



BGCI Accreditation

Botanic Garden Accreditation Standards Manual

Version 2.0 (2022)



**BOTANIC
GARDENS**
CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL



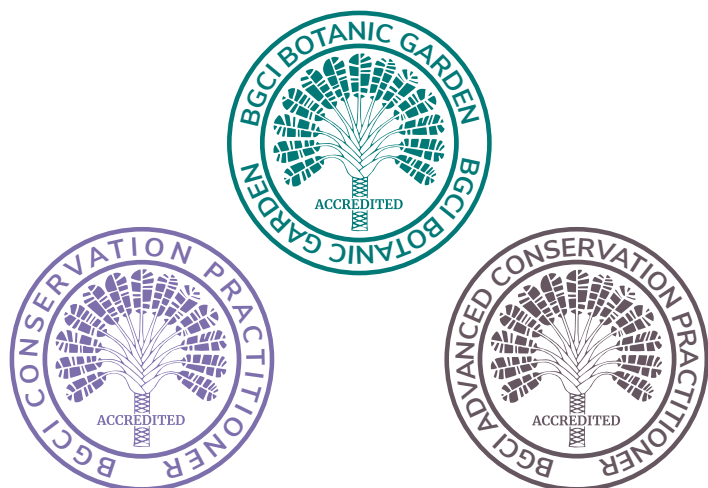
About BGCI Accreditation

Introduction

BGCI's Accreditation distinguishes botanic gardens from non-botanic gardens and recognises achievements in plant conservation.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation is aimed at botanical institutions wishing to establish their credentials as botanic gardens.

The BGCI Conservation Practitioner and Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditations recognise conservation-orientated botanic gardens and botanic gardens that focus on conservation actions that support local, national or global conservation goals.



Rationale

BGCI's mission is 'to mobilise botanic gardens and engage partners in securing plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet'.

Activities that botanic gardens do uniquely well – such as documenting, understanding, growing and conserving plant diversity across the taxonomic array – are not sufficiently recognised by policymakers and funders. This has led to the erosion of the values and activities that define a botanic garden compared to a public park, for example.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation Scheme assesses and places a high value on these unique skills, knowledge and data in botanic gardens.

It is also BGCI's experience that botanic gardens frequently don't realise that their collections, knowledge, data and skills are highly relevant to the conservation and management of rare and threatened plant diversity.

We believe that accreditation motivates and informs botanic gardens, thus empowering them to do more plant conservation so that we can better achieve our collective missions.

Accreditation can result in tangible benefits for participating gardens – such as recognition, peer comparison, creating standards for excellence, and funding – and will act as a motivator for botanic garden leadership.

Botanic Garden Accreditation	Conservation Practitioner Accreditation	Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation
Open to all institutions	BGCI Members Only	BGCI Members Only
Members: Free Non-Members: \$65	Members: Free Non-Members: Membership Fees	Members: \$500 Non-Members: Membership Fees + \$500

Duration

Accreditation will be granted for a period of five years, after which gardens will have to renew their application. Gardens can apply for a different BGCI Accreditation at any time.

Recognition

Certificates of accreditation will be issued together with a certification logo that recipients can use on their website, letterhead, etc. Recently accredited gardens will be highlighted on the BGCI news homepage and in the BGCI newsletter, *Cultivate*. Botanic gardens accredited as Advanced Conservation Practitioners will be publicised in *BGJournal*. All accreditations will be listed in GardenSearch.

Methodology for Accreditation Scheme

BGCI's Botanic Garden Accreditation is designed to be as inclusive as possible, but still ensure a level of standards across botanic gardens. For this reason, the criteria it measures will assess and value the fundamental components of a botanic garden.

BGCI defines these components in the [BGCI Technical Review: defining the botanic garden, and how to measure performance and success](#).

The BGCI Accreditation assessment criteria can be divided into two categories:

- 1. Policies and Infrastructure:** Policies, infrastructures and practices in place that are fundamental to botanic gardens (e.g. well documented collections, infrastructures, etc.)
- 2. Conservation and Sustainability Activities:** Specific conservation, sustainability and ethical actions, including public engagement, training, research, ex situ conservation, *in situ* conservation and policy-related activities.

