

# 5GBGC Talking points



Dear 5GBGC Delegate,

The Global Botanic Garden Congresses provide a unique opportunity for the botanic garden community to discuss together key issues that affect our work. In order to focus discussions at this Congress, BGCI has identified a number of 'Talking points' which are outlined below. We are hoping that these issues will be discussed as relevant in the various parallel sessions and symposia that will be taking place this week – as well during coffee breaks and over lunch. In addition, BGCI would value your individual feedback on these points. You can provide this by writing your comments on this sheet and handing it back to any BGCI staff member. Alternatively, we are providing a number of 'Talking point' poster boards, where you can write your comment on a 'post-it' for all to see.

We will be using Twitter to solicit comments from the wider community. Please follow us on @bgci and tweet about the talking points using #BGCI2013

At the end of the Congress, BGCI will evaluate the comments made and provide feedback on the discussions held.

## 1. What is a botanic garden?

The definition of a botanic garden as provided in the *International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation* is

*“An institution holding documented collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, display and education”*

In recent years, a number of botanic gardens have seen a reduction in support for their scientific research activities, so the question arises – is a botanic garden without a science research programme, still a botanic garden?

The question we are asking the Congress is:

**What are the defining qualities that distinguish a botanic garden from other types of gardens?**

**If we accept that “documented collections” is a key criterion of a botanic garden, what are the minimum standards for such documentation?**

*Your response:*

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## 2. Global coordination and outreach

The work of botanic gardens in helping to deliver the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the Convention on Biological Diversity is widely acknowledged. However botanic gardens individually or through partnerships are helping to tackle other big environmental challenges such as food security and climate change.

The questions we are asking the Congress are:

**Should botanic gardens do more through research, practical action and education to tackle global issues such as food security and climate change?**

**If so how can BGCI best support this work and promote the work of botanic gardens to relevant global fora?**

*Your response:*

## 3. Access to plant collection data

Should we consider opening up botanic garden plant collection databases so that people can see what is in cultivation where? Many collections already have open-access to collection data, but some do not support such a system. Open access would greatly facilitate cooperation in conservation and research and reduce the need for rare species to be collected from the wild. The disadvantages include the potential for theft of rare and valuable species from gardens and an increasing burden on garden staff to respond to requests for material. The implications of the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits from their use also need to be considered.

The question we are asking the Congress is:

**Should plant collection data be open-access, and if so, what mechanisms can we put in place to facilitate this?**

*Your response:*

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## 4. Participation for all

Botanic gardens have been criticised for only engaging with a relatively narrow sector of society. While museums have evolved over the past 15 years from object-centred to people-centred institutions, how can botanic gardens similarly open up their institutions and increase the accessibility and use of their plant collections to the wider public? Some excellent examples of good practice in public participation in botanic gardens do exist (citizen science projects and volunteer programmes). However, are these sufficient and do they really engage all sectors of society?

The question we are asking the Congress is:

**Should botanic gardens strive towards active participation from all sectors of society? What needs to happen within organisations to increase public participation?**

*Your response:*

## 5. Conservation action

GSPC Target 8 calls for at least 75% of threatened plant species to be conserved in *ex situ* collections that should be genetically representative. To date, only 5% of the total of the world's 380,000 plant species have been evaluated using the global *IUCN Red List* categories and criteria, while the *IUCN Sampled Red List Index for Plants* study estimates that one in five plant species is threatened with extinction (~76,000 species). Although progress has been made in increasing numbers of threatened species in *ex situ* conservation programmes, establishing genetically representative collections in line with Target 8, let alone for the total number of estimated threatened species, proves more challenging.

The question we are asking the Congress is:

**Given the limited time and resources in botanic gardens, and the growing threats to plants worldwide, are our current approaches to prioritisation for *ex situ* conservation and genetically representative collections on the right track? If not, what needs to be done and how?**

*Your response:*

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## 6. Looking ahead: Science communication in botanic gardens

Many botanic gardens around the world are renowned within their networks for their achievements in plant science. However, gardens' contributions to science are rarely showcased widely for their value to the society

The question we are asking the Congress is:

**How do botanic gardens currently communicate their scientific research to the public? How important is it for botanic gardens to increase their capacity in science communication and how can BGCI best assist with this?**

*Your response:*

## 7. What other issues do you consider require a globally co-ordinated approach?

Please let us know about any other issues you think BGCI should be addressing as we implement our Five Year Plan