Later in 1953, the Gardens Division, including the Herbarium and Botanic Gardens, was transferred to the Urban Services Department. The Herbarium was transferred again in 1971 to the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, which was renamed as Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in 2000.

The Herbarium moved several times in the recent decades: the Northcote Science Building (1953) at the University of Hong Kong; Central Government Offices, West Wing (1959); Causeway Bay Magistracy Building (1968); 14th floor, Canton Road Government Offices (1971); New World Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui (1982); 3rd floor, Canton Road Government Offices (1986); and 7th floor, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices (2000) where the specimens are kept under 24-hours temperature and humidity-controlled environment.

The Hong Kong Herbarium has been and continues to be a research centre for botanists. Its collection of specimens, associated field notes and botanical literature offers good reference materials to botanists who wish to write about the local flora. Various contemporary botanical works have made reference to the Herbarium collection, for instance: *Hong Kong Trees* (H. C. Tang, 1969), *Plants of Hong Kong* (S. L. Thrower, 1969), *Hong Kong Climbing Plants* (S. L. Thrower, 1983), *Hong Kong Trees Omnibus Volume* (S. L. Thrower, 1988), *Chinese Medicinal Herbs of Hong Kong, Vol. 1 – 8* (S. C. Cheung, N. H. Li & K. M. Lau, eds., 1978 – 2000), *Grasses and Sedges of Hong Kong* (D. A. Griffiths, 1983), *Ferns of Hong Kong* (H. H. Edie, 1977), *The Genera of the Orchidaceae in Hong Kong* (S. Y. Hu, 1977), *Hong Kong Orchids* (G. Barretto & J. L. Young Saye, 1980), *Systematics of Epilobium (Onagraceae) in China* (C. J. Chen, P. C. Hoch & P. H. Raven, 1992), *Hong Kong Ferns* (M. L. So, 1994), and *Hong Kong Vascular Plants: Distribution and Status* (R. T. Corlett et al., eds., 2000).

The Herbarium plays an important role in increasing awareness of the local flora and its conservation in the community by serving as a resource and information centre on the local flora. The Herbarium collection and its reference library are open to the public. Also available to the public is an electronic database of the specimens in the Herbarium. The Herbarium also offers plant identification services to government departments and members of the public as well as group visits by appointment.

Abbreviations

Hab.	Habit
Loc.	Localities
Dist.	Distribution
*	Introduced plant
†	New addition
Check List HK Pl. 1993.	<i>Check List of Hong Kong Plants</i> , 1993 edition.
Fl. Hongk.	<i>Flora Hongkongensis</i> (Bentham, 1861).
ICBN	<i>International Code of Botanical Nomenclature</i> (Saint Louis Code) (Greuter et al. 2000)

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- CHEN Zhong-yi: Magnoliaceae, Illiciaceae, Schisandraceae, Ranunculaceae, Droseraceae, Passifloraceae, Cruciferae, Olacaceae, Opiliaceae, Polygalaceae, Xanthophyllaceae, Araliaceae, Umbelliferae, Caprifoliaceae
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Check List of Hong Kong Plants 2001

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