BGCI will assess the policies, infrastructures and practices of candidate gardens through several mechanisms:

- Through an application form and uploaded evidence, which includes documentation such as Strategic Plans, policies, scientific publications, and other types of evidence presented in the form of photos, videos, links, etc.
- Through the candidate's own and BGCI's databases: PlantSearch, ThreatSearch and GardenSearch.

Achieving Accreditation

For Botanic Gardens to achieve the different forms of BGCI Accreditation, they will need to complete the applications found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation.

These manuals provide details on the standards for accreditation for each BGCI Accreditation. Each manual provides clear indications of targets for each component of accreditation and gives examples of evidence for these targets.



Standards for BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation

BGCI's Botanic Garden Accreditation is aimed at botanic institutions wishing to establish their credentials as botanic gardens. The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation is designed to be as inclusive as possible while still setting a global standard for botanic gardens. The application process involves filling out a questionnaire and providing documented evidence of activities. The criteria measured will assess and value the fundamental components of a botanic garden, including:

- Leadership and Strategic Direction
- Open to the Public
- Collections Management
- Public Engagement
- Horticulture
- Research Capacity
- Conservation Activities
- Sustainability and Ethics
- Specialist Staff Expertise
- Network Membership

Below you will find standards and examples for each of the criteria measured in BGCI's Botanic Garden Accreditation. These standards have been updated in 2022.

Examples of evidence submitted by BGCI Accredited Botanic Gardens can be found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation/

Botanic Garden Accreditation Standards

Leadership and Strategic Direction

Target 1

A strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of the operation of the botanic garden is in place and implemented.

Examples of Evidence

The botanic garden's strategic plan. A strategic plan can cover the following areas; these can be part of one document or several:

- Vision and mission
- Institution wide goals, outcomes and objectives
- Organisational or governance
- Conservation priorities
- Research priorities
- Landscape management
- Sustainability
- Visitor, education, or public engagement

Describe how the strategic plan is being implemented.

Target 2

A collections policy is in place and implemented.

Examples of Evidence

The botanic garden's collections policy (or strategy). A collection policy can cover the following areas; these can be part of one document or several:

- Collection's mission
- Collection's scope
- Acquisition (inc. biosecurity; access, intellectual rights and ethics)
- Accessioning and documentation standards
- De-accession/plant disposal standards
- Evaluation of collections

Open to the Public

Target 3

The botanic garden is open to the public on regular hours or at the least by appointment.

Examples of Evidence

A link to your website detailing how to visit the botanic garden and the hours of opening.

Agreements with schools, universities, etc... on visits to the botanic garden.

Collections Management

Target 4

Permanent living collections documented in plant records database.

Examples of Evidence

A screenshot of your plant records database (such as BG Base, Iris BG, etc...) or a file of your plant accession records.

If available, provide a weblink to the institution's plant records database.

Target 5

Plant records are uploaded on PlantSearch.

Examples of Evidence

A link to PlantSearch records.

A receipt of the botanic garden's PlantSearch upload.

Target 6

Botanic garden shares collections data.

Examples of Evidence

A link to shared collections data (on PlantSearch or botanic garden website).

Documents that demonstrate the living collection's data is shared (i.e. data sharing agreements).

Public Engagement

Target 7

Public engagement, educational, or cultural activities have plant diversity as a major theme.

Examples of Evidence

Detailed description of public engagement, educational, or cultural activities. E.g.: course curricula or catalogue; examples of events; public interpretation material.

A link to schedule of activities.

Photos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.

Videos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.

Target 8

Plant living collections are clearly labelled for visitors.

Examples of Evidence

At least 5 photos displaying the label and the plant specimen.

If available, one example of an interpretation panel showing plant diversity as a major theme.

Horticulture

Target 9

Horticultural operations are in place with well-curated, managed and maintained living plant collections. The botanic garden carries out at least three horticultural activities.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence for at least three horticultural activities.

