



BOTANIC GARDENS
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

BGCI Accreditation Standards Manual



Advanced Conservation Practitioner Standards



BGCI Accreditation Scheme

Introduction



BGCI's accreditation scheme distinguishes botanic gardens from non-botanic gardens and recognises achievements in plant conservation.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation is aimed at botanical institutions wishing to establish their credentials as botanic gardens.

The BGCI Conservation Practitioner and Advanced Conservation Practitioner accreditations recognise conservation-oriented botanic gardens and botanic gardens that focus on conservation actions that support local, national or global conservation goals.

Rationale

BGCI's mission is 'to mobilise botanic gardens and engage partners in securing plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet'.

Activities that botanic gardens do uniquely well – such as documenting, understanding, growing and conserving plant diversity across the taxonomic array – are not sufficiently recognised by policymakers and funders. This has led to the erosion of the values and activities that define a botanic garden compared to a public park, for example.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation assesses and places a high value on the unique skills, knowledge and data in botanic gardens.

It is also BGCI's experience that botanic gardens frequently don't realise that their collections, knowledge, data and skills are highly relevant to the conservation and management of rare and threatened plant diversity.

We believe that accreditation motivates and informs botanic gardens, thus empowering them to do more plant conservation so that we can better achieve our collective missions.

Accreditation can result in tangible benefits for participating gardens – such as recognition, peer comparison, creating standards for excellence, and funding – and will act as a motivator for botanic garden leadership.

Eligibility and Fees

	Botanic Garden Accreditation	Conservation Practitioner Accreditation	Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation
BGCI Membership Requirements	No Membership Requirements	BGCI Members Only Members: Free	BGCI Members Only Members: \$TBD
Fees	Members: Free Non-Members: \$65	Non-Members: BGCI Membership Fees	Non-Members: BGCI Membership Fees + \$TBD

Duration

Accreditation will be granted for a period of 5 years, after which gardens will have to renew their application. Botanical institutions can apply for a different BGCI accreditation at any time.

Recognition

Certificates of accreditation will be issued together with a certification logo that recipients can use on their website, letterhead, etc. Recently accredited gardens will be highlighted on the BGCI news homepage and in the BGCI newsletter, *Cultivate*. Botanic gardens accredited as Advanced Conservation Practitioners will be publicised in *BGJournal*. Botanic garden entries in the GardenSearch database will include a field for BGCI accreditation status.

Methodology for Accreditation Scheme

BGCI's Botanic Garden Accreditation is designed to be as inclusive as possible, but still ensure a level of standards across botanic gardens. For this reason, the criteria it measures will assess and value the fundamental components of a botanic garden.

BGCI defines these components in the *BGCI Technical Review: defining the botanic garden, and how to measure performance and success*.

The BGCI accreditation assessment criteria can be divided into two categories:

1. Policies and Infrastructure
 - a. Policies, infrastructures and practices in place that are fundamental to botanic gardens (e.g. well documented collections, infrastructures, etc.).
2. Conservation and Sustainability Activities
 - a. Specific conservation, sustainability and ethical actions, including public engagement, training, research, *ex situ* conservation, *in situ* conservation and policy-related activities.

BGCI will assess the policies, infrastructures and practices of candidate gardens through several mechanisms:

- Through a questionnaire/application form, uploaded evidence and declaration.
- Through the candidate's own and BGCI's databases (PlantSearch, ThreatSearch and GardenSearch). PlantSearch and ThreatSearch will provide information on the conservation significance of collections. GardenSearch will provide information on infrastructures, staff resources, etc.
- Through garden publications, including Strategic Plans, Annual Reports and scientific publications.

Achieving Accreditation

For Botanical institutions to achieve the different forms of BGCI Accreditation, they will need to complete the applications found at the following URL: www.bgci.org/accreditation.

This document provides details on the standards for accreditation for each BGCI Accreditation. The manual provides clear indications of targets for each component of accreditation and gives examples of evidence for these targets.

Standards for Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation

BGCI's Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation is aimed at botanic institutions wishing to demonstrate that they achieve significant conservation impact and recognises botanic institutions with a focus on conservation actions that support local, national or global conservation goals. It is *only open to BGCI members*. The application process involves filling out a questionnaire and providing documented evidence of activities. The criteria assessed may include:

- Compliance with international conventions
- Collections of conservation value
- Information required for collections assessment
- Training in conservation-related disciplines offered
- Native plant species horticultural trials
- Participation in international scientific research
- Conservation activities, including *in situ* conservation
- Sustainability practices
- Substantial staff specialist skills
- International network membership

In addition, the application process includes a conservation collections assessment carried out by BGCI and an external peer review.

This accreditation is *only open to BGCI members* and a fee, to be determined at a later date, will be charged for cost recovery. For non-members, botanic institutions can only be assessed as an Advanced Conservation Practitioner by becoming members.

Below you will find standards and examples for each of the criteria measured in Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation.

Examples of evidence submitted by BGCI Accredited Advanced Conservation Practitioners can be found at

www.bgci.org/accreditation/about/accreditation-standards/.

