3 years on... 6 trees return to their roots at Bras Basah

Replanting part of $52,000 project to preserve them and create green space

BY ALEXIS HOOI

SPARED the axe three years ago when construction of the new Singapore Management University (SMU) began, six of 17 preserved rain trees finally returned to their original home at the university's new Bras Basah campus yesterday.

The six rain trees are part of a total of 11 rain trees and six Tembusu trees — ranging from 25 to 35 years old — which were uprooted and nurtured in a Lim Chu Kang nursery, in an effort to retain the greenery in the historic city centre area.

The rain trees were dug up from their temporary homes, pruned and each secured onto a truck before starting on their two-hour-long journey to be replanted in the evening.

The manager of Island Landscape and Nursery in Lim Chu Kang, Mr Tee Chye Yong, 46, said that the trees got special "tender loving care", including custom-made metal supports that held their roots in transit.

All 17 trees will be replanted by next year as part of the SMU's $52,000 project to preserve them.

The university's landscape consultant, Mr Peter Bridgewater, 49, said that some trees were too large, or involved too much cost, to be saved.

"It's inevitable that some trees would be lost in such a situation," he said.

"But we wanted to minimise the impact, and recognise that there is a certain heritage here to be preserved," he added.

Besides the 17 trees held at Lim Chu Kang, other trees were moved from their original spots to other locations in the campus area to accommodate ongoing construction.

These include a 70-year-old rain tree about six storeys high and weighing more than 37 tonnes — or as heavy as three fully-loaded double-decker buses.

University authorities said this is part of a plan to create a green space for the public to share with students, when they start their school term this August.

Said SMU's campus development director, 51-year-old Foo Yit San: "This will help link the green corridor from the Singapore Art Museum to the Fort Canning Park area."