

How to remain in the public eye

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Abstract

The Botanical Garden of the University in Ljubljana had long been hardly present at all in the public life of the country. Our program has been divided into several levels: activation of journalists, organization of different events, guided tours for schools and groups of plant lovers, monthly lectures, workshops and writing articles to several magazines. The Garden also began to be promoted indirectly.

We are investing much effort in attracting attention of different media to get access to the public in the broadest possible sense (television, radio, newspapers) wherewith we have had considerable success in the recent years. Our presence in the media has progressed to a practically weekly basis. The indirect promotion of the Garden is associated to the fact that a number of television stations and various newspapers use it as a background for their contributions, shooting parts of their broadcasts in the loveliest parts of the Garden premises.

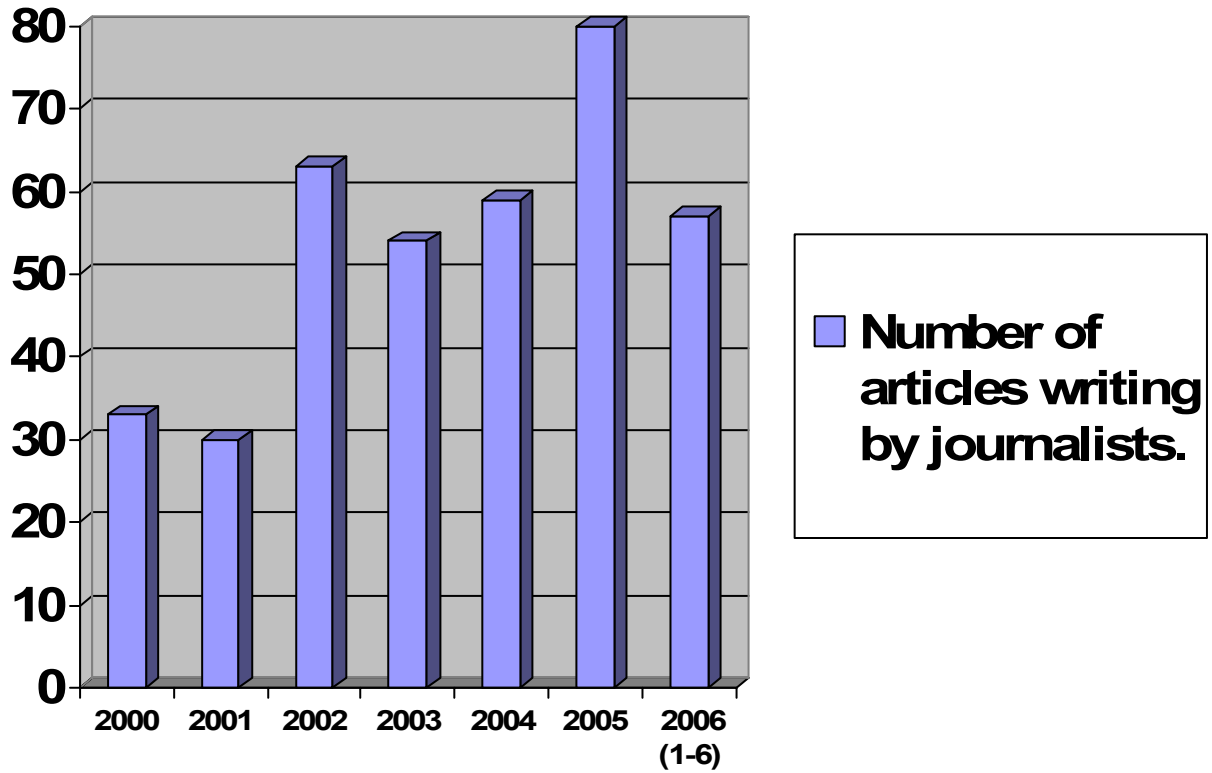
The goal of our endeavours is not only to present our Garden as such but also the activities and importance of botanical gardens in general, to enhance the interest of the broadest public in plant life and make it more aware of the need to protect plants and their habitats.

