This Plant in Focus sheet is in keeping with our resolve to put all our heritage listed trees into the Plant in Focus file.

We have two trees on the National Trust Register of Significant Trees known colloquially around the GBG as the 'Plum Pine' and the 'Plum Fir' respectively. They are both conifers from the family Podocarpaceae and were formerly both classified in the genus Podocarpus. However, the 'plum fir' (known in the literature more commonly as a 'plum yew') has been reclassified into the genus Prumnopitys. Both trees have common Gondwana origins, and have been traced to the humid southern edge of the Gondwana continent. Podocarpus elatus is one of ours -- native to the Australian east coast rain forest remnants -- while Prumopitys andina is endemic to the lower altitudes of the Andes in Chile. There are around 100 different species of Podocarpus and 8 recognised species of Prumnopitys, all of both genera surviving in humid, usually rainforest, conditions in ex-Gondwana areas of the world.

Podocarpus elatus

Family: Podocarpaceae
Genus: Podocarpus
Species: P. elatus
Meaning of Name: podos = foot, carpos = fruit, referring to the swollen fleshy cone (fruit) sitting under the seed. elatus = lofty , referring to the tallness of the species.
Reason for its classification as 'significant':
Our Podocarpus elatus is the largest known specimen in Victoria (which is south of its natural range). It is an 'outstanding specimen of this native species'. In 2004 it was measured at 19 m. tall.
Origin: This species is native to rain forests, especially coastal and river edge rain forests along the east coast of Australia from the Shoalhaven River area of southern NSW to southern Queensland with pockets further north.
Location in the GBG: On the boundary between the 19th and 20th century gardens, on the opposite side of the path to the Sequoiadendron giganteum. A cable holds together the split trunk.
Features: *Podocarpus elatus* can grow into a large tree (40m) in the short period of 8 to 10 years. Its dark green leaves are lanceolate and 5-15cm long. Its bark is dark brown and often fissured and scaly on older trees. It is dioecious. Like all conifers it has cones. On *Podocarpus elatus* trees, the female cones resemble fruit with fused cone scales forming a fleshy, dark purple 'berry'. These attract birds which disperse the seeds in their droppings. The solitary cone makes a fleshy base which is topped with a (usually) single 1cm seed. The 'berries' were eaten by indigenous Australians and are occasionally used more widely in cakes and tarts or made into a jelly. The male cones are narrow and catkin-like to 3 cm long and occur in clusters. The timber is highly regarded. *Podocarpus elatus* has been used as a street tree in Sydney. It can be pruned, clipped into a hedge, and even used for bonsai.
Prumnopitys andina

Family: Podocarpaceae  
Genus: Prumnopitys  
Species: P. andina

Common Names: Chilean plum yew, Plum fruited yew, plum yew, (around GBG: plum fir)  
Meaning of Name: pryynmos = hindmost, pitys = pine. This name apparently refers to a distinguishing feature of these trees: their 'resin ducts are behind the mid-rib' of the leaves. andina = of the Andes.

Reasons for its classification as 'significant': Prumnopitys andina is a rare species with a global conservation status of 'vulnerable'. It commonly grows to only 15m. and is often shrubby when cultivated. Ours is 21m. tall. Ours is the only known specimen in Victoria.

Origin: This species is endemic to low to mid-altitudes of the Andes in Chile. It grows in the bottom of valleys close to large rivers. One of its companion plants is the Quillaja saponaria, another of GBG's significant trees.

Location in the GBG: Close (too close) to the Ginkgo biloba, between the Ginkgo and the east-west path.

Features: Prumnopitys andina is dioecious. Its leaves are linear or sickle shaped and grow in yew-like formations along a mid-rib. The bark is dark brown, weathering to light grey. Each of the 1 to 4 scales of its female seed cones becomes a soft, edible, deep red-purple 'berry' covering a single seed. These 'berries' (arils) are food for birds which disperse the seeds through their droppings. The berries are also eaten by Native American Chileans and a jam is produced from them. The pollen cones are in groups of 10 to 20, each attached to an axillary shoot. The wood is yellowish and is good furniture timber. The germination of the seeds can be delayed for up to 4 years and regeneration of the species is threatened, in part because of livestock grazing on the fleshy cones.

References:
Australian Conifers (http://www.anbg.gov.au)  
The Gymnosperm Database  
The National Trust (http://trusttrees.org.au)  
Threatened conifers of the World (http://threatenedconifers.rbge.org.uk)
Podocarpus P. elatus
Plum, Illawarra Plum or Brown Pine
Heritage listed

Prumnopitys andina
Chilean Plum Yew, Plum-fruited Yew, Plum Yew, Plum Fir