

Genesis of the 'Apoliu Declaration': Global Conservation of Ancient and Historic Camellia Trees

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Abstract

Following a most successful meeting of the ICS Committee for Historic Camellia Conservation in Guangdong Province China in October 2019, the ICS Committee has brought forward for consideration by the ICS Board and Directors, agreement to the 'Apoliu Declaration', a world first international declaration aimed at global conservation of ancient and historic camellia trees. This Declaration (currently in its Protocol form) is named after the place of its inception, namely Apoliu Camellia Tourism Valley near Conghua in Guangdong Province. This proposed Declaration also sets criteria for Specification of Ancient Indigenous Camellia Trees and Historic Ornamental Camellia Trees, Standard of Measurements and Records, and the institution of International Awards for Significant Ancient Indigenous Camellia Trees and Significant Historic Ornamental Trees.

This short overview will focus on **four pressing reasons** why this initiative should be a priority of the ICS: (i) protection of ancient indigenous camellia tree in the context of the greatest loss of plant biodiversity recorded in human history, including indigenous *Camellia* species (ii) preserve precious camellia genetic resources to sustain the future prosperity of the camellia industries including teas, edible oils and nursery stock (iii) the preservation of historic ornamental trees may help prevent so many *Camellia* cultivars developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from becoming extinct, and (iv) the global climate emergency raises the spectre of 'horticultural triage' across the world, as maintenance of non-essential collections of ornamental plants are sacrificed to more significant nursery stock. One **final reason** is that the conservation of ancient and historic *Camellia* trees enables the ICS to promote *Camellia* not only as a source of beautiful flowers but as a symbol of endurance in harsh times as well as good, flowering for many generations.

Duration: Ten minute presentation