



# **SUSTAINABLE RETENTION INDEX VALUE**

## **(SRIV)© 2010**

Version 4

A visual method of objectively rating the viability of urban trees  
for development sites and management,  
based on general tree and landscape assessment criteria.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Sustainable Retention Index Value (SRIV)©

SRIV© provides a dual method of objectively rating the viability of urban trees for development sites based on general tree and landscape assessment criteria, and a numeric index for each tree as a tree management tool. SRIV© is designed as an objective system based on set criteria to replace previous subjective systems. SRIV© is based on the principle of sustaining trees in the urban environment including remnant forest trees, but does not cover social aspects of trees, or hedges. Dead trees and environmental or noxious weed species are not considered as removal of these trees is generally encouraged.

SRIV© benefits the arboriculturist by defining each variable providing certainty and clarity to their meaning and by issuing a definite index value to each category. This enables the professional manager of urban trees with an assumed knowledge of the taxa and its growing environment to consider the tree *in situ* and is based on the physical attributes of the tree and its response to its environment. SRIV© considers its *age class*, *condition class*, *vigour class* and its sustainable retention with regard to the safety of people or damage to property. The ability to retain the tree with remedial work, or beneficial modifications to its growing environment or options for removal and replacement.

To promote tree retention, remediation works to improve the growing environment should always be attempted where ever possible. Successive assessments may document improvements in a tree where it responded favorably to remediation, or where conditions in its growing environment improved naturally, or conversely a decline, or a static rating if the tree deteriorated, or no change observed, respectively.

SRIV© is designed to achieve a quick and readily understood value for a tree but does not replace the need for a comprehensive assessment of a tree and as a tool is intended to be used in conjunction with or complementary to a detailed tree assessment. As a management tool the ongoing SRIV© assessment of a tree may indicate its response to remedial works or other modifications to its growing environment over time.

SRIV© is a realistic approach to managing trees but recognises from the outset that as tree taxa are a vast and varied array of organisms, not all will fit easily into the system, e.g. tree species with a lifespan shorter than twenty years, most *Acacia species*. Field trials have revealed that it is suitable for the majority of trees.

An example of a SRIV© for a Mature tree with Good Vigour and Poor Condition is an assessment value of MGVP – 6, with 6 as the index value, see page 4. The matrix provides indices as a tree management decision making tool and the Age / Vigour / Condition classes as a tree assessment system.

The Glossary details the definitions for terms to be used with the SRIV© system and are taken from the Institute of Australian Consulting Arboriculturists (IACA)© Dictionary for Managing Trees in Urban Environments<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Draper BD and Richards PA 2009, *Dictionary for Managing Trees in Urban Environments*, Institute of Australian Consulting Arboriculturists (IACA), CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia.

## Matrix - Sustainable Retention Index Value (SRIV)©

### Use of this document and referencing

The Sustainable Retention Index Value (SRIV)© is free to use, but only in its entirety and must be cited as follows:

IACA, 2010, *Sustainable Retention Index Value (SRIV)*, Version 4, A visual method of objectively rating the viability of urban trees for development sites and management, based on general tree and landscape assessment criteria, Institute of Australian Consulting Arboriculturists, Australia, [www.iaca.org.au](http://www.iaca.org.au).

The matrix is to be used with the value classes defined in the Glossary for Age / Vigour / Condition.  
 An index value is given to each category where ten (10) is the highest value.