Introduction

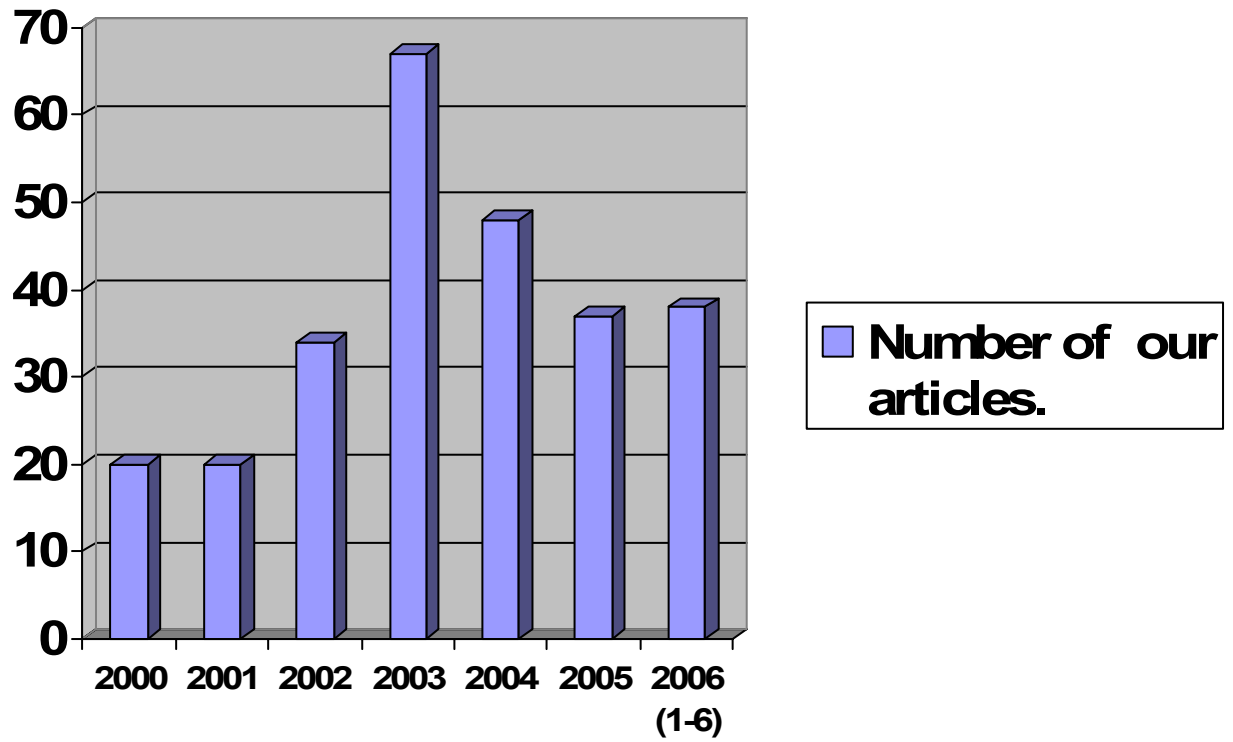
The Botanical Garden of the University in Ljubljana had long been hardly present at all in the public life of the country. In 1995 we embarked upon an intensive promotion campaign of the Garden in the public life. Our program has since 2001 been expanded and divided into several levels: activation of journalists, organization of different events. Added to the long-practiced guided tours for schools and groups of plant lovers, regular monthly lectures, workshops and announced guided tours. The representatives of the Garden began contributing monthly articles to several magazines. The Garden also began to be promoted indirectly.

We are investing much effort in attracting attention of different media to get access to the public in the broadest possible sense (television, radio, newspapers) wherewith we have had considerable success in the recent years.

