

Setting up a National Botanic Garden Day

Brian Johnson, Marcela Sánchez & Maite Lascurain

Botanic Gardens Conservation International

One proven strategy for raising public awareness is organized events and celebrations that promote a specific conservation message. Since 1972, World Environment Day has raised awareness of the environment. Arbor Day has successfully promoted the importance of trees and tree planting in the U.S. for more than 130 years. In recent years, several countries have organized national celebrations of botanic gardens and plant conservation.

This presentation will discuss the successes and challenges of managing a large-scale public awareness campaign. Specific examples to be highlighted during the presentation include:

- **National Botanic Garden Day (Argentina):** For the first time anywhere in the world, a National Botanic Garden Day was celebrated Oct. 14, 2005, by Argentine botanic gardens. Thirty-five gardens across Argentina held special events and activities for schools, families and visitors to explore their local garden. With the common theme “Discovering the Garden,” each participant garden designed its own celebration with a different approach to raise the profile of botanic gardens and plant conservation locally and nationally. The First National Botanic Garden Day was a joint project of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and the Red Argentina de Jardines Botánicos, supported by Investing in Nature-Argentina Programme. Reflections on the long-term value of this event for the participating botanic gardens will also be provided.
- **National Botanic Garden Day (Mexico):** On March 3, 2006, Mexican botanic gardens celebrated the country’s first National Botanic Garden Day with the theme “Plants in Daily Life.” Eighteen botanic gardens organized workshops, contests, exhibitions, and tree plantings, among other activities. An estimated 11,000 visitors took part in events nationwide. National Botanic Garden Day was coordinated by the Asociación Mexicana de Jardines Botánicos, with the support of the Investing in Nature-Mexico Programme and Botanic Gardens Conservation International. The presentation will also include the results of a survey conducted to assess the effectiveness of the day and to make recommendations for future National Botanic Garden Day celebrations.
- **Plant Conservation Day (United States):** On May 18, 2006, Plant Conservation Day launched with a coordinated celebration at botanic gardens and zoos throughout the United States in a unified effort to promote public awareness of plants, current threats to plants, and how individuals can play an active role in saving plants. Participating Plant Conservation Day institutions are free to design their celebrations in a manner that best suits their individual sites and local audiences. However, an online celebration planning kit developed by BGCI (U.S.) is available for guidance. Plant Conservation Day is a joint project of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (U.S.) and the Association of Zoological Horticulture.

Congress participants attending this session will receive a Plant Conservation Day materials kit, with full information on organizing a Plant Conservation Day celebration at their sites in 2007, and a poster from the Mexican National Botanic Garden Day.