



Target 14

The importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation *incorporated* into communication, education and public awareness programmes

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Progress towards the target/issue (1 of 2)

- Most presentations at the meeting record progress as ‘green’, or occasionally ‘yellow’ or in one case insufficient information to evaluate (and in one case only, red). This reflects the many successful and persuasive programs but does not take into account the extent of our influence on behaviours and decision making.
- Botanic gardens are now well versed in ways to get across the basic message that plants are important. They use different techniques for different audiences and in many cases measure their success through some kind of research or audience feedback.
- For government, CBD and similar audiences botanic gardens are perhaps not performing so strongly. For example, economics takes priority over the environment and governments are reluctant to commit to long-term objectives (i.e. beyond an election cycle). We would likely have more impact if we broadened our stakeholder base in this area to include tourism, agriculture and other ministries – a focus on the environmental arm of government is insufficient to bring about major change.



Progress towards the target/issue (2 of 2)

- In schools and formal learning programs there is still a deficit in plant knowledge but many gardens are providing strong leadership to address this gap (e.g. eco-clubs, edible gardens, curriculum advice and modules). We should not shy away from using animals and other props to promote plants. Botany also has an image problem as a career, whether in science or horticulture, and it is difficult to attract student to pursue plant subjects.
- We are doing well with peers in the same field but not always reaching out to other disciplines such as engineering (convincing them that plants offer a viable and sometimes better solution to 'concrete', that maintenance of a garden is as legitimate as a building or hard infrastructure maintenance, that diversity of planting is a good and sensible thing). We need to find ways to engage with specialists in other fields and to help them make the change to a more environmentally sustainable approach.



Constraints to progress

- Difficulty in establishing our real objective (awareness raising vs behaviour change)
- Inadequate measures of success in terms of reach into the community and whether we are changing behaviours.
- Inability to engage effectively with specialist audiences outside the plant world
- Lack of resources to support schools programs
- Botanic gardens (and members of GPPC) don't have full control or influence over key communication channels such as education
- Short-term approach by governments
- Complex language and concepts [Latin names...]



GSPC post-2020

- We should be more interactive, more opportunistic and broader in our scope of engagement
- Sub-targets may be needed to measure success in particular market segments
- Rather than simply promote 'plant diversity and its conservation' we may be better to reword the target around the opportunities and relevance of plants in our lives.
- Our focus should move beyond the already converted
- We should try to change behaviours and values, rather than just inform
- Part of this target should include high quality social research to measure our impact (and there may be partners in this that we have missed, such as UNESCO Institute of Statistics).
- Governments take reporting requirements seriously so we could establish benchmarks for behaviours or attitudes related to plants
- Specialist knowledge should be valued and encouraged, but with a relevance outside the particular field
- We should work more with commerce and industry (e.g. plant labelling that supports sustainability and greater appreciation of the source of the product – e.g. a plant species)



GSPC post-2020

A new 'Target 14' could be something like:

Awareness and understanding of plants results in measurable changes in behaviours, leading to improved conservation of plants and their habitats

- It should encourage and support social research into the impacts of our engagement programs and the development of indicators for Government around changes in behaviour
- But, is such a target beyond the control/influence of botanic gardens and like organisations?