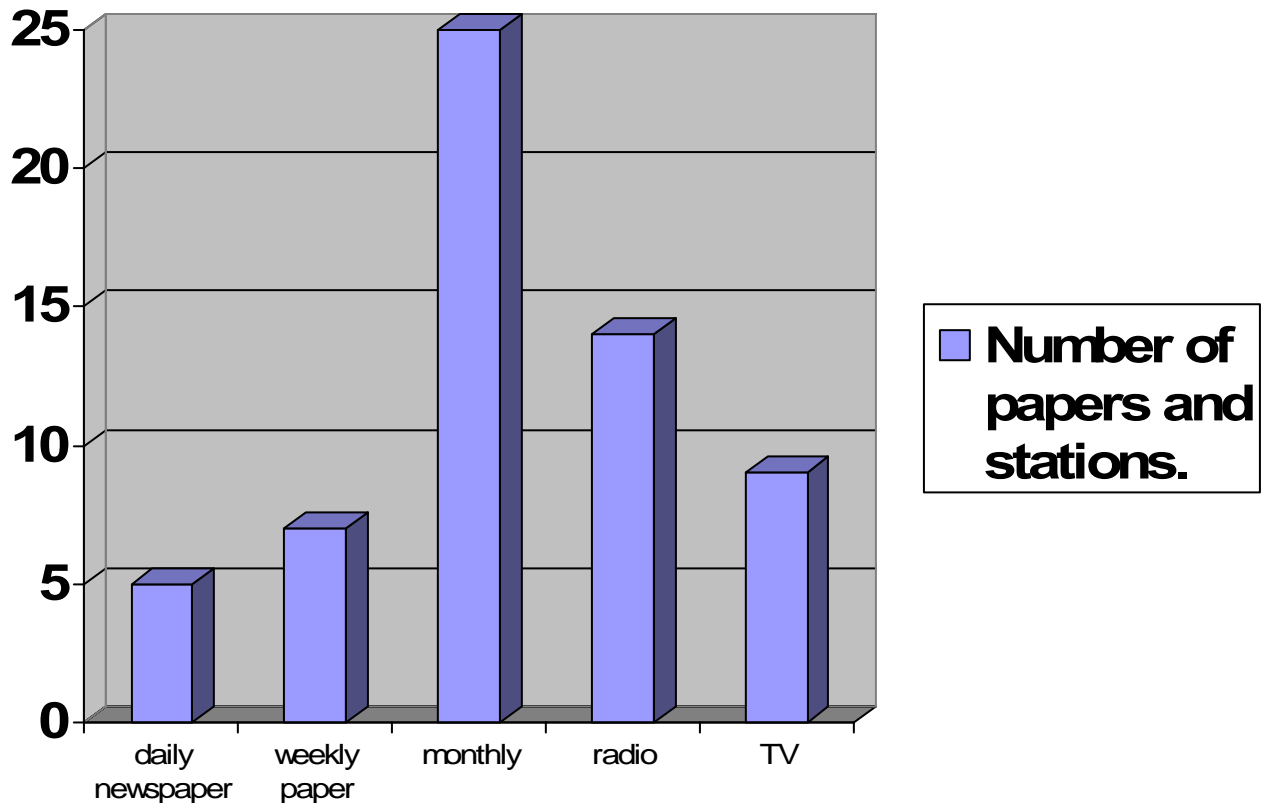
Results



Graph 1: Number of articles per single years, namely, by journalists reporting on the Botanical Garden or activities taking place on its premises. The 2006 data encompass but the first six months of the year.



Graph 2: Number of articles that the expert staff of the Botanical Garden contributed to different newspapers. The 2006 data encompass but the first six months of the year.



Graph 3: Number of various mass media in which the Botanical Garden featured in journalists' articles or our own contributions.

Discussion

In the last six years the Botanical Garden of the University of Ljubljana has affirmed its presence in the mass media. Shown in two graphs are Garden-related articles contributed by others and our own published articles dealing with various plant species, their cultivation and the importance of botanical gardens with their specific presentations. A third graph refers to different media in which we were present through journalists' articles or our own writing.

The Botanical Garden team is comprised of four full-time gardeners and one full-time expert, and one additional expert employed on a part-time basis. The Ljubljana Botanical Garden is visited each year by about 8500 primary and secondary school children and students for whom guided tours are provided by senior biology students properly trained for this kind of work. A considerable amount of time is being invested in the work with the media, as a result of which the public image of the Garden has acquired greater distinctiveness, thereby contributing also to that of other botanical gardens in Europe. However, in order to get media attention it is indispensable to engage in numerous additional activities and to constantly provide information on our work to the media. To this end the Botanical Garden organizes various workshops and lectures.

The Botanical Garden has featured in all daily newspapers, particularly the Delo, a daily with the largest circulation in Slovenia. We also managed to put our problems on the agenda of parliamentary questions. Articles on the Botanical Garden were published in all of the biggest local weeklies and monthlies. It was presented in several broadcasts on the national radio and TV, as well as some other stations. In the spring of 2006 three TV broadcasts, in three consecutive weeks, were dedicated to our work and in a broader sense to the importance of botanical gardens elsewhere, while problematizing the inadequate support of the State to this realm of activities in Slovenia.

The Garden found its way into the mass media also indirectly. It served as a scenic background or a promotional ambient to TV interviews, announcement of events by different TV stations, various promotional events in the printed media, as well as events organized on a variety of occasions such as presentation of books. These contributions often targeted an audience other than that interested in the issues of the previous paragraph.

Our articles on plants, their importance and the role of botanical gardens, occasional presentation of botanical gardens in the most widely read Slovenian daily Delo, regular publication of our Garden-related articles in three or four most popular gardening magazines (*Rože in vrt/Flowers and Garden*, *Gaia*, *Moj mali svet/My Little World*, *Vrtnar/Gardener*) - all of this has enhanced the public interest in our autochthonous plants and also in the mission of our garden.

Our activities of the last six years have brought increasingly positive results in terms of the number of visitors and their reaction to the Botanical Garden, and also with respect to a more distinctive public image and importance of this institution. This has been reflected in a livelier interest of the mass media in our activities.

References

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