



BOTANIC GARDENS
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

BGCI Accreditation Standards Manual



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 botanical institutions 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 Scheme assesses and places a high value on the unique skills, knowledge and data in botanical institutions.

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 botanical institutions will be highlighted on the BGCI news homepage and in the BGCI newsletter, *Cultivate*. Botanical institutions accredited as Advanced Conservation Practitioners will be publicised in *BGJournal*. 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 botanic gardens and 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 Conservation Practitioner Accreditation

BGCI's Conservation Practitioner Accreditation recognises botanic gardens with a conservation-oriented approach. The application process involves filling out a questionnaire and providing documented evidence of activities. The criteria assessed include:

- Leadership commitment to conservation
- Collections of conservation value
- Public education on conservation issues
- Conservation horticulture
- Conservation activities
- Conservation science or research
- Sustainability
- Staff commitment to conservation
- Network membership

Applications will be reviewed by BGCI. This accreditation is only open to BGCI members and there is no fee. For non-members, gardens can only be assessed as a Conservation Practitioner by becoming members.

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

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

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

Conservation Practitioner Standards

Leadership and Strategic Direction

	Target	Examples of Evidence
1	A strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of the operation of the botanical institution, including conservation, is in place and implemented.	The botanical institution's strategic or annual plan.
2	The botanical institution's mission statement includes conservation of plant diversity.	The botanical institution's mission statement. A link to the mission statement on the botanical institution's website.
3	Strategic policies and documents include plant conservation component.	Highlight or focus on area of strategic plan that includes plant conservation component.

Collections of Plant Conservation Value

	Target	Examples of Evidence
4	A collections strategy is in place and implemented.	The botanical institution's collections strategy or policy.
5	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 regulations. Material Transfer Agreements.
6	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.
7	Plant records are shared on PlantSearch.	A link to PlantSearch records. A receipt of the botanical institution's PlantSearch upload.
8	Material of wild provenance is indicated.	A screenshot of a plant record where wild provenance is indicated.
9	Living collections include unique or rare taxa.	A list of unique or rare taxa found in your collection.
10	The botanical institution shares collections data.	A link to shared collections data (on PlantSearch or the botanical institution's website).

Public Education and Community / Cultural Activities

	Target	Examples of Evidence
11	Public engagement, educational, or cultural activities have plant diversity as a major theme.	<p>Detailed description of public engagement, educational, or cultural activities focusing on plant diversity.</p> <p>A link to the schedule of activities at the botanical institution.</p> <p>Photos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.</p> <p>Videos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities.</p>
12	Plant conservation importance of the botanical institution's collection is highlighted through interpretation or signage.	Photo of interpretation or signage.
13	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
14	The botanical institution has invasive alien species, pests and disease, or landscape management strategies.	The botanical institution's management strategy on IAS, pests and diseases, or landscape.
15	Native species are part of the botanical institution's public display.	<p>List of native species that are part of the botanical institution's public display.</p> <p>Photos of native species display in the botanical institution.</p>
16	Threatened species are part of botanical institution's public display.	<p>List of threatened species that are part of the botanical institution's public display.</p> <p>Photos of threatened species on display in the botanical institution.</p>

Plant Conservation Scientific Research

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

Plant Conservation Activities

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

Examples of plant conservation activities

- 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.)
- Public displays with a conservation or environmental message
- Public events designed to raise awareness of plant conservation and environment
- Training courses on plant conservation attended by staff
- Training courses on plant conservation policy, practice or communication offered, including at school student, undergraduate and post-graduate levels; fellowships
- School programmes with plant conservation/environmental education component
- Conservation volunteer programme in place
- IUCN red listing or conservation assessments compiled at local, national or global levels
- Publication of plant conservation, environmental, traditional knowledge research for policymakers, researchers, or the general public
- Support staff with formal affiliation with BGCI, IUCN SSC specialist groups, or other conservation organisation
- 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
- Native species areas or gardens part of the living collection display
- Restored and managed natural areas within garden
- Conservation collections policy implemented
- Plant health collections policy implemented
- Invasive species policy implemented
- Collections sourced and exchanged in full compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol and CITES
- Gardens registered as national CITES rescue centres / refuges / training centres

Sustainability and Ethical Activities

	Target	Examples of Evidence
19	The botanical institution has a minimum of three 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

- 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
20	At least one member of staff has plant conservation as part of their job description.	Upload a job description, staff biography, work plan, or similar document for the member of staff with conservation, science, or specialist horticulture in their job description.

Network Membership

	Target	Examples of Evidence
21	The botanical institution partners with other botanical institutions or belongs to a botanical network.	A list of the botanical networks for which the botanical institution is a member. Partnership agreement with another botanical institution.
22	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.