- Pest, weed and disease management (evidence such as an annual plan on pest, disease and weed control)
- Plant propagation (evidence such as images of potting up benches, mist units, propagation units, growing up area)
- Horticultural training by or for staff (evidence such as links to the courses, photographs, certificates of attendance)
- General maintenance of display collections (evidence such as pruning, planting, irrigation, tree care)
- Management of newly acquired plant material (evidence such as images of quarantine facilities)
- Accessioning of plant collections (evidence such as images of clearly labelled plants displaying accession numbers in the propagation, growing and/or display area)
- Other (please provide evidence)

Research Capacity

Target 10

The botanic garden participates in, or supports, scientific research on plant conservation.

Examples of Evidence

Provide at least one example of scientific activity within the last five years. Examples could include:

- Peer reviewed paper acknowledging support from the botanic garden
- Publications written by visiting scholars, professionals and visitors that use the institution's collections for scientific research
- Publications written by the botanic garden staff
- Email correspondence with collaborators evidencing that the collections are being used for scientific research
- Material transfer agreements
- Scientific project information
- Other (please specify)

Zürich Succulent Plant Collection



Conservation Activities

Target 11

The botanic garden has a minimum of three activities focused on plant conservation.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence for at least three activities.

Capacity Building / Public engagement

- Training courses on plant conservation attended by staff
- Training courses on plant conservation policy, practice or communication offered
- Conservation volunteer programme in place
- School programmes with plant conservation/environmental education component
- Support staff with formal affiliation with BGCI, IUCN, SSC specialist groups, or other conservation organisation
- Public displays with a conservation or environmental message
- Public events designed to raise awareness of plant conservation and environment

Conservation Horticulture

- Horticultural trials (inc. propagation and germination studies) carried out on native and/or threatened taxa
- Improving horticultural knowledge for native and/or threatened taxa
- Invasive species removals and risk assessments

Ex situ conservation

- Propagation of species collected in the wild
- Seed conservation of species collected in the wild
- Exchange or supply of wild species material with other conservation practitioners or gardens
- Field gene banks or ex situ collections managed for conservation purposes

In situ conservation

- Habitat restoration and species reintroductions
- Natural area management
- Land and habitat protection (through policy and government engagement)
- Native species areas or gardens part of the living collection display
- Field-based ecological studies carried out on native habitats or species
- Population monitoring of native and/or threatened taxa
- Restored and managed natural areas within garden

Policy

- Engagement with local or national policy makers on the development of National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans, or equivalents
- Contribute to international plant conservation policy (e.g. the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation, CBD etc.)
- Collections sourced and exchanged in full compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol and CITES
- Conservation collections policy implemented
- Plant health collections policy implemented
- Invasive species policy implemented
- Gardens registered as national CITES rescue centres / refuges / training centres

Research

- IUCN red listing or conservation assessments compiled at local, national or global levels
- Publication of plant conservation, environmental, traditional knowledge research for policymakers, researchers, or the general public
- Publications on wild (non-domesticated) plant diversity.

Sustainability and Ethics

Target 12

The botanic garden has a minimum of two activities focused on sustainability.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence demonstrating at least two sustainability activities.

- Waste reduction/recycling schemes in place and on display to the public with appropriate interpretation
- Renewable energy constitutes a proportion of the institution's energy portfolio and energy conservation measures being implemented
- Water saving or recycling schemes in place
- ISO14001 or other recognised sustainability accreditation gained
- Sustainability plan/documentation
- Locally sourced commodities and products sold in retail outlets
- Composting facilities in house
- Use of peat-free compost for most plants in the garden

Target 13

The botanic garden has a minimum of one ethical practice in place.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence demonstrating at least one ethical practice.

- Responsible sourcing of commodities and products sold in retail outlets
- Responsible sourcing of materials and plants used by the organisation
- Ethical funding policy in place
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- Implementation of best practice in access and benefits sharing
- Leadership commitment to staff and visitor diversity and inclusion

Specialist Staff Expertise

Target 14

At least one member of staff has plant conservation, science, or specialist horticulture as part of their job description.

Examples of Evidence

Staff job descriptions that demonstrate that the institution has staff with specialist skills.

Network Membership

Target 15

The garden partners with other botanical institutional, attends botanical conferences or belongs to a botanical network.

Examples of Evidence

Examples of evidence can include conference programs; attendee list from conference; talk abstract; network membership; MOU/partnership agreement.



Cover Image: Huntington Botanical Gardens