

Making exhibitions come alive

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I) Introduction (5 min)

Many botanical gardens stage exhibitions, but these sometimes lack an interactive aspect. How can we involve the visitor in taking an active approach? How can we encourage an exchange between visitors and the guide? How can we involve visitors in activities and games? So that the exhibition can be a living, user-friendly activity, and so that the visitor can feel involved, have fun and learn.

Workshop objectives:

- to offer ideas for discussion relating to running an exhibition
- to help exhibition designers to develop new ideas for making exhibitions more lively.

II) Examples at the botanical gardens (25 min)

During 2005, the Nancy botanical gardens (Le Montet, France) organised an exhibition on the theme of citrus fruit. The exhibition, which was organised as part of the “Nancy 2005, le temps des Lumières” events, helped to make children aware of biodiversity through the study of a known family of plants.

In fact, we only know a few fruit varieties – the ones that we eat most often -, whereas there are over 5000 citrus fruit varieties!

The exhibition itself was not considered to be an interactive one, but it came to life as a result of the many activities that were organised around it.

The activities organised around the exhibition were as follows:

The exhibition :

- A game based on biodiversity
- An odour recognition game

Educational workshops:

- Making bergamot sweets: the importance of a fruit that forms part of a region’s local heritage.
- Writing with lemon juice: the recreational aspect. Contact with the fruit.
- A story: Working on the imagination. Links between a story and fruit.

A story:

Production of a story used during the workshops. To present a family of fruits, their varieties, uses and origins.

As a supplement to the exhibition guide, it was an original resource that combined accurate information and fiction.

Children’s courses:

A week's activities organised around the story. Disguises. Acting out the story.
A week involving sensory activities: tasting, flavours... Tasting little-known fruit.

During the talk we will do a few demonstrations: making bergamot sweets, recognising essential oils through the sense of smell, writing with lemon juice.

III) Exercises / Discussion

Suggest subjects for participants: relations between plants and animals, invasive plants, orchids, Asian plants. 25 min.

Participants are divided into groups, each group to pick a subject.
Participants are asked to think about activities that could be used to make an exhibition on these themes attractive.

All ideas welcome, even the craziest!

Participants may also like to think about possible constraints and list them: type of public (children, adults), length of the activity, possible budget, etc.

- Thinking and discussion time in each group
- Send a spokesman from each group to the board to tell the others about the ideas raised.
- Discussion of the ideas raised.

IV) Exchange of experiences (15 min)

Participants are invited to talk about their experiences of running exhibitions and to give a few examples.

V) Conclusion (5 min)

VI) Workshop evaluation

Orally, or draw up a questionnaire.