Leadership and Strategic Direction

	Target	Examples of Evidence
1	A strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of the operation of the botanical institution and that prioritises plant conservation is in place and implemented.	<p>The botanical institution's strategic or annual plan.</p> <p>Highlight or focus on an area of strategic plan that includes plant conservation component.</p>
2	The botanical institution's mission statement includes conservation of plant diversity.	<p>The botanical institution's mission statement.</p> <p>A link to the mission statement on the botanic garden's website.</p>
3	The botanical institution has established infrastructure or a strategy or plan for infrastructure at the botanic garden.	<p>Photos of the infrastructure found at the botanical institution (common garden, seed orchard, cryopreservation facility, growth chamber, herbarium, living plant collection, micropropagation or tissue culture facility, plant nursery, seed bank, shadehouse / greenhouse, library, etc...).</p> <p>A masterplan for current and future infrastructure at the botanical institution.</p> <p>Funding proposals or news announcements on new infrastructure at the botanical institution.</p>
4	The botanical institution's leadership has a clear understanding of the annual operating budget.	<p>Annual operating budget including annual report and financial statement.</p>
5	The botanical institution's leadership can determine the percentage of annual operating budget used for plant conservation.	<p>The percentage of annual operating budget used for plant conservation with an explanation of how the figure was calculated.</p>
6	The botanical institution's leadership can determine the percentage of plant conservation budget that is non-permanent (grant) funding.	<p>The percentage of plant conservation budget funded through non-permanent (grant) funding with an explanation of how the figure was calculated.</p>

Collections of Plant Conservation Value

	Target	Examples of Evidence
7	A collections strategy is in place and implemented.	The botanical institution's collections strategy or policy.
8	The botanical institution ensures compliance with sub-national, national, or international access and benefit-sharing regulations.	The botanical institution's policies related to national and international access and benefit regulations. Material Transfer Agreements.
9	Living collection is documented in a plant records database.	A screenshot of your plant records database (such as BG Base, Iris BG, etc...) An excel file of your plant records.
10	Material of wild provenance is indicated in the plant records database.	A screenshot of a plant record where wild provenance is indicated.
11	The botanical institution's leadership can determine the percentage of collection that is of wild origin.	The percentage of collections of wild origin. A list of wild origin plants.
12	Living collections include unique or rare taxa of national and global conservation importance.	A list of unique or rare taxa found in your collection.
13	The botanical institution's leadership can determine the number of unique or rare taxa of conservation importance.	The number of unique or rare taxa found in your collection.
14	Living collections include native species.	A list of native species found in your collection.
15	botanical institution's leadership can determine the number of native species.	The number of native species found in your collection.
16	The botanical institutions collections database is shared on PlantSearch.	A link to PlantSearch records. A receipt of the botanical institution's PlantSearch upload.
17	The botanical institution's collections data is shared with other botanical institutions, research institutions or collaborators.	A link to shared collections data (on PlantSearch or botanic garden website).
18	Collections at the botanical institution's are safely backed-up.	Seed banking in a cold-store located on/off site. <i>In-vitro</i> conservation of plant germplasm located on/off site. Cryopreservation located on/off site. Living collection duplicated on/off site. Photos of seed banking, <i>in-vitro</i> conservation, cryopreservation, or duplicate living collections. List of collection that is safely backed-up.

Collections Assessment Information

	Target	Examples of Evidence
19	The botanical institution's leadership identifies and provides information on the core or priority conservation collections in the botanical institution.	<p>A detailed explanation of the core or priority conservation collections found in the botanical institution.</p> <p>A link to the botanical institution's website where the core or priority conservation collection is explained.</p> <p>An indication of where information on the core or priority conservation collections found in the botanical institution are included in strategic documents.</p>
20	The botanical institution's leadership identifies and provides the broader collection priorities of the botanical institution.	<p>A detailed explanation of other priorities for the collection found at the botanical institution (regional, cultural, etc...).</p> <p>A link to the botanical institution's website where other collection priorities are discussed.</p> <p>An indication of where information on other collection priorities is included in strategic documents.</p>
21	The botanical institution's taxa list has been updated on PlantSearch within the last six months.	A receipt of the botanical institution's PlantSearch upload within the last six months.

Public Education and Community / Cultural Activities

	Target	Examples of Evidence
22	Educational activities have plant conservation as a major theme.	<p>A detailed description of public engagement, educational, or cultural activities focusing on plant diversity.</p> <p>A link to schedule of activities.</p> <p>Photos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.</p> <p>Videos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.</p>
23	Public engagement activities include training courses, exchange programs, fellowships/internships or other student education with plant conservation as a major theme.	<p>A link to description of training courses, exchange programs, fellowships / internships or other student education with plant conservation as a major theme on the botanical institution's website.</p> <p>Fliers for these engagement activities.</p> <p>Agreements made with universities, institutions, or other entities on these engagement activities.</p>
24	The plant conservation importance of collection is highlighted through interpretation.	Photos of interpretation or signage.
25	Communication outreach emphasises conservation.	Links to newspaper, magazine, social media, blogs, or other media articles about conservation efforts at the botanical institution.