Age Class	Vigour Class and Condition Class					
	Good Vigour & Good Condition (GVG)	Good Vigour & Fair Condition (GVF)	Good Vigour & Poor Condition (GVP)	Low Vigour & Good Condition (LVG)	Low Vigour & Fair Condition (LVF)	Low Vigour & Poor Condition (LVP)
	Able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. No remedial work or improvement to growing environment required. May be subject to high vigour. Retention potential - Medium – Long Term.	Able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. Remedial work may be required or improvement to growing environment may assist. Retention potential - Medium Term. Potential for longer with remediation or favourable environmental conditions.	Able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. Remedial work unlikely to assist condition, improvement to growing environment may assist. Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with remediation or favourable environmental conditions.	May be able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. No remedial work required, but improvement to growing environment may assist vigour. Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with remediation or favourable environmental conditions.	May be able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. Remedial work or improvement to growing environment may assist condition and vigour. Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with remediation or favourable environmental conditions.	Unlikely to be able to be retained if sufficient space available above and below ground for future growth. Remedial work or improvement to growing environment unlikely to assist condition or vigour. Retention potential - Likely to be removed immediately or retained for Short Term. Potential for longer with remediation or favourable environmental conditions.
Young (Y)	<b>YGVG - 9</b> Index Value 9 Retention potential - Long Term. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5 m. High potential for future growth and adaptability. Retain, move or replace.	<b>YGVF - 8</b> Index Value 8 Retention potential - Short – Medium Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5 m. Medium-high potential for future growth and adaptability. Retain, move or replace.	<b>YGVP - 5</b> Index Value 5 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5 m. Low-medium potential for future growth and adaptability. Retain, move or replace.	<b>YLVG - 4</b> Index Value 4 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5 m. Medium potential for future growth and adaptability. Retain, move or replace.	<b>YLVF - 3</b> Index Value 3 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5m. Low-medium potential for future growth and adaptability. Retain, move or replace.	<b>YLVP - 1</b> Index Value 1 Retention potential - Likely to be removed immediately or retained for Short Term. Likely to provide minimal contribution to local amenity if height <5 m. Low potential for future growth and adaptability.
Mature (M)	<b>MGVG - 10</b> Index Value 10 Retention potential - Medium - Long Term.	<b>MGVF - 9</b> Index Value 9 Retention potential - Medium Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions.	<b>MGVP - 6</b> Index Value 6 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions.	<b>MLVG - 5</b> Index Value 5 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions.	<b>MLVF - 4</b> Index Value 4 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions.	<b>MLVP - 2</b> Index Value 2 Retention potential - Likely to be removed immediately or retained for Short Term.
Over-mature (O)	<b>OGVG - 6</b> Index Value 6 Retention potential - Medium - Long Term.	<b>OGVF - 5</b> Index Value 5 Retention potential - Medium Term.	<b>OGVP - 4</b> Index Value 4 Retention potential - Short Term.	<b>OLVG - 3</b> Index Value 3 Retention potential - Short Term. Potential for longer with improved growing conditions.	<b>OLVF - 2</b> Index Value 2 Retention potential - Short Term.	<b>OLVP - 0</b> Index Value 0 Retention potential - Likely to be removed immediately or retained for Short Term.

# GLOSSARY

## Definitions for terminology of SRIV©

### Sustainable Retention Index Value©

From

Draper BD and Richards PA 2009, *Dictionary for Managing Trees in Urban Environments*, Institute of Australian Consulting Arboriculturists (IACA), CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia.

#### Vigour

**Vigour** Ability of a tree to sustain its life processes. This is independent of the *condition* of a tree but may impact upon it. Vigour can appear to alter rapidly with change of seasons (seasonality) e.g. *dormant*, deciduous or semi-deciduous trees. Vigour can be categorized as *Good Vigour*, *High Vigour*, *Low Vigour* and *Dormant Tree Vigour*.

**Good Vigour** Ability of a tree to maintain and sustain its life processes. This may be evident by the *typical* growth of leaves, *crown cover* and *crown density*, branches, roots and trunk and *resistance to predation*. This is independent of the *condition* of a tree but may impact upon it, and especially the ability of a tree to sustain itself against predation.

**High Vigour** *Accelerated growth* of a tree due to incidental or deliberate artificial changes to its growing *environment* that are seemingly beneficial, but may result in *premature aging* or failure if the favourable conditions cease, or promote *prolonged senescence* if the favourable conditions remain, e.g. water from a leaking pipe; water and nutrients from a leaking or disrupted sewer pipe; nutrients from animal waste, a tree growing next to a chicken coop, or a stock feed lot, or a regularly used stockyard; a tree subject to a stringent watering and fertilising program; or some trees may achieve an extended lifespan from continuous *pollarding* practices over the life of the tree.

**Low Vigour** Reduced ability of a tree to sustain its life processes. This may be evident by the *atypical* growth of leaves, reduced *crown cover* and reduced *crown density*, branches, roots and trunk, and a deterioration of their functions with reduced *resistance to predation*. This is independent of the *condition* of a tree but may impact upon it, and especially the ability of a tree to sustain itself against predation.

**Dormant Tree Vigour** Determined by existing turgidity in lowest order branches in the outer extremity of the crown, with good bud set and formation, and where the last *extension growth* is distinct from those most recently preceding it, evident by bud scale scars. Good vigour during dormancy is achieved when such growth is evident on a majority of branches throughout the crown.