Conservation Horticulture

	Target	Examples of Evidence
26	The botanical institution has documentation or policies on management/control of Invasive Alien Species.	Strategies or documents on management or control of Invasive Alien Species.
27	The botanical institution has documentation or policies for control of pests and diseases.	Strategies or documents on control of pests and diseases.
28	The botanical institution has a landscape management strategy.	A landscape management strategy.
29	Threatened species are part of living collections.	A list of threatened species that are part of the botanical institution's living collection. Photos of these species in the botanical institution.
30	The botanical institution carries out horticultural trials on threatened taxa to assist in their conservation.	Examples of horticultural trial records.
31	Horticultural trial records are shared or accessible.	A link to where horticultural trial records are shared online. Peer reviewed papers making use of horticultural trials at the botanical institution.

Plant Conservation Scientific Research

	Target	Examples of Evidence
32	The botanical institution is an acknowledged, formal participant in scientific research on plant conservation.	Peer reviewed papers acknowledging support from the botanical institution. Peer reviewed papers written by visiting scholars, professionals, etc... to the botanical institution.
33	The botanical institution's staff publish original research on plant conservation.	Peer reviewed papers written by botanical institution's staff.

Plant Conservation Activities

	Target	Examples of Evidence
34	The botanical institution has a minimum of five activities focused on <i>ex situ</i> plant conservation.	Examples of <i>ex situ</i> plant conservation activities can be found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation/about/plant-conservation-and-sustainability-activities/
35	The botanical institution has a minimum of three activities focused on <i>in situ</i> plant conservation.	Examples of <i>in situ</i> plant conservation activities can be found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation/about/plant-conservation-and-sustainability-activities/

Examples of *ex situ* plant conservation activities (this list is not exhaustive)

- Engagement with local or national policy makers on the development of National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans, or equivalents
- Contribute to international plant conservation policy (e.g. the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation, CBD etc.)
- Training courses on plant conservation attended by staff
- Training courses on plant conservation policy, practice or communication offered
- Conservation volunteer programme in place
- Publication of plant conservation, environmental, traditional knowledge research for policymakers, researchers, or the general public
- Horticultural trials carried out on native or threatened taxa
- Propagation and germination studies carried out on native or threatened taxa
- Publications on wild (non-domesticated) plant diversity
- Wild species seed conservation
- Wild species propagation
- Exchange or supply of wild species material with other conservation practitioners or gardens
- Field gene banks or *ex situ* collections managed for conservation purposes
- Improving horticultural knowledge for native and/or threatened taxa

Examples of *in situ* plant conservation activities (this list is not exhaustive)

- IUCN red listing or conservation assessments compiled at local, national or global levels
- Field-based ecological studies carried out on native habitats or species
- Habitat restoration and species reintroductions
- Natural area management
- Land and habitat protection (through policy and government engagement)
- Invasive species removals and risk assessments
- Population monitoring

Sustainability and Ethical Activities

	Target	Examples of Evidence
36	The botanical institution has a minimum of five activities focused on sustainability or ethical conditions.	Examples of plant sustainability or ethical activities can be found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation/about/plant-conservation-and-sustainability-activities/

Examples of sustainability and ethical activities (this list is not exhaustive)

- Sustainability plan/documentation
- Waste reduction, recycling schemes, or composting in place and on display to the public with appropriate interpretation
- Renewable energy constitutes a proportion of the garden's energy portfolio and energy conservation measures being implemented
- Water saving or recycling schemes in place
- ISO14001 or other recognised sustainability accreditation gained
- Responsible sourcing of commodities and products sold in retail outlets
- Responsible sourcing of materials and plants used by the organisation
- Ethical funding policy in place
- Leadership commitment to staff and visitor diversity and inclusion
- Ecological sustainability in landscape management (e.g. fertiliser use, pesticide application, etc...)

Staff Commitment

	Target	Examples of Evidence
37	At least one member of staff has plant conservation as part of their job description.	A job description, staff biography, work plan, or similar document for the member of staff with conservation in their job description.
38	botanical institution's leadership can identify the number of staff with conservation in their job description.	The number of staff with conservation in their job description and upload job descriptions, work plans, or similar for all staff.
39	Plant conservation activities at the botanic garden account for at least 30% of technical staff efforts (scientific / horticultural / educational efforts).	The percentage of time technical staff dedicate to plant conservation activities with an explanation of how you came to this percentage.

Network Membership

	Target	Examples of Evidence
40	The botanical institution partners with other botanical institutions or belongs to a botanical network.	A list of the botanic networks for which the botanical institution is a member. A partnership agreement with another botanical institution.
41	The botanical institution plays a conservation leadership role in mentoring external individuals or institutions.	Agreements demonstrating efforts to mentor external individuals or institutions (through exchange programs, visiting scholars or professionals, etc...) Agendas or abstracts for workshops hosted by the botanical institution for external individuals or institutions.
42	The botanical institution's staff participate in at least one plant conservation conference each year.	An abstract or agenda for a conference for which staff of the botanical institution attended.