#### Age

**Age** Most trees have a stable biomass for the major proportion of their life. The estimation of the age of a tree is based on the knowledge of the expected lifespan of the taxa *in situ* divided into three distinct stages of measurable biomass, when the exact age of the tree from its date of cultivation or planting is unknown and can be categorized as *Young*, *Mature* and *Over-mature*.

**Young** Tree aged less than <20% of life expectancy, *in situ*.

**Mature** Tree aged 20-80% of life expectancy, *in situ*.

**Over-mature** Tree aged greater than >80% of life expectancy, *in situ*, or *senescent* with or without reduced *vigour*, and declining gradually or rapidly but irreversibly to death.

#### Periods of Time

**Periods of Time** The life span of a tree in the urban environment may often be reduced by the influences of encroachment and the dynamics of the environment and can be categorized as *Immediate*, *Short Term*, *Medium Term* and *Long Term*.

**Short Term** A period of time less than <1 – 15 years.

**Medium Term** A period of time 15 – 40 years.

**Long Term** A period of time greater than >40 years.

## **Condition**

**Condition** A tree's *crown form* and growth habit, as modified by its *environment* (aspect, suppression by other trees, soils), the *stability* and *viability* of the *root plate*, trunk and structural branches (first (1<sup>st</sup>) and possibly second (2<sup>nd</sup>) order branches), including structural defects such as wounds, cavities or hollows, *crooked* trunk or weak trunk/branch junctions and the effects of predation by pests and diseases. These may not be directly connected with *vigour* and it is possible for a tree to be of *good vigour* but in *poor condition*. Condition can be categorized as *Good Condition*, *Fair Condition*, *Poor Condition* and *Dead*.

**Good Condition** Tree is of good habit, with *crown form* not severely restricted for space and light, physically free from the adverse effects of *predation* by pests and diseases, obvious instability or structural weaknesses, fungal, bacterial or insect infestation and is expected to continue to live in much the same condition as at the time of inspection provided conditions around it for its basic survival do not alter greatly. This may be independent from, or contributed to by *vigour*.

**Fair Condition** Tree is of good habit or *misshapen*, a form not severely restricted for space and light, has some physical indication of *decline* due to the early effects of *predation* by pests and diseases, fungal, bacterial, or insect infestation, or has suffered physical injury to itself that may be contributing to instability or structural weaknesses, or is faltering due to the modification of the *environment* essential for its basic survival. Such a tree may recover with remedial works where appropriate, or without intervention may stabilise or improve over time, or in response to the implementation of beneficial changes to its local environment. This may be independent from, or contributed to by *vigour*.

**Poor Condition** Tree is of good habit or *misshapen*, a form that may be severely restricted for space and light, exhibits symptoms of advanced and *irreversible decline* such as fungal, or bacterial infestation, major die-back in the branch and *foliage crown*, *structural deterioration* from insect damage e.g. termite infestation, or storm damage or lightning strike, ring barking from borer activity in the trunk, root damage or instability of the tree, or damage from physical wounding impacts or abrasion, or from altered local environmental conditions and has been unable to adapt to such changes and may decline further to death regardless of remedial works or other modifications to the local *environment* that would normally be sufficient to provide for its basic survival if in *good* to *fair* condition. Deterioration physically, often characterised by a gradual and continuous reduction in *vigour* but may be independent of a change in *vigour*, but characterised by a proportionate increase in susceptibility to, and *predation* by pests and diseases against which the tree cannot be sustained. Such conditions may also be evident in trees of advanced senescence due to normal phenological processes, without modifications to the growing environment or physical damage having been inflicted upon the tree. This may be independent from, or contributed to by *vigour*.

**Dead** Tree is no longer capable of performing any of the following processes or is exhibiting any of the following symptoms;

### *Processes*

Photosynthesis via its foliage crown (as indicated by the presence of moist, green or other coloured leaves);

Osmosis (the ability of the root system to take up water);

Turgidity (the ability of the plant to sustain moisture pressure in its cells);

Epicormic shoots or *epicormic strands* in Eucalypts (the production of new shoots as a response to stress, generated from latent or adventitious buds or from a *lignotuber*);

### *Symptoms*

Permanent leaf loss;

Permanent wilting (the loss of turgidity which is marked by desiccation of stems leaves and roots);

Abscission of the *epidermis* (bark desiccates and peels off to the beginning of the sapwood).